Action Plan 2008-2010

The GMS tourism strategy (TS) designed under technical assistance by ADB defines programs and projects to be implemented before 2015. In 2007, the Tourism Working Group (TWG) acting as the Board of Directors of the MTCO had decided to focus the actions of the MTCO for the next 2 years on a selected number of projects and asked MTCO project coordinator to carry out a prioritization exercise.

Comment [U1]: Link to red book

Comment [U2]: Link to MTCO structure

This paper presents the selection of projects, and a 2 years action plan proposed by the MTCO which has been presented to the TWG during its last meeting in Vientiane on December 3rd, 2007. The projects have been divided into three categories; short term (2008-2010), midterm (2008-2012) and long term projects (20010-2015). A table classifying all the projects is attached to this document.

Comment [U3]: Link to classification table

Although it is a realistic plan, it is still a challenging one, as its success relies not only on the Tourism Working Group efficiency, but as well on the active participation and support from the main actors of the tourism development in the GMS; governments, private sector and development partners.

The following action plan will be evaluated on a regular basis, and readjusted according to in particular funding resources available. In 2009 another 2 years plan will be elaborated.

B. **Human resource development with women' empowerment;**

C. **Heritage conservation and mitigation of negative socio-cultural impacts:**

D. **Pro-poor tourism and Equitable Distribution of Benefits:**

E. **Private sector participation**

F. **Cross-border facilitation**

G. **Tourism-related infrastructure**

Comment [U4]: Links to each section below

PRIORITIZATION OF PROJECTS: METHODOLOGY

The strategy designed for 10 years is ambitious; while it is good to aim high, it is wiser, with limited resources, to set up priorities and to proceed by steps, in order to ensure ultimate success. It was thus decided during Lijiang TWG in September 2007 to concentrate MTCO mission of coordination in the next 2 years on a selection of projects.

A table classifying the projects into 3 categories (short 2008-2010, medium 2008-2012 and long term 2009-2015).

Following extensive consultations with the 6 GMS countries, 4 main criteria approved in Lijiang TWG served as a basis for selecting the projects:

1. **Countries' priorities**

All countries leading one or more projects[1] were visited and then consulted via email. They were asked to mention their priorities, as well as to provide detailed information on all projects that could be related to the strategy.

2. **Current Status of each project**

MTCO, based on information collected from NTOs and development partners, assessed the level of progress of each project. The advancement of each progress depending on whether a task force is set up, the activities carried out by the task force, and the other initiatives that could be related to the project without being directly initiated by the task force. Many actions were recorded in a table listing all information gathered by project, and submitted to the NTOs in November for additional input, this table to be regularly improved will require constant updates to be provided by the countries.

3. **Feasibility**

It then had to be determined what was the short to midterm feasibility of each project, What are the potential human and financial resources available, who might be the potential implementing agencies, . Discussions with development partners and identification of current initiatives allowed to make a first evaluation.

4. **Sustainability**

Another criteria that also prevailed was to choose those projects which are going to build the foundations, which, once secured, can be replicated to other projects, and in particular those concerning corridors. What are the core problems that require action in the shor term in order to ensure the best sustainability for all projects. The thematic approach was consequently preferred to a geographic one.

Provisional action plan 2008-2010, for Projects of priority 1 and 2

Projects of category 1 and 2 are presented below with a brief action plan proposed for each, sometimes the action plan presented is going beyond the next 2 years period for coherence purpose. Other times the action plan is not detailed, as it first requires further consultations with and, between the countries, in particular for the projects related to corridors and circuits

The programs are listed below as they appear in the strategy document, the order of appearance does not reflect an order of importance.

A. Marketing the subregion as a single destination

See the link ;….

B. Human Resource Development

Main objectives

[1] PRChina is the lead country on 6 projects(4 Guangxi, 2 Yunnan), Cambodia on 7 projects, Lao PDR on 3, Viet Nam on 3, and Thailand on 4.

To upgrade the skills of tourism managers and tourism trainers to ensure that the strategy can be implemented, and that tourism institutions deliver quality training, so that subsequently qualified staff is in place to face and manage tourism growing demand from high yield markets. A special emphasis will be placed in all activities on gender's issue to promote women' empowerment.

Rationale

Tourism is a chain of many different services and products. A tourist during his trip will be catered by, or in contact with a wide range of people; immigration officers, policemen, drivers, guides (general, cultural, natural guides), housekeepers, cooks, waiters, travel agents, heritage sites, ethnic communities, boat riders, handicrafts sellers, provincial tourism officer, etc. These people are at the core of the tourism experience, each in its own way and specialty, is conveying the image of their country and contributing or not to the overall quality of the experience tourists will remember and then promote when back home.

But the purpose of training people is not only to serve tourists, but to take tourism as a chance to provide career opportunities to a wide range of people. In particular to the poor and women, for the advancement of people of the sub region, so that they can be empowered and improve their lives, increase their capacities to proudly contribute to the development of their societies.

The key to poverty reduction is definitely human development through education and capacity building.

Human resource development is recurrent in the overall strategy and is the base of many other programs as we will see, but this program focuses on 2 aspects, HRD within the administration and vocational training.

B.1. Human Resource Development Plan for Public Officials

Brief Project description *see link for detailed project description*

The administrations at central and at provincial level are to implement tourism policies in a constantly evolving environment, but few public officials are skilled to face the challenge of a sustainable tourism development. There have been many education and training programs in the GMS, but their impact within the NTOs is limited as they are not part of a wider organized HRD plan. The necessity to develop a HRD culture and, to incorporate a HRD scheme in national policies has become crucial to ensure the successful design and implementation of national tourism policies, as well as to better regulate and liaise with the private sector.

Main activities planned for 2008-2010

- Preparatory phase:
  - Creation of a task force in each country
  - Training need analysis
  - Fund raising
- Activity 1: Sub regional workshop : how to build up a HRD Plan within the NTOs
- Activity 2: Finalise and validate HRD plan
- Activity 3: Design training materials for each countries including CD to be used internally
- Activity 4: Train the trainers course

- Activity 5: Create a web based knowledge centre in local languages and in English

B.2. Capacity Building of Hospitality Skills Trainers in Vocational Institutions
Brief Project description *see link for detailed project description*

With a prediction of over 3 mln new jobs required by 2015 in the tourism hospitality services only, there is no need to explain why vocational training is a priority. As the GMS wishes to optimize its revenue from tourism by positioning itself as a quality destination attracting high yield tourists, the staff need to upgrade their skills in order to address the demanding international tourists;

If Thailand, strong of 25 years of successful tourism history and an innate sense of hospitality, stands out with highly qualified staff, most other GMS countries have extensive needs of training in hospitality management and travel operation services. Vietnam is currently benefiting from a very comprehensive training program funded by the EC. Similar programs should be implemented within each country.

Main activities planned for 2008-2010

- Preparatory phase:
  - Creation of a task force at regional and country level
  - Gather material available
  - Evaluate potential implication of training schools and private sector
- Activity 1: Training need analysis,
- Activity 2: Design training material in local languages
- Activity 3: Train the trainers course

C. Heritage Conservation and Mitigation of Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts

Main objectives

- To promote higher standards in the management of natural and cultural resources to maintain the value of what are the primary assets of the GMS,
- To strengthen socially responsible practices to limit the negative impacts which uncontrolled tourism growth generates.

Rationale

The core assets attracting high yield tourists in the GMS are first its cultural diversity, with on one hand its monumental heritage, in particular religious and colonial heritage and, on the other hand, its authentic living customs and traditions embodied by multiple ethnic groups, who, often called minorities, are one of the main richness and unique characteristics of the sub region.

The second main asset, is its natural heritage, from snowed mountains through river valleys to tropical forests and coral reefs. The specific geological characteristics; landscapes and natural wonders, fauna and flora, are attracting millions who come for mere contemplation, or to experience its dramatic features

through physical activities trekking, rafting, biking, diving, etc. *"Protecting the environment is pricey, not doing it will cost much more"* Kofi Annan

It shall always be remembered that this heritage is the main reason for the success of the GMS destination, the good management and protection of this heritage is key to the sustainability of tourism.

Within this program comprising 6 projects, 3 were retained in category 1 for short to midterm implementation.

C.1. Enhancing tourism management at cultural heritage sites

Brief Project description *see link for detailed project description*

Training of cultural heritage managers and the guides certification program

Main activities planned for 2008-2009

This program implemented by UNESCO and UNESCAP and supported by the French government is well advanced already.

- National 'Train the trainers' courses will be conducted in Angkor Wat, Pagan, and Lijiang in 2008.
- Establish a certification scheme for training guides at heritage sites
- Conduct training of guides and cultural heritage site managers and staff.

C.2. Ecotourism development along transboundary biodiversity corridors

Brief Project description *see link for detailed project description*

Training of protected areas managers and local nature guides, develop ecotourism principles and activities within the PAs.

Main activities planned for 2008-2010

- Preparatory phase: Set up a task force and an organisational framework at sub-regional and country level
- Activity 1: Design and conduct a core regional training course for trainers in tourism management of natural heritage sites (one for managers, one for local nature guides)
- Activity 2: Design and conduct site specific training course
- Activity 3: Identify and design infrastructures required for developing ecotourism products
- Activity 4: Promote to private sector through fam trips

C.3. Mitigation of social negative impacts & promotion of responsible tourism practices

Project description *see link for detailed project description*

It is often said that *"tourism is like the fire it can cook the meal or burn the house"*. Would social adverse impacts of tourism be as spectacular and immediate as casualties caused by fire, there would be no hesitation in tackling them. But social negative impacts of tourism are more discreet and insidious; they can easily remain unknown and hidden as they often affect the poorest, until a breaking point is reached affecting the entire society.

These adverse impacts include human trafficking for tourism purposes, and sex tourism which unfortunately brings along its two tragic 2 sub components, the spread of HIV AIDS and child sex tourism (CST).

The GMS countries have taken a firm stand against CST as demonstrated again this year through the COMMIT regional seminar which took place last November. MTCO will support this program by offering its website as a platform to disseminate information.

Initially exclusively focussed on major adverse impacts, the MTCO has proposed to address as well, the overall issue of responsible tourism, with the aim of spreading best practices (social cultural and environmental) among tourism providers, by promoting those operators applying good practices and, among travellers including Asian as most of the time good practices manuals dos and don'ts are only published in English.

Main activities planned for 2008 - 2009

- Mitigate negative social impacts
  - Organise a think tank meeting with international organisations to identify how the MTCO could support and complement their actions.
  - Sensitise private sector through MTCO website, workshops;
  - Support fund raising activities, for translation of prevention materials into sub regional languages and, distribution
- Promote responsible tourism
  - Publication of the "socially responsible tourism guide" which is about to be completed under the ADB / MTDP loan and shall be published on the occasion of the GMS summit in Vientiane next March.
- Promotion of good practices & operators adopting good practices through MTCO website, seminars, workshops, participation to training courses of various institutions.

D. Pro-poor tourism program for Equitable Distribution of Benefits

Main objectives

To promote patterns of tourism development that help reduce the incidence of poverty and increase economic opportunities and incomes for the poorest through their empowerment.

Rationale

The overall GMS tourism strategy objective is to contribute to the MDG through tourism as such this project is a priority. Pro poor tourism is often confounded with CBT, which is only one pro poor strategy among others. Many initiatives are taking place in the GMS funded by various donors and supported by local governments, most concentrate on CBT or ecotourism projects.

Project description

D.1. Tourism initiatives to alleviate poverty

Brief Project description *see link for detailed project description*

If tourism is to become more pro poor – *one which provides significant economic opportunities to the poorest and less favored people (women) by empowering them, employing them and facilitate their economic initiatives (creation of SMEs) through tax incentives, micro credit, ect*.- countries must look at how mass tourism can become more pro poor. This approach is now being adopted with the development of value chain analysis.

Main activities planned for 2008-2010

- Preparatory phase:
  - set up a national task force in each country,
  - select one pilot project per country for implementation
  - assess PPT initiatives to extract best practices and lessons learnt,
- Activity 1: Establish a provincial task force
- Activity 2: Conduct a sub regional workshop on a subject to be determined with PPT actors
- Activity 3: Write proposal and fund raising
- Activity 4: Project implementation with optimum participation of local communities including women

E. Private sector participation

Main objectives

To facilitate private sector small and medium enterprises participation and partnerships in planning, investment and marketing.

Rationale

The development of SME's is the backbone of a wide spread development in the region, as small local investors are not enough represented in quality operations. If tourism is to be profitable to the countries there is a necessity to facilitate the national private investments in small businesses, indeed the stronger and more numerous are the SMEs, the better and sounder is the economy of a country. SMEs belonging

to numerous small entrepreneurs will better spread benefits than major companies regulating the market and concentrating the benefits in the hands of a few individuals or families.

E.1. Facilitation of SME's investments in Tourism related infrastructures

Brief Project description *see link for detailed project description*

The purpose of the overall project is to encourage and develop facilitation programs, such as regulatory reforms, tax incentives, to foster the creation of SMEs, introduce measures that would improve the small enterprise investment and business environment throughout the region.

MTCO will attempt to build up on existing and past initiatives (GMS BF, 2007 SME forum).

Main activities planned for 2008-2010

- Preparatory phase:
  - Set up a sub regional (and/or national) SME committee /task force
  - Liaise with existing partners (IFC, GMS BF, etc.) to identify ways to improve SMEs participation in planning, investment and marketing.
- Activity 1: Publish information on existing incentives, mechanisms for SMEs
- Activity 2: Promote SMEs enforcing good practices

F. Cross-border facilitation

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Main objectives

To address impediments to travel to and within the GMS, improve facilities and services in particular information at borders

To facilitate visa requirements and delivery, with the ultimate aim of a common GMS visa.

Rationale

Three projects were declined under this program;

"GMS wide visa scheme" – "Upgrading of keyborder check points" and - "Information databank and monitoring of progress on travel facilitation initiatives".

Most issues related to borders and border crossing depend on the immigration services, Ministries of Interior or / and Foreign Affairs, and in some areas border limits are not yet clearly drawn, the MTCO cannot play a major role on these issues as a result, project related to GMS single visa was dropped out.

Ministries of tourism can play a role by advocating in favor of easier visa delivery or even visa exemption for high yield markets (for example), as it has been proven all over the world that visa free destination optimize their tourists' arrivals; the example of Thailand speaks by itself.

The MTCO will publish regularly updated information on visa requirements through its web site and is available to provide technical assistance. It will also help to develop proposals for fund raising, in particular for the improvement of information services at border check points at countries request.

Main activities planned for 2008-2009

- Creation of a data base
  - Currently being created information on border check points and visa regulations will be posted on MTCO website as soon as it is completed.

Comment [U5]: To visa info

- Upgrading of key border check points
  - MTCO will follow up projects' advancement in each country and in particular the activities included in the ADB MTDP in VietNam, Cambodia and Lao PDR.

G. Tourism-related infrastructure for Sustainable tourism development along corridors and circuits

Main objectives

13 multi countries corridors and circuits were identified and included in the strategy; these tourism related infrastructure development projects are meant to better spread tourism benefits between the countries, within each country and within the population.

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Rationale

Corridors are at the core of the GMS economic cooperation program, they considerably changed the face of the sub region by improving the connectivity between the different countries. To these corridors were added tourism circuits of major importance such as the Emerald Triangle or the Heritage Necklace which have been developed by Thailand previous to the elaboration of the TS.

As MTCO had to limit its focus, 6 projects were selected among the 13 proposed in the TS.

G.2. North South corridor

G.3. East West Economic Corridor

G.4. Emerald Triangle

G.5. Southern Economic Corridor

G.6. Green Triangle

G.7. Heritage necklace

The Southern Economic Corridor, the Green Triangle are in the category 2 projects for midterm implementation but they are to be supported as soon as 2008, appreciating the significant progress in

particular by the creation of trilateral task forces by the respective lead countries, Cambodia and Viet Nam. The North South corridor led by Yunnan and the East West Economic Corridor led by Lao PDR are also included in category 2 projects but no task force has been created yet. Some proposals have been prepared on the Heritage Necklace

Brief Project description *see links above for each project detailed description*

Plan and develop tourism infrastructures by adopting an integrated tourism development plan combining management, capacity building, socio economic and cultural needs, infrastructure (linking tourism zones to the main sub regional transportation network by secondary and feeder roads to towns and villages with a tourism potential access) and superstructures (building small scale environmental and social support infrastructures within towns and villages identified, as well as natural and cultural site heritage conservation management infrastructures at the key sites.) and attracting private investors.

Main activities planned for 2008/2009

For all corridors the approach will be similar, depending on the progress already made for each project. More detailed action plan will be discussed with the task forces.

- Preparatory phase: Set up a regional task force (preferred to working group in order not to confuse with the GMS tourism working group)
- Activity 1: Write terms of reference for technical assistance (TA) to conduct a survey of the routes to identify potential tourism sites and requirements to develop them (infrastructures, superstructure, services, training needs, etc.)
- Activity 2: Fund raising for TA
- Activity 3: Start TA

For the Emerald Triangle as many activities have been conducted already under the leadership of Thailand, mainly on soft actions (capacity building, marketing), the first task will be to decide what are the priorities during the next task force meeting planned in April 2008 between the Ministry of Tourism of Thailand, partner countries and the MTCO.