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Seminar on Sustainable Development of Ecotourism in
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PROMOTION OF COOPERATION IN HUMAN
RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN
THE TOURISM SECTOR THROUGH
THE ESCAP NETWORK OF ASIA-PACIFIC
EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTES
IN TOURISM (APETIT)

*Ryuji Yamakawa
Chief, Tourism Unit
Transport, Communications, Tourism and
Infrastructure Development Division
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)*

INTRODUCTION

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations. ESCAP is the largest of the five regional commissions; it currently comprises 52 members and 9 associate members representing 58 per cent of the global population. The primary function of ESCAP is to promote economic and social development through regional and subregional cooperation.

Tourism can be an effective tool for sustainable development, contributing to poverty alleviation and the conservation of the natural and cultural environment. Recognizing the important role of tourism in the socio-economic development of the developing Asian and Pacific countries, ESCAP has undertaken a number of activities in this field. The overall objective of these activities is to help governments maximize the socio-economic benefits from sustainable development of tourism while minimizing its adverse impact, through strengthening of national capabilities in comprehensive and properly planned tourism development and promotion of regional and subregional cooperation. Studies, workshops, seminars and technical advisory missions constitute the basic methods of assistance.

In April 1999, ESCAP launched the Plan of Action for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Asian and Pacific Region (PASTA 1999-2005).

The Plan of Action provides members and associate members of ESCAP with a structured framework for the implementation of regional and national actions in the field of tourism development.

It sets forth proposals for action in the following six theme areas:

- (a) human resources development in the tourism sector;
- (b) economic impact of tourism;
- (c) environmental management of tourism;
- (d) infrastructure development and investment for the tourism sector;
- (e) facilitation of travel;
- (f) regional and subregional cooperation in tourism development.

Human resources development is one of the thrust areas in the Plan of Action and ESCAP has been promoting cooperation in tourism education and training through the Network of Asia-Pacific Education and Training Institutes in Tourism established by ESCAP in 1997.

The success of any tourism development strategy will be determined to a large extent by human resources, which can deliver efficient, high-quality services. As a consequence of the rapid growth in tourism, the need to develop the required human resources in various segments of the industry has become imperative. Some of the problems and constraints related to human resources development can be tackled more effectively through closer cooperation among the countries of the region, since individual countries possess certain strengths and expertise that could usefully be shared with other countries. One important step in this direction could be the strengthening of institutional links among tourism training institutes, which would form the basis for the exchange of experience and information.

To promote cooperation in tourism education and training, the Network of Asia-Pacific Education and Training Institutes in Tourism (APETIT) was established by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 1997. Currently, 120 education and training institutes, and national tourism organizations in 33 countries and areas, are participating in its activities.

I. ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS RELATED TO HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

The need to develop the required human resources in various segments of the tourism industry has become imperative as a consequence of the rapid growth in tourism, rapidly changing technology and dynamic changes in the international tourism market. Issues related to human resources development in the tourism sector involve the quality of human resources, their conditions of work, their training and educational opportunities, the role of the private sector and the role of the government in giving attention to and finding solutions to problems and constraints.

By the very nature of tourism as a service industry, its efficient administration and successful operation depend largely on the quality of manpower. In the Asian and Pacific region, the shortage of skilled manpower poses a major threat to the overall development of tourism. International tourism is a relatively new phenomenon and therefore the lack of managerial capability exists at all levels of the industry.

In particular, the rapid expansion of hotels of an international standard in the region is creating a high level of demand for skilled and experienced staff. The nature of the decisions facing hotel management is continually expanding. For their business to remain competitive, managers must be skilful in many diverse areas. For instance, they must possess a good understanding of how current events and the economy affect the market and develop skill in marketing their products. They must also strive to keep up with the technological innovations in the operational side of the industry. As part of the service industry, tourism is labour-intensive and generally requires well-developed social and language skills in a cross-cultural working environment. These demands have placed considerable strain on small, independent operators, who cannot rely on the broad management expertise available to their multinational hotel chain competitors.

The availability of skilled and trained manpower is a crucial element in the successful long-term development and sustainability of a tourist destination. In the ultimate analysis, skilled and trained human resources will ensure the delivery of efficient, high-quality service to visitors, which is a direct and visible element of a successful tourism product. High standards of service are particularly important in sustaining long-term growth, since success as a tourist destination is determined not only by price competitiveness or the range of attractions available, but also by the quality of the services provided. Repeat visits, a vital factor in maintaining growth, will be deterred if standards of service do not meet expectations.

The major problems and constraints facing human resources development in the tourism sector can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Shortage of qualified manpower, particularly at the managerial level, which poses a major obstacle to the overall development of the tourism sector;
- (b) Shortage of qualified and experienced teaching staff;
- (c) Shortage of training materials and facilities;
- (d) Lack of strategies and policies for human resources development in the tourism sector;
- (e) Difficulty in keeping pace with rapidly changing technological innovations and dynamic changes in the global marketplace;
- (f) Complexity of the multidisciplinary nature of tourism studies;
- (g) Gap between the training capacity of training/educational institutes and the actual need of the industry;
- (h) Shortage of higher-level programmes for management development.

II. ROLE OF THE NETWORK OF ASIA-PACIFIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTES IN TOURISM IN PROMOTING COOPERATION IN HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

Background

ESCAP member countries have clearly seen the rationale behind the creation of a network for tourism training and education as a form of regional cooperation and one form of technical cooperation among developing countries. Since the early 1990s, there has been an urgent need to exchange information and expertise throughout Asia and the Pacific in the area of human resources development for the tourism sector. Some countries might lack the training and education facilities necessary to meet the growing demand for skilled and trained personnel in the industry. There might also be a shortage of skilled trainers, instructors and teaching staff to meet industry needs. The curriculum and skill standards might also need to be upgraded. Some countries might not have the resources available to enable them to expand or improve their capability to develop human resources for the tourism industry. As a result, it was logical to share information, expertise and education and training resources at the regional level through cooperative activities. Networking was considered the most practical mechanism for regional cooperation and collaboration.

Against this background, APETIT was established at the Meeting for the Establishment of a Network of Tourism Training Institutes and Organizations in the Asian and Pacific Region, organized by ESCAP and held in Tehran in September 1997. Representatives of Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; China; Fiji; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Islamic Republic of Iran; Macao, China; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Thailand and Viet Nam participated in the Meeting. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Labour Organization, the World Tourism Organization and the World Travel and Tourism Council also participated.

Objective of APETIT

The objective of the Network is to promote cooperation among tourism education, training and research institutes, national tourism organizations and tourism trade organizations in human resources development in the tourism sector.

Activities of APETIT

The activities of the Network are organized under five general activity groups as indicated below:

1. **Information Management** (responsible focal point: Tourism Services Training Center, Iran Touring and Tourism Organization, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran).

Activities to be undertaken include the following:

- (a) maintaining a website on the Internet <www.apetitnet.net>;
- (b) creating a database system, which should have a pre-set format and include, among others:
 - X courses that are offered;
 - X entrance requirements;
 - X contact names;
 - X information that can be offered to the network;
 - X facilities that can be offered.

2. **Communication links** (responsible focal point: The Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, Gwalior, India).

Activities to be undertaken include the following:

- (a) producing APETIT newsletter;
- (b) marketing the Network in international, regional and subregional forums, tourism trade fairs, etc..

3. **Training and advisory services** (responsible focal point: Institute for Tourism Studies, Macao, China).

Activities to be undertaken include the following:

- (a) promoting sharing of training and educational facilities;
- (b) providing advisory services on request;
- (c) promoting faculty and trainer exchange programmes.

4. **Sharing experiences** (responsible focal point: Hotel and Tourism Training Institute, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Bang Saen, Thailand).

Activities to be undertaken include the following:

- (a) promoting human resources development through exchange of experience by organizing workshops, seminars, study tours, etc.;
- (b) promoting student exchange programmes.

5. **Research and development** (responsible focal point: Department of Tourism and Leisure Management, the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia).

Activities to be undertaken include the following:

- (a) establishing a discussion forum to focus on R & D related to technology transfer;
- (b) identifying opportunities and promoting joint research;
- (c) promoting links with tourism-related industries and obtaining grants and scholarships for training of trainers, educators and students;
- (d) working to evolve a system of articulation for career planning in the tourism industry.

Organizational structure

The network shall be administered by a General Council and Executive Committee with the ESCAP secretariat acting as regional coordinator.

1. *General Council*

The General Council is constituted by the gathering of all members of the Network and meets once every two years at a place and date to be determined by the Executive Committee.

The General Council establishes the policies of the Network, review and evaluate its activities and approves its programmes of work. It also appoints the Executive Committee members.

Decisions of the General Council are made by consensus, or when this is not possible, by a majority of present and voting members.

2. *Executive Committee*

The Executive Committee is composed of nine members, including the five focal points (Australia; India; Islamic Republic of Iran; Macao, China; and Thailand) and four additional members (currently China; Hong Kong, China; Singapore and Sri Lanka). Membership in the Executive Committee rotates after a certain period to be decided by the General Council. Members are eligible for re-election. The Executive Committee meets twice a year. The responsibilities of the Executive Committee include:

- (a) act in accordance with the decisions of the General Council Meeting.
- (b) setting its own terms of reference.
- (c) deciding on the criteria for accepting new members.
- (d) mobilizing resources for the network.
- (e) reviewing the progress of the activities undertaken by the international focal points and reporting to the General Council.
- (f) preparing a draft programme of work to be undertaken over a two-year period for approval by the General Council.

Membership

Criteria for accepting new members and related procedures are as follows:

1. APETIT membership shall consist of:

(a) Regional members:^{*/}

- *National focal point members*, representing the country/territory with voting privileges;
- *General members*, which could be tourism education, training and research institutes; government tourism agencies and tourism trade associations; tourism departments at the universities/colleges, with no voting privileges;
- *Individual members*, with no voting privileges;

(b) Non-regional members:

- *Invited members*, with no voting privileges;
- *Individual members*, with no voting privileges;

^{*/} A regional members would be taken from those countries and areas in the Asian and Pacific region as defined by the official ESCAP listing of the territories of Asia and the Pacific: Afghanistan; American Samoa; Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Cook Island; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; French Polynesia; Georgia; Guam; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Islamic Republic of Iran; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Macao, China; Malaysia; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Federated States of Micronesia; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nauru; Nepal; New Caledonia; New Zealand; Niue; Northern Mariana Islands; Pakistan; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; the Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Tonga; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Tuvalu; Uzbekistan; Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

(c) Other members:

- *International and regional organizations involved in tourism*, with no voting privileges;
- *Honorary life member*, with no voting privileges, for a person or company in recognition of contributions made to development of APETIT.

A national focal point member should be training or education institute, and will have responsibility for the national Network. A national tourism organization could also serve as a national focal point if a training or education institute was not available in that country or area.

2. The applicant must be willing and able to actively participate in the activities of APETIT.
3. An application form must be submitted to the ESCAP Secretariat.
4. Admission of membership is subject to the approval of the Executive Committee.

Accomplishments and work in progress

Since the establishment of APETIT in September 1997, a number of activities have been implemented. The Internet will be an important tool for efficient and effective networking in virtually all of the activity areas. Accordingly, the APETIT web site on the Internet was established by the international focal point in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and can be contacted at <www.apetitnet.net>. The web site is being updated continuously, based on information sent by members. This web site will be linked to those of other APETIT member institutes and registered with popular search engines. APETIT Newsletter is issued by the international focal point in India.

The international focal points have made a number of formal arrangements for bilateral and multilateral cooperation and sharing experience. The international focal point in Thailand signed a memorandum of understanding with counterpart institutes in Australia; China; Macao, China; Mongolia; New Zealand and Viet Nam to advance and promote exchanges involving human resources, equipment and the development of academic curricula and personnel. Similar arrangements have been made between member institutes in Australia and China. The international focal point in Macao signed an agreement for cooperation with an institute in the Islamic Republic of Iran and China.

The Network has facilitated the implementation of specific operational bilateral action, such as the provision of advisory services on human resources development to Mongolia by Thailand. In Viet Nam, Thailand undertook a one-week training programme in the areas of restaurant and bar operations, and front-office operations. Thailand hosted 65 tourism management students from Australia and accepted 2 students from Viet Nam to participate in a 10-day training programme on cultural heritage as a tourism product. The Islamic Republic of Iran hosted students from Macao, China. Malaysia hosted students from Australia. There were a number of faculty/trainer exchange programmes involving

Australia, China, Malaysia, Viet Nam and Thailand. Thailand conducted a one-week training course on “restaurant and bar”, “kitchen operation” and “housekeeping” in Mongolia and sent a Thai cuisine cooking instructor to Bangladesh. China conducted a six-day Chinese cookery training programme for Thailand. Two instructors from Macao conducted a Teach-the-Teacher Workshop for Tourism/Hospitality Instructors at Tehran in September 2001.

Macao, China donated training materials to Mongolia and has offered short courses to APETIT members on the development and management of meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE), training of trainers, sustainable tourism planning and development, and heritage tourism. Institutes in Australia, China, Malaysia and the Philippines participated. Thailand organized a seminar on small and medium hotels in June 2000.

The international focal point in Australia has appointed scholars from China, the Republic of Korea and Thailand to conduct surveys and carry out research on education needs and research priorities in their home countries. It is undertaking research on ecotourism in China.

The Executive Committee of APETIT, at its fourth meeting, agreed that to promote faculty/student exchanges, host institutes should provide, if available, accommodation and all other local facilities during their stay, while the cost of international air travel should be borne by the parent organizations of faculty/students. That arrangement would greatly facilitate faculty/student exchange programmes among APETIT members.

A Seminar on Challenges for Human Resource Development in Tourism in the Asia-Pacific Region in the New Millennium was held by ESCAP and WTO at Macao in May 1999. The APETIT Conference on Tourism Education and Training in the Asia-Pacific Region was held by ESCAP at Khajuraho, India in August 2001.

These accomplishments are a sample of a number of activities being carried out by members of APETIT. It is clear that the members can see the benefits of networking throughout the region and have taken significant innovative action.

Supplementary information to be provided by tourism education and training institutes

A. Courses conducted by your institute and length of study for each course

- Certificate of _____ Duration _____
- Diploma of _____ Duration _____
- Degree _____ Duration _____
- Other _____ Duration _____

B. APETIT is intended to provide members with benefits. Please indicate which of the following benefits you would value most:

1. Access to qualified resource persons in the field of:

- Hotel Management
- Tourism Management
- Catering Management
- Other – please specify _____

2. At what level do you see the greatest need for cooperation at your institute?

- Vocational level in _____
- Academic level at Undergraduate level in _____
- Academic level at Postgraduate level in _____
- Industry specific training in the field of _____

3. Other benefits:

- Student exchanges
- Staff exchanges
- Other – please specify _____

Please indicate the ways in which your institute can contribute to APETTT activities.

- Provide faculty staff to conduct training to APETTT member institutes.
- Facilitate student visits from APETTT member institutes by providing accommodation and meals.
- Other way your institute can contribute to the APETTT network.

Please specify _____

ESCAP Tourism Activities for Pacific Island Countries

Meetings

Seminar on the Promotion of Sustainable Tourism Development in Pacific Island Countries.	Held at Suva on 18-22 November 1991.
Seminar on Investment at Economic Cooperation in the Tourism Sector in Pacific Island Countries.	Held at Tokyo on 18-23 October 1993.
Workshop on Integrated Tourism Planning in Pacific Island Countries.	Held at Port Vila on 5-9 June 1995.
National Workshop on Integrated Tourism Planning.	Held at Nauru on 11-13 October 1995.
National Workshop on Strategic Tourism Marketing Planning.	Held at Marshall Islands on 28-30 November 1995.
National Seminar on Tourism Investment in Tonga.	Held in Tonga on 10 June 1996.
Training Programme on Tourism Management for South Pacific Countries.	Held in Singapore on 26-31 May 1997.
Training Programme on Tourism Management and Development for South Pacific Countries.	Held in Singapore on 1-5 November 1999.
Training Programme on Tourism Management and Development for South Pacific Countries.	Held in Singapore on 27 November-1 December 2000.
Seminar on Sustainable Development of Ecotourism in Pacific Island Countries.	Held at Suva on 17-18 October 2001.

Research/publications

Study on Sustainable Tourism Development in Pacific Island Countries. (ST/ESCAP/1220)	Published in August 1993.
Study on Foreign Investment in the Tourism Sector in Samoa. (ST/ESCAP/1426)	Published in June 1995.
Study on Foreign Investment in the Tourism Sector in Vanuatu. (ST/ESCAP/1427)	Published in June 1995.
Guidelines on Integrated Tourism Planning in Pacific Island Countries. (ST/ESCAP/1637)	Published in November 1996.
Tourism Investment Guide in Tonga.	Completed in 1996.
ESCAP Tourism Review No. 1, Tourism Development in Pacific Island Countries. (ST/ESCAP/540)	Published in July 1988.

ESCAP Tourism Review No. 9, Sustainable
Tourism Development in Pacific Island Countries.
(ST/ESCAP/1165)

Published in June 1993.

ESCAP Tourism Review No. 12, Feasibility
Study on the Arona Valley Tourism Development
Project. (ST/ESCAP/1292)

Published in January 1994.

ESCAP Tourism Review No. 13, Investment and
Economic Cooperation in the Tourism Sector in
Pacific Island Countries. (ST/ESCAP/1386)

Published in December 1994.

ESCAP Tourism Review No. 17, Integrated
Tourism Planning in Pacific Island Countries.
(ST/ESCAP/1638)

Published in December 1996.