



# HISGUT KALIBUNGAN

## HURUHISGUTAY 7 POLICY BRIEF

10 September 2021

### SUMMARY

*Huruhisgutay 7* highlighted experiences in advancing sustainable tourism in Region 8 and other parts of the country. In response to the call for the promotion and implementation of sustainable tourism, environmental conservation, and sustainable development, the following recommendations were derived from the discussion in this last episode of the *Hisgut Kalibungan* series:

- Strictly implement existing policies on sustainable tourism and environmental conservation.
- Enhance proper waste management.
- Implement a sustainable purchasing policy.
- Adopt best practices in environmental conservation and sustainable tourism.
- Ensure proper coordination and collaboration between and among the local government units (LGUs), line government agencies (LGAs), stakeholders, and the host community in planning for and implementing sustainable tourism initiatives.
- Conduct relevant studies that will guide policymakers and implementers in the proper management and development of tourism sites.
- Build the capacity of host communities especially in tourism and tourism-related livelihood management and environmental conservation.
- Maximize the utility of online platforms like social media to amplify efforts to promote sustainable tourism and boost local tourism activities especially during the pandemic.

### INTRODUCTION

Eastern Visayas has many natural formations like karst landforms, beaches, mangroves, upland forests, and waterfalls that draw tourists and provide cultural and recreational services and livelihood opportunities to locals. Because of their distinct ecological features and economic potential, some natural tourist destinations in the region have been classified as protected areas (PAs). Aside from the natural formations, manmade attractions like heritage sites, farms, parks, and other establishments that offer accommodation, food and beverages, shopping, and entertainment and recreation services also contribute to the tourism economy of Region 8.

Tourism as an economic driver puts pressure on natural resources through overexploitation, especially in areas where resources have become scarce, causing serious environmental, economic, social, and human health impacts. Thus, protecting both natural and manmade resources is vital in sustaining and enhancing the tourism industry and economy of the region and the country as a whole. At the same time, it is important to safeguard local customs, knowledge, and traditions and the rights of indigenous peoples (IPs) and communities to preserve local culture and authenticity. Sustainable tourism can help policymakers and stakeholders achieve these goals. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism “takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.” It seeks to balance the social, economic, and environmental aspects of tourism to ensure sustained development.

There are certain challenges affecting the implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives at the regional and national levels especially during this pandemic. These challenges can be addressed through a multi-stakeholder approach where the community, national government agencies, local government units, and the private sector work hand-in-hand to formulate and implement informed policies for the conservation of tourist destinations and for improving the living conditions of tourism-dependent locals and host communities through the creation of appropriate community-based biodiversity-friendly and culturally-sensitive livelihood opportunities.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The final episode of *Hisgut Kalibungan* entitled “*Huruhisgutay 7: Sustainable Tourism in Eastern Visayas*” focused on the importance of promoting and implementing responsible or sustainable tourism. Ms. Eylla Laire M. Gutierrez, Research Manager of the Asian Institute of Management’s Andrew L. Tan Center for Tourism, led the discussion with Department of Tourism Eastern Visayas Regional Director Karina Rosa S. Tiopes, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Regional Office 8 Conservation and Development Division officer-in-charge Mrs. Marissa N. Solite, and Leyte Normal University College of Management Dean Dr. Solomon D. Faller. In response to the need to amplify efforts to boost sustainable tourism in Eastern Visayas and the Philippines as a whole, they articulated the following recommendations:

1. **Strictly implement existing policies on sustainable tourism and environmental conservation.** It is important for tourism service providers to firmly implement local ordinances and national laws on sustainable tourism and environmental conservation. Well-informed and well-trained staff and owners of tourist establishments can implement sustainable tourism strategies and help educate visitors and host communities. Local legislation on tourism development and management can also be revisited to update existing policies and formulate new policies in line with sustainable development.

2. **Enhance proper waste management.** Pursuant to the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, tourism service providers should enhance material recycling and proper waste management in order to reduce the production of solid waste and wastewater. For example, government-owned and controlled tourism facilities and establishments and those managed by private business owners may adopt policies to reduce solid waste production, such as banning use of non-environmentally acceptable products, especially single use plastics, in their daily operations.
3. **Implement a sustainable purchasing policy.** This approach gives priority to local, natural, recycled/recyclable and seasonal products. Aside from reducing waste, promoting use of traditional or locally available products and indigenous and biodegradable materials showcases local culture and traditions. Partnerships between tourism operators, host communities, and local non-government organizations can be established for jobs development and/or employment.
4. **Adopt best practices in environmental conservation and sustainable tourism.** This recommendation can be operationalized through exposure to appropriate, cost-effective, and highly efficient tourism and environmental conservation strategies from all over the world. Local tourism service providers and host communities may then be able to formulate better strategies that suit their communities. For example, best practices in architecture and design such as the Zero Carbon Resorts (ZCR) project can be explored. The project aims to reduce energy consumption, replace inefficient technologies, and redesign buildings and systems.
5. **Ensure proper coordination and collaboration between and among LGUs, LGAs, stakeholders, and the host community in planning for and implementing ST initiatives.** This will help resolve issues in the management and maintenance of tourism sites and facilities. At the same time, harmonized implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives will help address lack of human and fiscal resources.
6. **Conduct relevant studies that will guide policymakers and implementers in the proper management and development of tourism sites.** Studies focusing on determining the carrying capacity of tourism destinations especially in protected areas, and cost-benefit analyses of economic development projects that aid the tourism industry, are very much needed. The results from these studies will help local policymakers and stakeholders come up with appropriate and research-based decisions in support of sustainable tourism and sustainable development.
7. **Build the capacity of host communities especially in tourism and tourism-related livelihood management and environmental conservation.** Tourism service providers, host communities, national government agencies, and tourists must be well informed about the ill effects of irresponsible tourism and other destructive economic development activities attached to tourism. Corollarily, they should be educated about the importance of environmental conservation and sustainable development in the process of implementing sustainable tourism initiatives.
8. **Maximize the utility of online platforms like social media to amplify efforts to promote sustainable tourism and boost local tourism activities especially during the pandemic.**