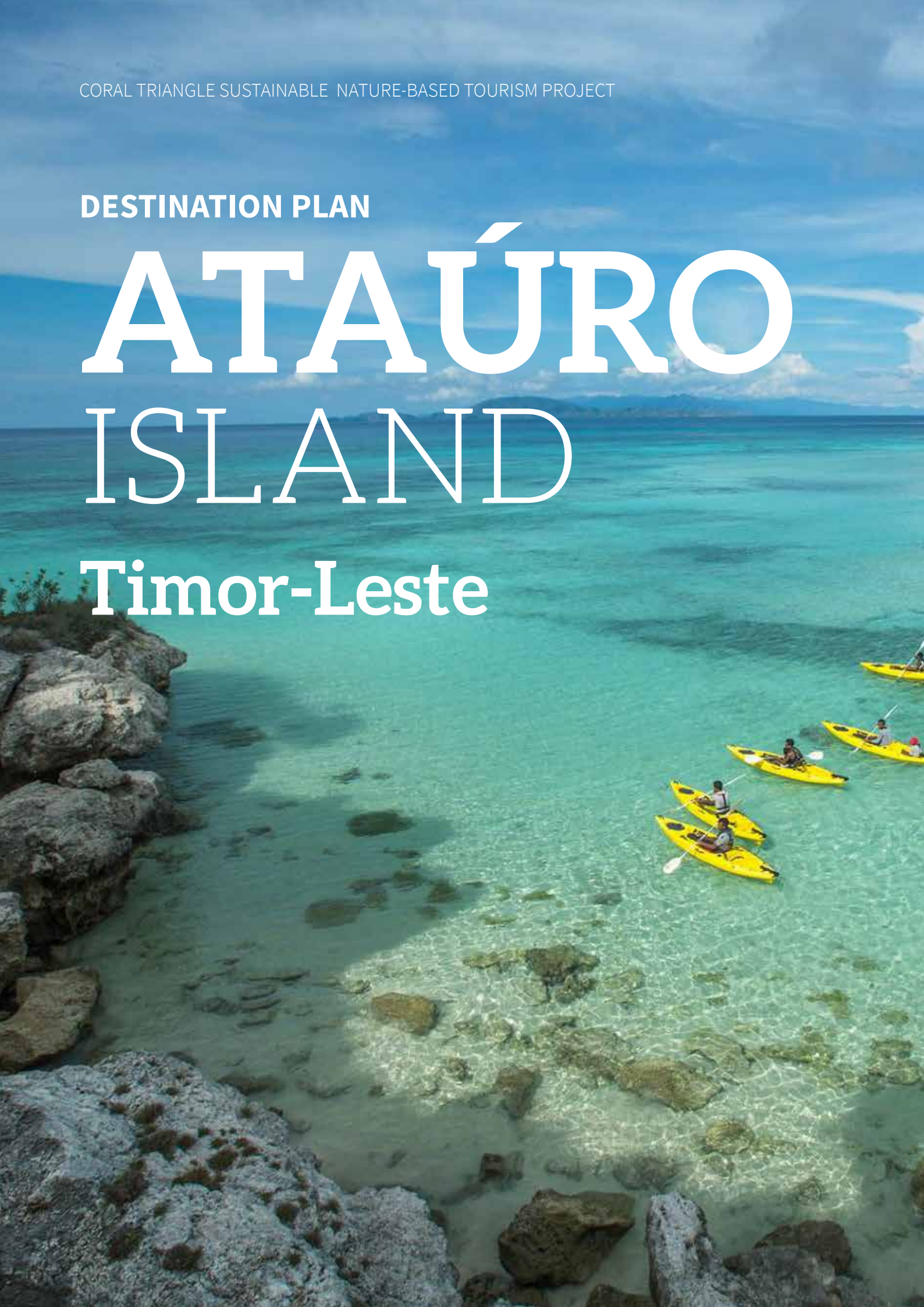


CORAL TRIANGLE SUSTAINABLE NATURE-BASED TOURISM PROJECT

DESTINATION PLAN

# ATAÚRO ISLAND

## Timor-Leste



DESTINATION PLAN

# ATAÚRO ISLAND Timor-Leste

Acknowledgement: The tourism consulting team travelled across Ataúro Island and held meetings in Dili during the three consultation visits. We met with many people from the communities and businesses of Ataúro Island, representatives of the Government of Timor-Leste, non-government organisations and development agencies as well as the Ataúro Island Sub-District Administrator and Chefe de Sucos. We wish to acknowledge and express our deep gratitude for their generous and invaluable contribution of time, experience and knowledge shared with us during this project, including providing feedback on the draft Destination Plan. Significant logistical support was provided by the Coral Triangle Foundation, MV Ataúro and Barry's Place, for which the consultant team was very grateful.

Cover Photo - © Kevin Austin Coral Triangle Heritage Foundation



**CORAL TRIANGLE**  
INITIATIVE  
ON CORAL REEFS, FISHERIES  
AND FOOD SECURITY



**Australian  
Aid** 



# CONTENTS

## **1. Introduction**

## **2. Site selection in Timor Leste**

## **3. Destination Plan**

- Target Market
- Vision and Site Positioning
- National and Provincial Government's Planning Framework
- Addressing Supply
  - i. Product and experience development
  - ii. Capacity initiatives
- Driving Demand – Marketing

## **4. Appendices:**

- Background on the Coral Triangle Sustainable Nature-based Tourism Project
- Consultation undertaken during the development of the destination plan
- Marketing models
- Blue Ventures' case study – recent developments on Ataúro Island



# 01

## INTRODUCTION







# INVESTING IN NATURE & ADVENTURE-BASED TOURISM IN THE CORAL TRIANGLE

## THE 2035 OPPORTUNITY



**Nature and Adventure-based Tourism (NABT) is forecast to be worth US \$1.46–US \$1.88 trillion per annum in Total Socio-Economic and Environmental Value to the Coral Triangle by 2035**

- Timor–Leste US \$1.9–2.2 billion
- The Solomon Islands US \$2.1–2.5 billion
- Papua New Guinea US \$11.9–13.8 billion
- The Philippines US \$174–220 billion
- Malaysia US \$595–770 billion
- Indonesia US \$674–871 billion



**The direct Economic Value NABT could provide to the 6 Coral Triangle Countries is forecast to grow to US \$159–US \$204 billion per annum**

- Timor–Leste US \$210–240 million
- The Solomon Islands US \$231–273 million
- Papua New Guinea US \$1.3–1.5 billion
- The Philippines US \$19–24 billion
- Malaysia US \$65–84 billion
- Indonesia US \$73–95 billion
- (Forecasts above from 2015 Baseline Analysis)



**Over the next 20 years, NABT’s Weighted Return on Investment (ROI) is predicted to average 14.5–16.5% across the 6 Countries (vs. 8.5–10% for Mass Tourism)**



**ROI could reach as high as 29% at sites of High Conservation Value or high potential for Nature and Adventure-based Tourism (vs. 19% for Mass Tourism)**



**This means Nature & Adventure-Based Tourism would outperform Mass Tourism by 60–65% on average, whilst delivering significant positive Socio-Economic and Environmental Benefits to over 105 million people**

The Key Findings above are based on modeling by 2iis Consulting using data from the UN Statistics Division, UNWTO, WTTC, OECD, TIES, UNEP and selected academic sources.





**Developing and Promoting Sustainable Nature-Based Tourism in the Coral Triangle** is an initiative being implemented by WWF through funding from the Australian Government. The initiative's goal is to assist the six countries of the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF) to develop and/or accelerate a long-term approach to more sustainable nature-based tourism in the Coral Triangle.

The long-term vision that guides the initiative is: **The Coral Triangle region is a renowned sustainable tourism destination with economic benefits flowing to communities, governments and private enterprise, providing a strong incentive to protect and sustain the regions natural environment.**

**The aims of the project are to:**

- Promote world class, high quality visitor experiences;
- Increase the value of tourism to local, regional and national economies;
- Enhance the role of marine protected areas in local communities and supporting sustainable livelihoods;
- Build support for protecting our natural and cultural assets, in particular the marine and coastal resources of the Coral Triangle.

The project aims to build a partnership between government, communities, tourism and conservation. Present Marine Protected Areas on Ataúro Island have been unsuccessful in the absence of economic value for resident communities often living in poverty. In late 2015, a baseline analysis of the current state of tourism in the Coral Triangle was prepared by Richard Plumpton of 2iis Consulting<sup>1</sup>.

The document outlined a roadmap for the future development of nature-based tourism as a socio-economic development pathway for the region. The baseline analysis has informed the development of the Destination Plan and included, among other things:

- Global trends in tourism and nature-based tourism;
- Tourism as a driver of socio-economic progress;
- Coastal and marine tourism;
- Risks relevant to tourism development; and
- Assessment of tourism models and the potential for nature tourism brands.

In terms of conservation values, recent research has suggested that Ataúro Island may hold the greatest levels of reef fish biodiversity on the planet<sup>2</sup>. Only two other areas – the provinces of North Sulawesi and Raja Ampat, both in Indonesia – are thought to support similar numbers of species. The research found an average of 253 reef fish per location, which significantly exceeded the previous record of 216, held by a reef in West Papua.

<sup>1</sup> The base-line analysis may be accessed at: [http://wwf.panda.org/what\\_we\\_do/where\\_we\\_work/coraltriangle/publications/?260690/Developing-and-Promoting-Sustainable-Nature-based-Tourism-in-the-Coral-Triangle](http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/coraltriangle/publications/?260690/Developing-and-Promoting-Sustainable-Nature-based-Tourism-in-the-Coral-Triangle)

<sup>2</sup> Jerry Allen and Mark Erdmann (2016 expedition) aimed to measure the levels of biodiversity in 10 dive sites around the island. Erdmann, a Senior Adviser to Conservation International, told The Guardian that "three of the 10 sites had more than 300 species of fish – a remarkable number, even by the standards of the Coral Triangle bioregion, which is home to more marine species than anywhere else on the planet; Atauro proved exceptionally rich." – see: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/17/atauro-island-timor-lemte-the-push-to-protect-the-most-biodiverse-waters-in-the-world>





Vision: A sustainable and low-impact tourism industry flourishes and supports vibrant communities, strengthens local economies and contributes to the conservation of the outstanding marine and coastal environment of the Coral Triangle.

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## Vision and guiding principles for the Coral Triangle sustainable destinations

The project has also developed a number of guiding principles, designed to ensure that destination planning and tourism activities are appropriate for the site. The guiding principles enable resilience and protect the point of difference for those sites within the Coral Triangle Sustainable Nature-based Tourism Project and have been endorsed by the communities and stakeholders involved in the project:

- **Conservation** of natural and cultural heritage values is paramount to the long-term sustainability of the region for its community and visitors;
- The **visitor experience** will be grounded in the culture and nature of the site;
- Planned growth in tourism will be respectful of **local culture**;
- **Community benefits** will be achieved through the delivery of tourism opportunities;
- **Protection of marine and coastal resources** will be improved through building awareness with the local community, policy officials and tourists/visitors;
- The **site's character** will be retained through effective design, planning and management of infrastructure; and
- **Development of new visitor experiences and infrastructure** should be informed by an understanding of the needs and expectation of the target market (visitor-centric approach) and involve robust and consultative master planning and feasibility analysis to ensure the sustainability of the initiative.

## Key elements of a Destination Plan

A Destination Plan (DP) is a framework for developing sustainable experiences for visitors. It identifies:

- The shared vision of the community and industry for tourism;
- How the site should be positioned in the eyes of visitors to achieve this vision;
- The signature experiences that can be used to support the positioning and attract visitors to the site; and
- Enablers to address challenges, gaps, opportunities and barriers.

The DP will provide a framework to assist the local community to pursue new opportunities for sustainable tourism experiences that support long term community benefits, and will provide the framework under which the community might consider permitting investment or partnerships for new tourism developments. It is not an exhaustive list of everything that should be done in terms of tourism.

It is a strategic approach to positioning the site and implementing a small number of projects that will make a difference in how it is seen by visitors and how it is better promoted to ensure long term sustainable tourism and economic and social benefits are realised.

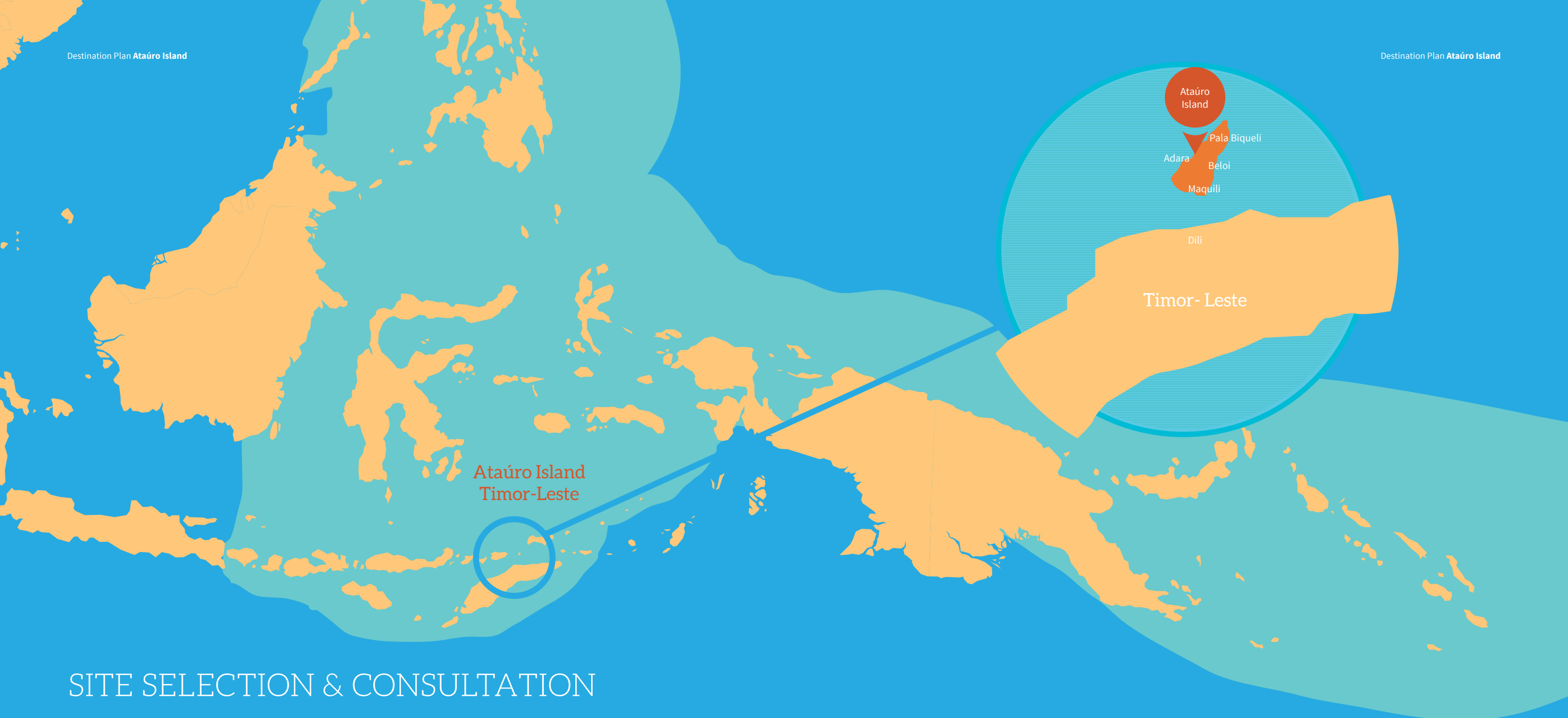




# 02

## SITE SELECTION IN TIMOR-LESTE





## SITE SELECTION & CONSULTATION IN **TIMOR-LESTE**

In December 2015, Dr Lida Pet Soede of Hatfield Consultants conducted a preliminary field trip to Timor-Leste. During which, Dr Pet Soede met with a number of national stakeholders, including the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Special Zones for Social Market Economy of Timor-Leste (ZEESM TL) and representatives of a number of not-for-profit organisations and the Ataúro and Oé-Cusse Districts.

Based on this field trip and subsequent discussions with WWF Pacific Office and other national stakeholders, the following site was identified as a priority site for the project: Ataúro Island.

Following the subsequent field visit by Lida Pet Soede, Janet Mackay of TRC Tourism and Carl Solomon and Charlotte Prouse of Destination Marketing Store in April 2016, which included meetings with Timor-Leste Government officials in Dili and stakeholders on Ataúro Island, it was confirmed that Ataúro Island would be the nominated site for Timor-Leste. Further details on the consultation process are included in Appendix B.

Ataúro Island is located around 35 kms North of Dili. Only 25 km long, Ataúro has a rugged mountainous centre and very narrow coastal plains. The highest mountain, Manukoko is considered sacred. Ataúro, mostly made of limestone, with some volcanic rock formations, has a diverse landscape and

vegetation, which varies from dry grassland and eucalyptus savannah, to semi evergreen tropical forest on mountain peaks and in gullies. It is fringed by one of the world's best coral reefs and is a very significant fish breeding ground. Two exceedingly deep straits – Ombai and Wetar, meet at the northern and southern ends of the Island.<sup>3</sup>

Ataúro is administered by the Government as a Sub-district of Dili. It has recently been designated as part of a special economic zone (ZEESM), which also encompasses Oé-Cusse. Divided into five areas (Sukos) – Makili, Makadade, Vila-Maumeta, Beloi and Biqueli, each is under the control of a Chefe de Suko.<sup>4</sup>

For the purpose of this Destination Plan, the site is referred to as Ataúro Island.

<sup>3</sup> This description is provided by Ataúro Tourism, see: <http://ataurotourism.org/information/about-atauro/>

<sup>4</sup> As above



An aerial photograph of a tropical beach. The top half of the image shows a sandy beach with several palm trees and lush green vegetation. A small boat is beached on the sand. The bottom half of the image shows the turquoise ocean with white waves crashing onto the shore. Two larger boats are in the water, one with a blue canopy and another with a white canopy. A small boat is also visible in the lower left. The overall scene is a serene tropical coastal environment.

# 03

## DESTINATION PLAN





The Nature and Adventure Travellers market is growing and is highly interested in nature and cultural-based tourism.

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## TARGET MARKET

The target market for the project is the Nature and Adventure Travellers market. This is a psychographic market, and is broadly based on the Global Experience Seeker market identified by Tourism Australia.<sup>5</sup> It prioritises consumer personality traits, values, attitudes, interests and lifestyles rather than simple demographic data, such as age, gender or family situation. They are the most relevant market for the Coral Triangle Sustainable Nature-based Tourism Project.

The *Nature and Adventure Travellers* market is growing and is highly interested in nature and cultural-based tourism. It is a niche, high-yield market, which suits the type of destinations included in the project while also being sympathetic to high-conservation value areas. It is important to remember these sites will not appeal to mass markets, such as the large cruise-ship market.



**The types of visitors** we want to attract are people who are:

Interested in people and new places

Respectful

Willing to spend for good quality experiences

Seeking authenticity

Adventurous and willing to try new things

Active and want to do lots of things

<sup>5</sup>Tourism Australia – Global Experience Seeker Fact Sheet: [http://www.tourism.australia.com/documents/corporate/Global\\_Exp\\_Seekers.pdf](http://www.tourism.australia.com/documents/corporate/Global_Exp_Seekers.pdf)





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It is a niche, high-yield market, which suits the type of destinations included in the project while also being sympathetic to high-conservation value areas.



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They are likely to be:

Well-travelled, educated and from an urban environment

Technically savvy and social media connected

Broad demographic (age, nationality, family composition)

Seeking quality accommodation at a range of price points



These visitors will be inspired by:

Sustainable environmental practices including tourism activities

Making a difference

Personal interactions with people

Below, we have defined the attributes and motivations of the Nature and Adventure Travellers market and provided a description of the market segments relevant to Ataúro island, Timor-Leste.

### NATURE AND ADVENTURE TRAVELLERS' MARKET

Nature and Adventure Travellers can be found among all age groups, income levels, and geographic locations. Within this segment there are commonalities in attitude to travel, personal development and everyday life that exist across countries, for example:

- Travelling is a big part of their life. As experienced travelers, they are often interested in travel for travels sake and see it as an important aspect of their lifestyle and well-being.
- Compared to the average long haul traveller, this market want to get off the beaten track and interact with local people to make friends, develop personal relationships and engage in the lifestyle.
- This market seeks self-discovery and education when travelling. As well as observing they also want to personally experience cultures and lifestyles different from their own. Exposure to such experiences results in a deep sense of personal fulfillment meeting their desire to grow as an individual. This accounts for their interest in indigenous culture.
- They look to challenge themselves physically, emotionally and/or mentally. By learning about different cultures and challenging themselves, the opportunity for self-discovery is enhanced.
- Nature and Adventure Travellers are drawn to destinations that are 'yet to be discovered' or are away from the standard tourist trail to experience the true natural and cultural surroundings - they have a preference for locations that are untouched rather than stylised tourist destinations.



Who do Nature and Adventure Travellers look like?



**ADVENTUROUS FAMILIES**

Holiday as an opportunity to reconnect with their children and disconnect from busy city lives and digital world

KEY INSIGHTS:

- Safe adventure
- Interaction with locals
- Exposure to different ways of life
- Packages to minimise logistics



**‘FLASH-PACKERS’**

Travel in couples or small groups of close friends to re-live their youth but more comfortably

KEY INSIGHTS:

- Unique and comfortable accommodation
- Options for activities
- Interaction with locals

Special interest markets: overlapping in terms of attributes and motivation but can be reached through targeted marketing efforts

- Diving
- Fishing
- Wildlife-watching, in particular bird and cetacean watching
- Trekking
- Expedition cruise
- Historic and cultural heritage
- Voluntourism (short-term volunteer projects)



**YOUNG ADULTS**

Experience new places a different way – looking for the point of difference that others haven’t found

KEY INSIGHTS:

- Unique accommodation
- Interaction with locals
- Options for activities including volunteering opportunities



**OLDER COUPLES**

Interested in a truly immersive and relaxing escape from the city-grind. Happy to be off-grid.

KEY INSIGHTS:

- Safe adventure
- Interaction with locals
- Packages to minimise logistics

# VISION AND SITE POSITIONING

The vision for all the sites within the project is: A sustainable and low-impact tourism industry flourishes and supports vibrant communities, strengthens local economies and contributes to the conservation of the outstanding marine and coastal environment of the Coral Triangle.

This vision was agreed with the community and stakeholders of Timor-Leste. It is a long-term vision for the area and underpins the positioning of the site.

The site’s positioning

It is critical to understand what differentiates each site, not just from other sites within the Coral Triangle, but from other marine destinations more broadly. It is essentially the site’s unique point of difference or competitive advantage.

This agreed Site Positioning is not about an advertising campaign, a new logo or even a tag line. Positioning is the engine that drives the way you offer and deliver your visitor experiences now and into the future. It underpins your products, services, creative approaches, communication and marketing. Positioning helps to shape the words and images we use to promote the site to the world. The more

consistently we all use those words and images, the stronger our message and the greater the cut-through in the tourism market.

An important aspect of the site’s positioning is to identify an emotional territory that resonates with the target market (Nature & Adventure Travellers’ Market) and invites them to experience more than just the attributes of your destination. This is important as many places around the world and across the Coral Triangle offer great diving, snorkelling and coral reefs. The positioning helps to define what your value-add is to those attributes.



**Inspired by hope with  
a desire to share their  
deep connection to the  
sea and a simpler way  
of life, Ataúro Island  
welcomes those with  
an intrepid spirit**



# NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT’S PLANNING FRAMEWORK

## Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011 - 2030

The Government of Timor-Leste has developed a Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for 2011 to 2030,<sup>6</sup> which identifies tourism as a key opportunity to underpin its long-term economic development. Importantly, the SDP recognises that Timor-Leste’s competitive advantage in tourism relates to the following segments:

- Eco and marine tourism;
- Historic and cultural tourism;
- Adventure and sports tourism;
- Religious and pilgrimage tourism; and
- Conference and convention tourism.

A number of insights from the SDP are relevant in relation to the Destination Plan:

- The tourism sector is at an early stage of development with limited but improving visitor infrastructure;
- There are limited human resources available to service a growing tourism industry, although there is a focus on education and vocational training to address the skills required to support the sector;
- Local communities will be supported to offer services to the visitor economy, including but not limited to accommodation, guide services and food;
- Partnerships with the private sector are seen as critical to attract investment for the development of tourism infrastructure and facilities;

- Creating a destination brand for Timor-Leste that reflects its unspoiled nature and cultural values is a critical first step towards marketing the destination globally;
- Tourism marketing will need to be dynamic to reflect the evolving development of the Timor-Leste tourism sector, including infrastructure, facilities and services; and
- There is an opportunity to leverage established international relationships with Australia, Portugal, Indonesia and other parts of ASEAN to focus marketing efforts before expanding globally.

The SDP identifies three zones as priorities for the growth of the visitor economy, specifically Eastern, Central and Western Tourist Zones. These zones leverage the existing infrastructure, facilities and services while also highlighting some of the outstanding attributes and experiences that would be attractive to international tourism markets.

Ataúro Island is located in the Central Tourist Zone and has been identified as a high priority for sustainable, nature-based tourism development:

“Dili will also be the gateway to the island of Ataúro where tourists can experience a true tropical island getaway with pristine beaches, rural villages, trekking and fishing. Ataúro Island will be promoted as a scuba diving centre and low impact eco-lodges will work with local communities to provide tourists with authentic and remote experiences. The sea between Dili and Ataúro is rich in large marine life, including whales and dolphins, and whale watching and leisure boat charters will be encouraged both from Dili and the rehabilitated Ataúro Island Port.”



© Kevin Austin Coral Triangle Heritage Foundation

The SDP also details environmental challenges facing Timor-Leste, including climate change and habitat loss. It outlines strategies to improve conservation and environmental protection. This is critical to underpin the Destination Plan for Ataúro Island. Specifically, the SDP identifies strategies directly relevant to marine and coastal conservation:

“To protect and conserve marine biodiversity and our beautiful coral reefs, Timor-Leste will continue to work with Indonesia and other governments in the region that have signed up to the Coral Triangle Initiative to safeguard the region’s marine and coastal biological resources for sustainable growth and the prosperity of current and future generations.”

To date, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture has commissioned a wide range of tourism-related projects, including identifying an inventory of key tourism sites within Timor-Leste, specifically arranged on experience themes, such as hiking, marine activities and cultural activities, among others. Likewise, an inventory of accommodation arranged by type or class of accommodation has also been undertaken.

ZEESM has produced a detailed spatial plan for Ataúro Island, which sets out zones for development and infrastructure. Specifically, this project is known as the **Land Use Plan of the island of Ataúro**. The process is still in study phase in order to reorganize and structure the island so that it can host sustained and sustainable tourism development, with environmental preservation as a major focus.

<sup>6</sup> A copy of the Strategic Development Plan can be accessed at:  
<http://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Timor-Leste-Strategic-Plan-2011-20301.pdf>



# STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

The table below provides a high-level summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to tourism on Ataúro Island:

+ STRENGTHS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Beautiful natural environment with some of the highest marine biodiversity in the World</li><li>Clear water and excellent diving/snorkeling</li><li>World class whale, dolphin and marine wildlife experiences</li><li>Committed operators and high quality information provided online by the Ataúro Tourism Association (ATKOMA)</li><li>Community care for the marine environment</li><li>Proximity to Dili, Australia and Indonesia and potential for the wider Timor and Wetar seascape</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Regular access by ferry and other operators from Dili</li><li>Unspoiled nature of the island’s community</li><li>The link between economic values for poverty alleviation through conservation and sustainable tourism is increasingly understood by communities</li><li>Attractive investment incentives</li><li>Genuine community experiences</li></ul>
- WEAKNESSES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lack of community awareness of the economic, environmental social heritage opportunities tourism presents</li><li>Unsustainable coastal road construction (limited environmental impact assessment, engineering or bio-engineering)</li><li>Treacherous waters in windy and strong current conditions</li><li>Food offering</li><li>Diversity of accommodation</li><li>Lack of standards, especially hospitality and safety</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Communications infrastructure</li><li>Lack of small-scale infrastructure to support marine-based tourism</li><li>Mosquito born viruses such as dengue and malaria</li><li>Limited air services competition from Darwin, Bali and Singapore</li><li>Challenges with land tenure and agreements with the communities</li><li>Erratic fuel prices and challenges for boat maintenance</li></ul>

- WEAKNESSES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Tourist visa to Timor-Leste</li><li>Water and sanitation</li><li>Heavy fuel generators and proposed industrial desalinization, limited renewable energy incentives</li><li>Domestic plastic consumption and marine debris</li><li>Slash and burning, free ranging goats, pigs and other animals impacting on watershed catchment health</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No land law for conservation, economic development and investment.</li><li>Low health services and no dive medicine facilities on the Island or mainland</li><li>Communities in the Northern Protestant half of the Island presently unable to provide tourism services on Sundays</li><li>Extremely low production of vegetables and fruit on Ataúro Island</li></ul>
✓ OPPORTUNITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Swimming with marine wildlife</li><li>Further development of handicrafts and other creative activities</li><li>Additional nature based accommodation (range or style of accommodation)</li><li>Growing local produce for local community and visitors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Additional conservation tourism projects (voluntourism initiatives)</li><li>Community-based dive tourism, spa and wildlife watching, replacing unsustainable fishing and terrestrial livelihoods</li><li>Tourism development brokered locally managed protection and heritage areas</li></ul>
! THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Unsustainable livelihoods, development and over development</li><li>Aging community and young people leaving the island</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Competition from other Timor-Leste destinations</li></ul>

In 2016, Ataúro Island was included in **the Global 100 Green Destinations** – see: <http://greendestinations.info/top100-2016/?dest=atauro-island>. The awards celebrate the efforts of tourism destinations’ responsible and sustainable tourism initiatives.

Nominators had to provide extensive information on the destination and on its efforts to make itself and its stakeholders more sustainable for the benefit of visitors, its local communities and the world. Information had to be provided about the extent the destination complies with the 15 core criteria of the Green Destinations Standard. This is an accolade for Timor-Leste that helps to positively position Ataúro Island in the nature and adventure tourism market.



# ADDRESSING SUPPLY

In consultation with the community and stakeholders, the following experience themes have been identified for destination development and planning:

- 1. Conservation through Stewardship
- 2. Experience Village Life
- 3. Adventure into the Coral Triangle

Underpinning these themes is a commitment to the conservation and protection of the marine and coastal resources of the destination; an appreciation

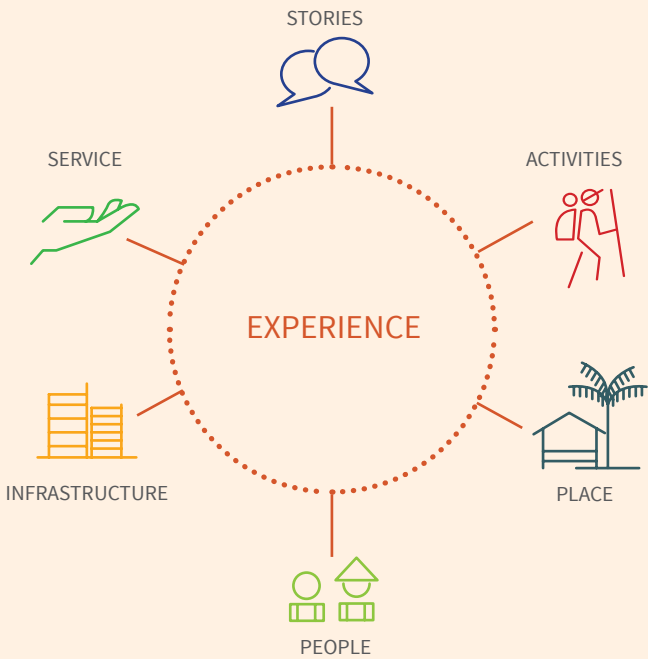
of the importance of marine and coastal resources to community well-being and livelihoods; and a practical understanding of sustainability.

In line with the priority for product development and investment, there are a number of recommendations relating to:

- Signature and supporting experiences
- Enablers - opportunities, gaps & challenges

Experiences are generated by an interaction between visitors, places and people. One half of the interaction comes from the area, and can include activities (guided and self-guided), the natural or cultural setting, storytelling or interpretation, information (before, during and after the visit), infrastructure and facilities, and the customer service received along the way. They represent the key ingredients and can be managed and changed to create better or new experiences.

The recommendations are based on a consideration of all the elements that contribute to high quality visitor experiences as outlined in the following diagram:



# PRODUCT & EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT



## Conservation through Stewardship

The contribution of visitors and the local community to conservation, which supports the outstanding marine and coastal resources of the Coral Triangle, in particular recognising that these are sites of high conservation value.

### Theme 1: Conservation through Stewardship

The Ataúro Island community is making considerable progress in conservation of its marine resources through a range of initiatives. The island is surrounded by outstanding, biodiverse waters, rich in fish, marine mammals and both soft and hard coral species. The opportunity exists to extend the community stewardship and celebrate the success of village programs through engagement of visitors in a range of conservations programs that contribute both human resources and a financial contribution to long-term conservation of the marine environment.

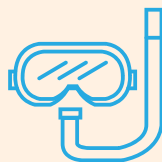


## Experience Village Life

It is the simplicity of village life that is so attractive to visitors along with the opportunity for genuine, authentic engagement with the local community.

### Theme 2: Experience Village Life

It is the simplicity of Ataúro Island that is attractive to the visitor, and the sense of being part of the community. With limited numbers of tourists, and a geography that encourages access on foot and by boat, the visitor is regularly passing through villages and able to interact with the community in an informal way. Experiences that offer visitors the opportunity to meet with the local people, share their stories and understand their way of life will be attractive to visitors with the values the island community is seeking to attract and as such will enrich the visit. The distinctive culture of the island and the connections from the mountains to the sea will be important elements of this experience.



## Adventure into the Coral Triangle

At the heart of the Coral Triangle Sustainable Nature-based Tourism Project is the opportunity to connect visitors to and immerse them in the outstanding marine and coastal environment.

### Theme 3: Adventure into the Coral Triangle

The Island's landscape is enticing to people with an interest in walking, kayaking, mountain bike riding and a range of trails are in existence. Likewise, the Island's rich marine biodiversity, including amazing coral reefs and an array of marine species, large and small, with many villages accessible from the sea, offer outstanding opportunities to explore the island by boat. Growing these opportunities could attract a different market seeking adventure and looking for experiences that link the marine with the terrestrial environment.



Signature Experiences


THEME	SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES	SPECIFIC ENABLERS
<div></div> <div>Conservation through stewardship</div>	<p><b>Produce Trail and Cookbook</b> Ataúro Island is the perfect environment for growing a range of local tropical produce and is surrounded by a supply of seafood. Local communities could contribute and gain from the visitor economy if the food offered to visitors was used to showcase the natural resources of the island. The development of an Ataúro Island cook book could serve a number of purposes including encouraging the community to produce distinctive recipes from the island, improving the food on offer, providing visitors with a product they can buy that includes local characters, stories and photography that supports marketing efforts. The trail concept could be developed along with the Experience Village Life theme to grow the reputation of Ataúro Island as a sustainable produce destination and support the agricultural industry on the island.</p> <p><b>Tourism and research dive industry</b> Growing and leveraging the dive sector and the exceptional biodiversity of Ataúro Island through sustainable tourism ventures that deliver research benefits for the island whilst offering marine tours and diving experiences for guests has potential for growth on Ataúro.</p> <p><b>Marine wildlife calendar, annual migratory whale and dolphin festival and interactive app</b> Ataúro Island is home to extensive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Local produce cookbook (including sustainable seafood)</li><li>Link to programs such as <i>Pack for a Purpose</i><sup>7</sup></li><li>New partnerships to deliver conservation volunteering programs similar to <i>Blue Ventures</i><sup>8</sup></li><li>Development of a wildlife app (similar to Wild About Whales) working with local tourism vessel and dive operators – see: <a href="http://www.wildaboutwhales.com.au/app">http://www.wildaboutwhales.com.au/app</a>)</li><li>Wildlife Calendar including annual events such as a whale, dolphin festival, Ataúro heritage stewardship awards, photography and film competition.</li><li>Creation of sustainable enterprises that will broker locally managed terrestrial and marine heritage areas</li></ul>

THEME	SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES	SPECIFIC ENABLERS
<div></div> <div>Conservation through stewardship</div>	<p>marine wildlife, many of them migratory. There are a number of species such as dolphins that can be viewed year round, but others come at different times of the year. Ataúro is fast becoming known as one of the world’s best places to watch blue whales including contributions from vessel operators and tourist to global marine wildlife research.</p> <p>Whilst an unexpected encounter with wildlife enhances the visitor experience, visitors can be encouraged by a calendar that advises of the range of species and the broad timeframe they may be viewed year round. This encourages appreciation of the diversity of species and the value of visiting the island at different times of the year. To enhance the interaction for visitors, an app similar to the Wild About Whales app could be developed to record sightings of iconic species, provide tips for wildlife viewing and share conservation efforts and stories. This could also contribute to a ‘citizen science’ program.</p> <p><b>Existing experiences</b> Blue Ventures – a science led marine conservation program – this program would be enhanced through the development of the wildlife app (especially through volunteers using or uploading data to the app to enrich the content) and should be promoted as part of this theme (see also footnote 8). Blue Ventures</p>	Refer to the previous page

<sup>7</sup>Pack for a Purpose is a not-for-profit initiative that encourages travellers to use available space in their luggage to provide supplies to communities they visit. For example, Dive Munda in the Solomon Islands participates in this program. See more at: <https://www.packforapurpose.org/>

<sup>8</sup>Blue Ventures is not-for-profit, that works with coastal communities and volunteers from around the globe to develop transformative approaches for catalysing and sustaining locally led marine conservation. For example, they have a program run from Beloi on Ataúro Island in Timor-Leste. Refer to Appendix D for a case study on latest developments with Blue Ventures in Timor-Leste – to find out more about Blue Ventures visit: <https://blueventures.org/>



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<div></div> <div>Conservation through stewardship</div>	<p>is further developing the product it offers through partnerships with villages to develop homestays for the dive guests.</p> <p>The Coral Triangle Foundation has established a number of sustainable enterprises to build the heritage of local communities in Northern Ataúro, Biqueli Suco including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• package holidays for other enterprises and communities through Coral Triangle Holidays.</li><li>• a passenger vessel operating ferry services between Dili and Ataúro as well as tour, whale, dolphin, wildlife watching, research and charter services</li><li>• a live-aboard dive and research vessel will also join the Coral Triangle Foundation in 2017.</li><li>• sustainable seafood value chain production and high value coconut production (cold pressed extra virgin oil, baked chips and chunks, juice, flour, ice cream, activated charcoal and other food, body and health products).</li><li>• Kendara Dive Resort &amp; Spa that will broker the first locally managed protected marine and watershed catchment area.</li></ul>	<p>Refer to the previous page</p>




THEME	SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES	SPECIFIC ENABLERS
<div></div> <div>Experience village life</div>	<p><b>Additional accommodation</b></p> <p>The current range of accommodation that includes homestays, village stays, guest houses, lodges and one hotel could be improved through the addition of at least one small scale but higher-end eco-lodge.</p> <p><b>Village cultural activities</b></p> <p>Village visits can be improved where the visitor has the opportunity to engage with the community and observe or participate in an activity that is everyday life for the village. This might include handicraft production, painting, local music and instrument making or performance. Activities such as these also offer visitors the chance to buy local works which contributes to the economy but also enables the visitor to share their memories with friends back home. Training and support could be provided to extend the range of handicrafts available on the island as well as those that can be exported for sale in Dili or beyond. Other areas that could benefit from professional advice include product presentation, pricing, retail distribution and business mentoring.</p> <p><b>Village guides</b></p> <p>A simple walk in a village with a local community member can be a memorable experience for the visitor. It offers the opportunity to see everyday life and have it explained. There can be added value with local produce being offered, handicrafts for sale, a visit to the school. Ultimately it comes down to the interest of a community in having visitors come</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Master planning required to assess feasibility, identify infrastructure and activity requirements and position the overall visitor experience</li><li>• Meet the locals - Improving access to villages and capacity for quality supply of art, handicraft, local produce and food</li><li>• Financing support for creation of small-scale village stay accommodation options</li><li>• Implement accommodation and hospitality standards</li><li>• Creation of a regular transport service point to point across the island</li><li>• Business support training through mentoring programs</li><li>• Agreement between resource owners and tourism operators on benefit sharing and responsibilities – to be negotiated at establishment of experience to minimise potential for conflict – this would address a key issue relating to land tenure</li></ul>



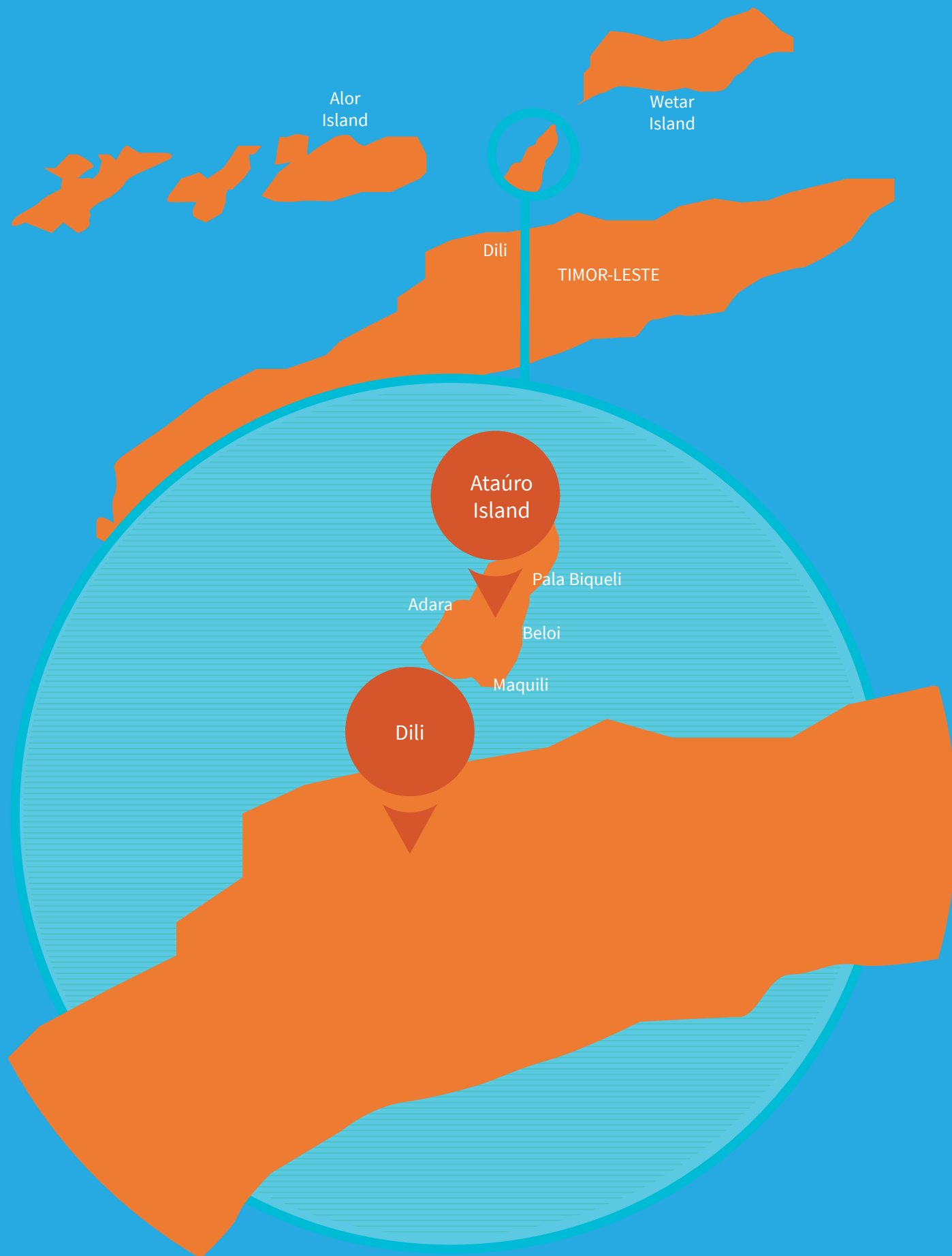


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<div></div> <div>Experience village life</div>	<p>into their life, and the opportunities they would like to provide. Working with villages to understand their aspirations for tourism, the impact it may have, and what they need to do will be a critical part of this.</p> <p><b>Existing experiences</b> The current range of accommodation does encourage the visitor to experience village life through home stays and small accommodation complexes. It is important to ensure that a consistent and reasonable standard of customer service, hygiene and safety is achieved across accommodation properties and cafés/restaurants and that the expectations of the visitor of the type of accommodation they have booked are met.</p> <p>Eight families within the Beloi village have formed an independent homestay association, and received hospitality and food service training from ETDA (East Timor Development Agency) in late 2016 to provide accommodation for Blue Venture guests.</p> <p>The company is planning to replicate the model elsewhere in Timor-Leste later in 2017, hoping to build the model to the point where it can represent a significant proportion of the accommodation sector on Ataúro - for volunteers and independent travellers alike.</p>	Refer to the previous page



THEME	SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES	SPECIFIC ENABLERS
<div></div> <div>Adventure into the Coral Triangle</div>	<p><b>Guided village-to-village kayak/ walk (3 nights)</b> With much of the island inaccessible by vehicle, several villages are only able to be reached by foot or boat. This creates a unique situation in villages and a distinctive story about the lifestyle on the island. There are some excellent opportunities for guided itineraries that enable the visitor to travel around the island including its highest peaks with overnight stays at three villages. Some sections could also be undertaken by kayak, and luggage could be transported between most villages. A guided experience would enable story telling along the way, would overcome language issues, and would enable introductions and ensuring appropriate responses to cultural issues by guests.</p> <p><b>Circumnavigate the island</b> Much of the island reef is easily navigable although the southern coast section has high cliffs with no access, and various aspects of the island may be treacherous under prevailing winds and currents. The opportunity to circumnavigate the island with overnight stays in villages will be attractive to some visitors. Establishing simple moorings on inaccessible sections of the coastline would improve safety and enable stopping points. A similar experience could be provided for sailing vessels including live-aboard ships if appropriate moorings were to be installed.</p> <p><b>Existing experiences</b> There are currently a number of walking trails identified on the Ataúro Tourism website, and there are a small number of well-known walks including to the island's peaks. Some kayaking is offered by accommodation businesses, but there are limited guided experiences, although it is noted that these can be arranged and are promoted on the Ataúro Tourism website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Master planning required to assess feasibility, identify infrastructure and activity requirements and position the overall visitor experience</li><li>• Meet the locals - Improving access to villages and capacity for quality supply of art, handicrafts and local produce.</li><li>• Development of transport routes, with key hubs and appropriate infrastructure (eg moorings).</li><li>• Develop more dynamic itineraries that include combination of terrestrial and marine experiences/ accommodation</li><li>• Strengthen online product information across key environmental and cultural tourism themes such as, nature, dive, fishing, customs and traditions, festivals and events – the Ataúro Tourism Association already provides good quality content on their website – see: <a href="http://Ataurotourism.org/">http:// Ataurotourism.org/</a></li><li>• Business support training through mentoring programs</li><li>• Agreement between resource owners and tourism operators on benefit sharing and responsibilities – to be negotiated at establishment of experience to minimise potential for conflict – this would address a key issue relating to land tenure</li><li>• Compliance with strict safety and equipment maintenance standards, especially given the high-risk nature of some of the experiences identified.</li></ul>





## High priority actions

There are a number of high priority actions that should be undertaken to create the signature experiences. These are addressed below.

### 1. Masterplan development

Master planning needs to be undertaken for signature experiences as a priority:

- Guided village-to-village kayak/walk
- Circumnavigate the island
- Additional accommodation that stewards the islands heritage experiences
- Produce Trail
- Whale, dolphin and wildlife watching
- Community dive centres and experiences

A number of considerations should be made with regard to the master planning process:

- Definition of the overall concept and experiences to be offered, including the mode of transport and type of adventure activities offered, involving detailed:
  - Consultation with the community
  - Consultation with research, conservation and heritage development partners where relevant
  - Assessment of demand and target market segments, including willingness to pay and potential price points – this is particularly important as there are a number of examples of businesses, including local eco-lodges,<sup>9</sup> that have not been successful due to insufficient demand. See also point 5c below
- Site assessment and feasibility analysis, which considers among other things, accessibility, costs of operations and maintenance, the range of accommodation options and facilities required to meet visitor expectations, access to and combination of nature, adventure and cultural activities as well as site or activity capacity and visitor risk analysis

- Mapping all existing trails to ensure optimal use of existing resources
- Services, infrastructure, facilities and interpretation required to support the experience(s)
- Development of a site plan and design guidelines
- Wildlife and indigenous experience management
- Business plan for operations

### 2. Accommodation supply

The current range of accommodation that includes homestays, village stays, guest houses, lodges and one hotel could be improved through the addition of at least one small scale but higher-end eco-lodge<sup>9</sup>. A site offering views of the marine environment/ seascape that has the potential to be an iconic image for the island would offer an aspirational development that would also encourage visitors to stay in other sustainable accommodation. The development could be a partnership between a village and an investor. Ideally such investments would use an investment stewardship business model to support diversifying coastal community economies away from unsustainable livelihoods and partnering in heritage development of the globally significant environment. Initiating an opportunity such as this will require the following considerations:

- Discussions with local community and government about suitable and available land
- Ensuring compliance with ZEESM spatial plan
- Pre-feasibility study (infrastructure, services etc) and consumer testing
- Investigation of partnership with community for use of site plus available experience opportunities
- Seeking private sector investors

Blue Ventures has been working with the Beloi community to successfully expand and improve the standard of homestay accommodation. A short case study is provided in Appendix D.

<sup>9</sup> For an insight into the latest trends relating to high-end lodges, see: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/top-10/seven-luxury-travel-trends-hotel/>



### 3. Develop supporting experiences with potential operators and the community

To enable the signature experiences, it is essential that a range of immersive, nature, adventure and cultural-based activities are developed. These can be delivered by the local community. They may involve a range of niche activities, which in themselves will be attractive to certain market segments. For example, those specifically interested in cultural immersion, trekking, and marine wildlife watching.

There are a range of specific activities that are integral to the delivery of the signature experiences, including:

- Guided tours to sacred or heritage sites;
- Guided tours to and enhanced interpretation for specific sites, such as mangrove kayaking;
- Opportunities for wildlife interactions, such as diving with the rich fish and reef biodiversity, whale and dolphin watching;
- Opportunities to taste local produce or participate in a local feast;
- Opportunities to participate in cultural festivals or events or experience local customs; and
- Specific options for day or night-time activities that could be offered to the live-aboard cruise market
- Unspoilt natural and cultural heritage landscapes, including those the visitor feels they are contributing meaningfully to such as indigenous and globally significant heritage.

These supporting experiences need to be structured to determine how each activity links to the delivery of a signature experience while also being undertaken independently. Determining the capacity, price point, commission structure, marketing and booking systems is essential to ensure that these experiences are market ready and enable a quality visitor experience to match and exceed expectations.

This requires a dedicated program to encourage resource owners and other members of the community to develop ideas for activities that can be packaged as part of the experience offer of the region. A key barrier to market entry is lack of capital and low levels of capacity to deliver such services. This could be addressed through a broader micro-financing scheme designed for local communities that provides a small amount of seed funding from an initial fund for

small-scale, community-based tourism initiatives. It could be matched by a five-year mentoring program, which enables the local business operator to access relevant services and expertise at the right stage in the business establishment and management cycle, from development of their business plan through to marketing and the structuring of contracts. It could also help to fund essential equipment, such as safety equipment (see following section on Essential infrastructure requirements).

There are two additional considerations: ensuring agreement with resource owners on access and a benefits-sharing model; and improved centralised marketing support, potentially through the **Ataúro Tourism Association**<sup>10</sup> (ATKOMA – refer below) or organisations such as the Coral Triangle Foundation. It should be noted that their existing website (<http://Ataurotourism.org/>) and support provided to local operators and enterprises are of a high standard.

Given the high reliance on sea transport, challenges for these initiatives include unreliable fuel prices (making it riskier to lock in or publish price points) and access to qualified mechanics to ensure equipment, such as outboard motors, is maintained and properly serviced. These risks need to be planned for in a basic operations plan. As demand grows for sustainable tourism experiences, such as those outlined above, it will stimulate demand for support industries, such as mechanics, produce suppliers (local farmers, fishers etc) or book-keepers. There is potential to include support services or industries in any micro-financing scheme.

### 4. Essential infrastructure requirements

There are a number of infrastructure initiatives that are essential to support sustainable tourism, the growth of the visitor economy and encourage new tourism operators to commence business in the region. The highest order priorities are outlined below:

- a. Develop graded tracks and trails maps for both terrestrial and aquatic trails.** These should highlight the best aquatic and terrestrial trails for kayaking, trekking and mountain climbing, or mountain biking. Integrate accommodation options and highlight key features or supporting experiences connected to the trail. This is particularly important given the rise of interest

<sup>10</sup> About Asosiasaun Turizmu Koleku Mahanak Ataúro (ATKOMA) – ATKOMA comprises local tourism providers and community representatives on Ataúro Island. It was formed in August 2016. It replaced Grupu Turizmu Ataúro, which commenced April 2014. ATKOMA's purpose is to increase employment and revenue from tourism for the communities of Ataúro, while at the same time protecting the environment and promoting local culture.



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in combination-adventure, which involves the inclusion of different adventure activities into an itinerary or as components of a signature experience. It is also important to outline the key risks or challenges associated with particular tracks or trails and any mitigation strategies, which may be as simple as what preparations the traveller should take or pointing out where it is unsafe to swim.

**b. Safety and natural disaster preparedness are areas for further development.** While this does not necessarily require investment in high cost, major infrastructure, it is essential to ensure the delivery of safe and quality visitor experiences. It is also important to enhance the perception and protect the reputation of the area with the target market segments. There are a number of key actions:

- Identify and communicate a set of safety standards required for nature and adventure-based activities as well as for commercial road and sea transport. These standards should be realistic for the setting and not so onerous that compliance is unlikely, particularly given the lack of capacity or resources for effective enforcement;

- Facilitate access for small-scale operators to funds (via low-cost loans or grants) for the purchase and maintenance of safety equipment. This is particularly important for the operators of sea transport vessels and those leading or guiding treks in challenging landscapes. This could include funds for the purchase of life jackets, communication equipment, emergency flares, first aid kits, a second outboard motor, sea survival training, accessing forecast technology etc; and

- Ensure that the risks associated with graded tracks and trails (see point 3a above) are communicated effectively to those who are interested in undertaking the activity (ie so they are aware of the need to realistically match their ability to the level required of challenge).

**c. Waste management and sanitation** is a growing problem across the world, particularly the increasing presence of plastics. It is essential

that the use (reduced use) and appropriate disposal, including recycling of plastics is given a high priority. Improving the amenity of local villages by reducing waste would enhance the perception of the region as a high-quality nature destination and contribute significantly to the protection of the marine and coastal environment. Once communities can identify with tourism opportunities and the relationship with their marine heritage, all members of the community could prevent the use of domestic disposable plastics and importation of unsustainable consumable packaging.

**d. Telecommunications infrastructure,** particularly to enable improved internet services that are essential for building awareness of the island’s product and experience offer and promotion.

**e. A network of moorings** would facilitate live aboard vessels although the number of safe and accessible sites for these is limited due to the Island’s narrow fringing reefs, tides, currents, drop offs and weather exposure. Any network of moorings would require a booking system.

**5. Improved Governance**

Ensuring good governance is a critical step towards the effective implementation of the Destination Plan. Governance is not the sole responsibility of Government. It involves many partners, including the tourism industry and relates to a wide range of issues, including genuine community and stakeholder engagement, enforcement of regulations, adoption of quality standards through to transparent and robust business practices and processes.

A major benefit of a strong commitment to effective governance is that it underpins more productive partnerships between Government, communities and businesses, providing greater certainty for all stakeholders and a solid foundation for investment. However, a common pitfall is to over-complicate processes in the name of governance. This should and may be avoided by focusing governance actions to achieve a desired outcome rather than on the process itself.

A number of specific governance issues have been identified in the region and are outlined below:

**a. Strengthening relationships** between the levels of government (that is, National and local-level Government) and between the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MTAC) and ZEESM as well as with the industry.

As noted above, ATKOMA comprises local tourism providers and community representatives on Ataúro Island. It is important that ZEESM and MTAC engages and maintains a dialogue with ATKOMA. Industry stakeholders and community representatives will contribute local knowledge and tourism expertise, provide content for promotions as well as represent the views and ambitions of the local community. Communication, including through social media about regular meetings should continue to be shared with the local industry and community and can become an important channel for ZEESM and MTAC to engage more effectively with the local tourism industry. ATKOMA already assists in coordinating tourism and business training opportunities on Ataúro Island. This should be continued to support greater business capacity and governance.

**b. Sustainability of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs),** which includes LMMAs (Locally Managed Marine Areas), requires a long-term commitment from the local community, non-government organisations and Government. In many cases, initial efforts to create MPAs are weakened over time due to funding limitations or over-reliance on un-funded support from local communities. A key consideration in establishing MPAs is to ensure appropriate governance structures and sustainable financing mechanisms are identified at the outset. For example, an opportunity arising from the CTSNT project is to identify a funding stream from sustainable tourism enterprises operating within and around MPAs to contribute towards conservation. This should be formalised through an agreement with the local community to enable resources for critical conservation activities. A benefit of this approach is that it provides content for tourism businesses to share with their visitors or potentially involve them in the conservation efforts more directly through seeking further

contributions or participating in volunteer conservation activities or citizen-science-style monitoring activities.

**c. Governance also extends to ensuring robust and transparent planning for the development of new experiences or visitor facilities and infrastructure.** This includes undertaking feasibility analysis, risk assessments (eg visitor safety) and master-planning to mitigate the risks associated with investment in visitor-related infrastructure. An important consideration is to ensure that planning for visitor facilities and infrastructure adopts a customer-centric approach. Inappropriate investment results in infrastructure or facilities that are either under-utilised or abandoned due to low demand, insufficient revenue to cover operating costs and/or poor return on investment. In undertaking the feasibility analysis, it is critical that the timing of the expected return on investment is understood. Building awareness of tourism products and experiences in the international market can take a number of years, which means that revenue in the first several years of operation is often insufficient to cover costs, especially when accounting for marketing and promotion. For example, simply building a new eco-lodge does not mean it will be filled with guests immediately and therefore there needs to be careful consideration given to how the operations and marketing will be funded until demand has grown to a break-even or better level. Another consideration is how to stage a project to better match the scale of operation with lower demand in the early years of operation and expand as demand grows.

**d. Ensuring proper governance structures and processes** are addressed in the **development of any collaborative booking site.** This includes responsibilities for all parties involved and requires clear and timely communication. For example, appropriate product delivery from the supplier (that is, ensuring that accommodation booked is available and of an expected standard); and the timely payment of revenue to local operators from the website administrator. A critical success factor is to ensure that standard agreements are put in place for each listing, clearly outlining the costs, commission structure, timeframes for delivery of information or remittance of revenue and responsibilities of suppliers.



- e. **Investment and land tenure.** As noted above, it is critical that any investment in the region is underpinned by an agreement with resource owners on access and a benefits-sharing model. This agreement will need to be developed in the context of the local land laws and ownership model, including providing clarity on who has the right to act on behalf of the community in any such agreement negotiations. By ensuring this is addressed at the outset, the risk of challenges to access and disagreements over benefit sharing are mitigated (although not eliminated).
- f. An important step towards improved governance in tourism on Ataúro Island would be to increase the participation of MTAC and the local community and tourism industry in the **Land Use Plan of the island of Ataúro**. In particular, to identify and prioritise infrastructure improvements and new experience development and capacity building opportunities. A key priority would be to integrate recommendations from this Destination Plan into the Ataúro Land Use Plan.
- g. Establishment of an **inter-ministerial coordination mechanism** would greatly assist coordination and implementation of the Destination Plan. This should involve key agencies such as ZEESM (lead responsibility), Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (Directorate General of Fisheries), Ministry of Interior (Maritime Police Unit, and Immigration), Ministry of Public Works, Transportation and Communication (National Directorate of Maritime Transportation), Ministry of Finance (Directorate General of Customs) and Ministry of State Administration (Dili Municipality).
- h. **Volunteer programs** can be challenging to establish, manage and resource for a number of reasons, including the sustainability of volunteer-provided services, visa or permit requirements, identification of appropriate volunteer activities, objectives or roles, volunteer safety and well-being and both attracting and managing people with the right expertise, skills

and attitude to contribute in a meaningful way to the host organisation. Other considerations include the tenure of the volunteer program and the availability of resources, including people to manage volunteers. However, there are also benefits that derive from volunteering, including the cost-effective contribution of needed skills and experience. From a tourism perspective, short-term volunteer programs (voluntourism) can attract a new audience, assist in building destination awareness and provide a critical mass of volunteers to deliver project outcomes or outputs more efficiently.

Governance is critical to the success of any volunteer program, including establishing clear objectives, identifying desired outcomes and undertaking robust planning and management. There are a range of credible organisations that directly manage or can provide assistance with the management of volunteer programs – given the complexity of volunteer recruitment, management and resourcing, it may be important to consider utilising these organisations where either the resources or capacity within the host organisation is insufficient to dedicate to ongoing volunteer management. A short case study on Blue Ventures, which has undertaken successful voluntourism programs in multiple developing countries is provided in Appendix D.

# CAPACITY INITIATIVES

## CORE CAPABILITIES & CAPACITY INITIATIVES:

- 1. Clear commitment to the protection of one of the world's most unique ecosystems and areas of high conservation value
- 2. Deep understanding of the importance of the environment to community well-being and livelihoods
- 3. Practical and shared understanding of sustainable tourism and its implications across all aspects of the supply-chain, from building design and location, local produce, water and energy consumption, transport options, etc

## 1. Conservation of the marine and coastal environment

- a. Clean-Up program – develop and promote an annual Clean Up campaign, focusing on the establishment of a pristine environment for the island and involving the community in initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of a clean environment and impact of waste.
- b. Work with communities to identify, declare and maintain additional Marine Protected Areas (potentially and preferably locally-managed MPAs, similar to the one established with the support of WorldFish around Adara village) and Protected Natural Areas. This action should leverage the already existing network of communities involved in community-based conservation and heritage development activities.
- c. A key challenge for Ataúro Island and Timor-Leste more generally is that of over fishing. The sustainability of fish populations is critical for food security and ecosystem health while also contributing to the beauty of the marine environment, which makes it more attractive

for sustainable tourism. This issue needs to be addressed through a mix of regulation, enforcement and education/awareness.

- d. Continue to partner with organisations such as Blue Ventures and the Coral Triangle Foundation to promote, partner and engage communities with marine tourism operators and guests (refer footnote 7 above). A case study on recent developments with the Blue Ventures’ program in Timor-Leste is included in Appendix D.
- e. International standards exist for vessel and human interactions with marine wildlife. In a destination that aspires to be seen as enhancing conservation and best practice sustainable tourism it is critical that these standards are recognised and adhered to by all operators. Develop and adopt a Coral Triangle Marine Tourism Quality Assurance Standard that aims to ensure visitor satisfaction, environmental and indigenous cultural heritage protection, reef resilience and tourism sustainability. Encourage operators to adopt these standards and recognise operators that provide outstanding service and stewardship (see further detail below at point 3e).
- f. The sustainability and impact of new developments – the impact of new developments is a potential challenge for Ataúro Island. This includes waste and wastewater management, erosion and visual amenity, among other things. The close proximity of the island’s villages to the reef system means that negative impacts are more likely to have a greater and more immediate effect. It is critical that the land use plan for the island consider carefully controlling development where it would have the greatest impact on the marine environment.
- g. Management of invasive species – another issue that is faced by the Coral Triangle region is the impact of invasive species. For example, the introduction of non-native fish can have a significant impact on local/endemic fish populations. It is critical that the Government of Timor-Leste commit to regulation and strict enforcement relating to invasive species.



**2. Community and tourism industry development**

a. If Ataúro Island is to benefit from tourism, there will need to be an ongoing program of training that builds on and extends with funding for the program already commenced by the East Timor Development Agency (ETDA)<sup>11</sup> with businesses. With limited previous interaction with tourists, and not having travelled beyond Timor-Leste, there will need to be capacity building in some communities ranging from the basic needs of tourists through to effective business planning and management.

A comprehensive program of training is recommended that is complemented by mentoring of individuals and communities as they progress from dreaming of a business to planning, implementing and running it as well as sustaining or expanding it. The program could be supported by seed funding for limited infrastructure. Study tours to other destinations would be a useful way of capacity building for people aspiring to run tourism businesses but with limited knowledge of tourist expectations.

Internships in businesses such as in Dili may also be able to be negotiated for aspiring tourism industry individuals. Critical areas of training include:

- Frontline staff/customer service
- Food safety/hospitality
- Marine services
- Experience and destination stakeholder development
- Business management
- Study tours
- Mentoring
- Internships

b. Business support and training – develop a five-year mentoring project, which connects local businesses to the right resources, skills and expertise throughout the business establishment and management phases. The importance of this scheme is to distinguish itself from one of training program and provide a longer-term relationship that encourages and fosters success for enterprise sustainability.

c. Establish a micro finance support program that enables SMEs to further develop their operation to appropriate standards through access to small-scale equipment, improved waste management and similar.

d. Support product distribution through a centralised on-line reservations system, including on-line development by tourism operators through targeted training. This should segment between various markets ie tailor the offer through itineraries and product packaging and bundling to match the key market segments’ motivations and expectations. Refer to the Governance Section above regarding some of the critical success factors for a centralised online booking system.

e. Ensuring the optimal visitor experience on Ataúro Island does not mean delivering on ‘western standards.’ People are coming here for something different. However, it is important that visitors are aware of what they can expect, and that visitor safety and conservation standards are assured. As a minimum, the following basic standards need to be determined and applied:

I. Customer service - Customer service charter for island businesses that identifies:

- what tourists can expect on the island in terms of customer service (eg welcome, reliable service, safety, opportunity to learn about the local culture)
- what communities may expect from tourists (eg respect for culture and religious protocols, not intruding in homes etc)

II. Risk management - A risk management/visitor safety plan for activity and transport businesses that includes requirements for:

- Current First aid qualification by all guides
- Carrying first aid kit

- Adequate numbers of serviceable life jackets on all vessels

- A minimum guide to client ratio relevant to the activity risks

- Appropriate training/expertise/certification of vessel operators and crew

- Vessel safety standards and operating procedures for inshore and offshore vessel services and operations

**3. Strengthening sustainable tourism**

a. Whilst initial training has been undertaken with communities on tourism and tourists, it is critical that if Ataúro Island is to welcome and be successful as a sustainable destination, communities continue to learn more about the implications of tourism and the needs of tourists. Importantly, each village needs to articulate its own vision for tourism and the extent to which it wishes to become part of the tourism offering in the knowledge of what this may mean for the community. Discussion needs to be facilitated around the benefits and challenges of tourism, how it may impact, and the limits to acceptable change for villages and the community.

b. Aligned with the above action is the importance of the island and the individual villages across the island having a common vision for tourism and the role of different communities and experiences in delivering that vision. The development of individual village/community plans that address how the place may contribute to tourism whilst ensuring a sustainable destination form an environmental, cultural and economic heritage point of view would be a key step in moving towards the vision.

c. Strengthen the supply of local produce, for example implementing a farm/sea to table program. As part of this initiative work with local communities to develop a local cookbook, utilising local produce. This should be promoted by local cooks and chefs, who could be invited to contribute a ‘signature dish’ to the cookbook.

In addition, cooking demonstrations could be hosted for the local community to increase engagement in the use and values of sustainable local produce.

d. Develop and implement basic sustainability principles and guidelines for building, maintaining and managing eco-lodges. Provide a grants scheme to provide assistance for local operators to source, acquire and use sustainable building materials and/or implement sustainability design features. This is particularly important in relation to waste water and sewage systems.

e. Develop sustainability criteria for tourism products, for example:

- i. Limits on game fishing, including both numbers and size of fish caught and/or potentially promoting catch and release;
- ii. Guidelines for wildlife interaction such as approach distances; and
- iii. Capacity limits such as guide to client ratios or number of visitors to particular sites at any one time.

f. Accreditation and standards – Voluntary minimum standards for guesthouse or ecolodge style accommodation could evolve and also support a system of classification and grading covering all accommodation styles. Implementation should be staged to facilitate compliance and be matched by a small grants scheme to provide access to essential capital investment in the most appropriate infrastructure or supply of equipment.

<sup>11</sup> ETDA has implemented hospitality and tourism training throughout Timor-Leste, including delivering specific programs in collaboration with the Ataúro Tourism Association local operators on Ataúro Island. Note – the website link is currently unavailable due to a virus.



# DRIVING DEMAND - MARKETING

Over recent years, it is likely that Timor-Leste has seen a modest increase in the number of international travellers. However, there is limited data available on visitor arrivals<sup>12</sup>. In 2014, the World Bank estimated that there were approximately 60,000 international tourist arrivals. In 2014, the Asia Foundation undertook a visitor survey to better understand the level of satisfaction and travel patterns, among other things, of international tourists to Timor-Leste<sup>13</sup>.

It is imperative that greater efforts are made to market Timor-Leste. A critical point is to ensure it doesn't attempt to compete with other Asia-Pacific destinations, such as Bali or Fiji, which provide a distinctly different and significantly more developed tourism offer to Timor-Leste. The Strategic Development Plan recognises that Timor-Leste's competitive advantage or point of difference is its nature and adventure-based offering. This aligns with the identified target market for the Coral Triangle Sustainable Nature-based Tourism project. As a result, Ataúro Island offers an outstanding opportunity to enhance the national tourism positioning by providing visitor experiences that safely and reliably deliver on the 'new and undeveloped' perception of Timor-Leste.

In 2016, the Government of Timor-Leste contracted a consultant under the auspices of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) to develop a Community Based Eco-tourism Marketing Strategy for the country. The strategy identified some key strengths and lead experiences for Ataúro Island, which reinforce or

support the recommendations contained within this Destination Plan. For example, it identified an opportunity to develop marketing activities to promote the vast natural beauty of Timor-Leste, specifically the marine life and associated experiences such as diving and snorkeling, culture and heritage tourism and mountain-biking. The strategy also identifies specific target markets that have the greatest propensity to choose Timor-Leste as a destination, such as the 16-35 year olds, soft adventure, women traveling in groups and extreme adventure seekers. These markets align with the target market segments identified within the Destination Plan. In addition, the strategy identified key challenges and barriers, such as accessibility, quality of accommodation on offer, the need for a critical mass of eco-tourism products that can be delivered year-round and lack of community 'buy in' into delivering experiences that an eco-tourism market is seeking. This Destination Plan provides a framework to address many of the issues, gaps and opportunities identified in the strategy.

As noted in the background to the Destination Plan (refer Appendix A), significant analysis has been undertaken with regard to the growing opportunity for sustainable tourism in the Coral Triangle. The analysis included a forecast of the opportunity to 2035 for the Coral Triangle overall as well as specifically for Timor-Leste, as follows:

REGION/ SCALE	Estimated Value in 2015			Forecast to 2035*		
	Total Tourism Market (US\$)	Nature-based & Adventure Tourism		Total Tourism Market (US\$)	Nature-based & Adventure Tourism	
		20% Share (US\$)	25% Share (US\$)		35% Share (US\$)	45% Share (US\$)
Coral Triangle (CTI-CFF Coundtries)	\$98.7 billion	\$19.7 billion	\$24.7 billion	\$454.3 billion	\$159 billion	\$204.4 billion
Timor-Leste	\$57 million (International value only)	\$11.4 million	\$14.3 million	Est. \$300 million (No Current Data)	Est. \$105 million	Est. \$135 million

As outlined above, the Nature and Adventure Traveller market in Timor-Leste is forecast to be worth between \$105 million to \$135 million by 2035, an increase of over 800% on 2015. However, this growth forecast requires significant effort to:

- Raise awareness of the destination in the target and source markets;
- Facilitate conversion of awareness and intent to travel into actual bookings; and
- Provide and deliver visitor experiences that meet or exceed the expectations of the market.

In order to fulfil the potential contribution of Ataúro Island to the national forecast, there are a number of models that need to be considered for marketing. The

models are outlined in Appendix C and have informed the high priority actions recommended below. As noted above and in Appendix A, collaboration through the Coral Triangle is likely to provide significant benefits to participating destinations. This is a result of leveraging regional resources rather than trying to compete independently. However, it remains critical that Timor-Leste continue to promote itself as a nature and adventure-based destination, in line with its national tourism brand and marketing activities.

The high priority actions below are divided between those that involve collaboration under the auspices of the Coral Triangle Initiative and those that relate specifically to Timor-Leste or Ataúro Island.

50

<sup>12</sup> See: [http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?name\\_desc=true](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?name_desc=true)  
<sup>13</sup> For further information and access a copy of the Asia Foundation survey report, see: <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/VisitorSurvey2014English.pdf>



## High priority actions

### 1. Regional collaboration through the Coral Triangle

a. Development of a **regional nature-based tourism brand for the Coral Triangle** – each Destination Plan includes a positioning that identifies each site’s unique difference. To build on the tourism aspect of the Coral Triangle (CT), it is recommended to develop a nature-based and cultural tourism or heritage brand for the Coral Tringle that each Member Country can leverage to promote the best of the best sustainable marine and coastal experience within each country. While nature based tourism is the fastest growing market within the tourism sector there are many other destinations including others similar to the CT that leverage nature as their point of difference.

Developing a clear and focused positioning and identifying the emotional territory for the CT is not just dependent on its attributes but it is also about creating an emotional reason for the target market to purchase a holiday to one of the sites within the CT region. The purpose of repositioning the CT is to also underpin and support the key themes and signatures experiences that have been developed as part of the Destination Plan.

Through the positioning and brand development the persona or brand archetype, which impacts the tone and manner of how a destination speaks about itself through all its channels to market, would be identified. This will also underpin and influence on-going development of marketing content and provide a framework to ensure that user generated content (UGC) reinforces the CT positioning. This does not mean that the CT needs to develop a new logo but it could underpin the development of a new tagline (if one is required) so as to provide a replacement for the reference to the ‘Amazon of the Ocean’ on TheCoralTriangle.com website (to move it away from a comparison strategy).

b. Collaboration for **attendance at international tourism trade shows** – there is a significant opportunity for the six countries of the Coral

Triangle to coordinate efforts to attend international tourism trade shows to present the most outstanding sustainable nature and adventure destinations across the region. This would assist to raise the profile and awareness of the Coral Triangle sustainable tourism destinations with wholesalers and distributors while also enabling the sharing of costs and resources. That is, rather than each site within the project attending the trade show, they could share a Coral Triangle exhibition, featuring the individual destinations within the region. This is particularly important for special interest trade shows, such as diving and birdwatching trade shows. This would require the development of appropriate Coral Triangle collateral, recognising the individual products or operators by country. For example, across the three current sites within the project there are a number of dive operators, including Walindi Resort (PNG); Dive Munda and Dive Gizo (Solomon Islands); and Dive Timor Lorasae, Compass Charters, Ataúro Dive Resort and Aquatica Dive Resort (Timor-Leste), all of which could contribute great content to raise awareness of the outstanding diving opportunities across the Coral Triangle and help to create the ultimate ‘bucket list’ for diving enthusiasts.

c. Strengthen the **profile and user experience (UX) of the Coral Triangle consumer-facing website**, <http://thecoraltriangle.com/> - There are a range of actions required to enhance this website to increase awareness of the sustainable tourism destinations of the Coral Triangle region and convert interest into bookings. For example:

- i. Profiling each site specifically, including consumer-friendly and inspiring content on the visitor experience offering and why the site is part of the Coral Triangle Sustainable Nature-based Tourism Project, such as the outstanding marine, coastal and cultural values
- ii. Integrating or implementing a booking system for operators (accommodation, tours, activities

and transport) within each site, which could be implemented in stages commencing with providing referrals to existing sites

iii. Review and identify a budget for search engine optimisation (SEO) and opportunities for search engine marketing and digital advertising as well as improving links to key websites within each destination/site. Search engine companies could be approached to consider investing as a good steward to the CT sustainable tourism SEO

### 2. Specific marketing and communication actions relating to Ataúro Island, Timor-Leste

A high priority is the development of a five-year marketing plan for Ataúro Island, utilising the positioning identified in this Destination Plan. There are a number of key areas to address in the marketing plan, which are outlined below. Some of these actions should be commenced immediately as they will assist in promoting the island while the marketing plan is prepared. In particular, content can be provided to the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MTAC) to strengthen the Ataúro Island presence on the Ministry’s tourism website (<http://www.timorleste.tl/>) and Visit East Timor website (see <http://visiteasttimor.com/>). It is essential that the relationship between ZEESM and MTAC is resolved with regard to responsibility for leading the development of a five-year marketing plan for Ataúro Island.

### High priority actions for marketing and promotion of Ataúro Island and Timor-Leste:

**a. Content marketing** - Develop content to be used across all paid, owned and earned media channels. Content consists of images, video and copy. Content marketing is reliant on the good quality and content that is relevant to the target market. That is, images, video, blogs and stories that are regularly updated. Content marketing is becoming more important as the travel market moves away from utilising traditional media and is more focused on digital marketing. This change in marketing is very relevant to niche markets. Note that there is already some content available through the Coral Triangle consumer-facing website, <http://thecoraltriangle.com/>.

A table is outlined below that sets out key activities by channel, in line with the Paid, Owned and Earned Model (refer Appendix C for general information on the Paid, Owned and Earned Model).

**b. Itinerary development, packaging and bundling** – Identify further opportunities for packaging and bundling of experiences with accommodation, transport and tours (etc), building in a commission structure to ensure all business in the supply chain are paid and share in the benefits. This would enable the development of itineraries with multiple points of interest and stays, which can assist with conversion of interest into bookings. Currently, there are only a few static itineraries for the island. This information should be enhanced by the development of maps (especially interactive maps) as well as inspirational content on the highlights, activities and options that could be incorporated into the itinerary.

**c. Partnerships for promotion** – There is a clear need to adopt a more strategic approach to developing and strengthening partnerships to improve promotion of the Island. For example, a partnership with ZEESM, MTAC, airlines, such as Air North, Air Timor and Sriwijaya and NAM, which promotes the Ataúro tourism offer, could be developed. This would include partnerships with sea transport operators and accommodation and tour/activity providers based on the itineraries identified above. There should be a partnership formed with existing operators in Ataúro, through ATKOMA and the Coral Triangle Foundation to share resources and enhance marketing through content placement and improved search engine optimisation (SEO). SEO is a weakness for both MTAC and the Ataúro Tourism websites demonstrated by poor search results on Google. Partnerships also need to be established with source market distributors.



Paid, Owned and Earned Channels - Action Table

The following table identifies a number of immediate and high priority actions to assist in driving demand. However, the development of a marketing plan for Ataúro Island would consider these and other actions in more detail.

CHANNELS	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
OWNED	<p>Develop a <b>content calendar</b> including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Nature-based and cultural events, such as wildlife experiences</li><li>Existing Experiences – for experiences that already exist, including local heroes (guides, local identities, etc), special interest themes (bird-watching, diving, etc), local events or cultural activities (festivals, markets, etc)</li><li>New Experiences – identify content for all new experiences – this may include building content as the experience is developed to help create excitement and provide a different angle for Public Relations (PR)</li></ul> <p>High quality content is essential to assist in driving stronger engagement through social media channels as well as providing greater depth to the content for the website and newsletters. The content needs to be relevant and relate to the target market motivation for travel. Therefore, the primary message should be visitor-experience focused to inspire the target market to visit while the secondary message is a conservation, cultural or nature-based message, ie why these sites have been chosen and are so special (they have unique conservation heritage values). Content, including copy, images and short videos, should be developed for use across multiple platforms.</p>	ATKOMA and ZEESM in collaboration with Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MTAC), Coral Triangle Foundation, operators, conservation NGOs, etc

CHANNELS	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
OWNED	<p><b>Website review</b> – Review and improve the ATKOMA tourism website. It should be noted that the website is already of a high standard, including being mobile-responsive, which is best practice. However, a key issue is that further content needs to be developed, including more dynamic itineraries as well as enhancing links with social media, including prioritising Instagram and YouTube (not currently integrated, only Facebook) and links to other websites (such as the MTAC website <a href="http://www.timorleste.tl/">http://www.timorleste.tl/</a> and the Coral Triangle consumer-facing website - <a href="http://thecoraltriangle.com/">http://thecoraltriangle.com/</a>). Other domains, including those owned by the Coral Triangle Foundation, should be considered to determine whether they could be utilised due to stronger consumer recall or relevance.</p> <p>Likewise, the MTAC website, <a href="http://www.timorleste.tl/">http://www.timorleste.tl/</a> could be enhanced through improved geographical context and references along with more dynamic itineraries. A review of the website should be undertaken, as outlined above for the ATKOMA website. It is noted that the website does contain inspirational content and has been well executed from a creative perspective. The review should focus on the user experience (UX) with regard to content.</p> <p>An agreement between MTAC, ZEESM and ATKOMA should be developed to enhance SEO and shared content.</p> <p>Specifically consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Contract a digital agency to <b>undertake development of the website and test the UX across the website and all ‘owned’ digital assets</b> and develop a roadmap and budget to bring the UX up to best practice design and functionality for destination websites and social media assets.</li></ul>	ATKOMA, ZEESM and MTAC in collaboration with Coral Triangle Foundation, operators, conservation NGOs, etc



CHANNELS	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
OWNED	<p>This will assist in driving traffic to the website, which will in turn provide a greater opportunity to convert more people to purchase a holiday. This is a critical asset to support the other marketing activities such as attendance at tourism trade and consumer shows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)</b> – As part of the website development, consider SEO. It is vitally important that the fundamentals are in place to capture and drive the maximum amount of traffic to the website. Develop an SEO strategy that involves partnerships with local operators, retailers and airlines.</li><li>• Create a database and providing a regular (eg seasonal/quarterly) <b>e-newsletter</b> for those who sign up for updates – this should leverage the content calendar. This is highly recommended for both ATA and MTAC websites.</li></ul>	ATKOMA, ZEESM and MTAC in collaboration with Coral Triangle Foundation, operators, conservation NGOs, etc

CHANNELS	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
PAID	<p>As part of the marketing plan, identify a budget for search engine marketing (SEM) (eg placement of AdWords, which should be linked to SEO review) and <b>digital advertising</b>.</p> <p>As noted above, <b>attendance at trade and consumer shows is vital</b>. Some operators are likely already attending these shows, such as dive operators. However, a combined Coral Triangle presence would enhance awareness of the Coral Triangle sustainable tourism destinations (as noted above)</p>	ATKOMA, ZEESM and MTAC in collaboration with Coral Triangle Foundation, operators, conservation NGOs, etc
CHANNELS	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
EARNED	<p>Facilitate public relations through <b>international travel famils</b>, including with special interest media (diving, bird watching, etc). However, strengthen the promotion of Ataúro Island by utilising the positioning and itineraries.</p>	ATKOMA, ZEESM and MTAC in collaboration with Coral Triangle Foundation, operators, conservation NGOs, etc



# APPENDICES



# APPENDIX A

## BACKGROUND ON THE CORAL TRIANGLE SUSTAINABLE NATURE-BASED TOURISM PROJECT

Developing and Promoting Sustainable Nature-Based Tourism in the Coral Triangle is an initiative being implemented by WWF through funding from the Australian Government. The initiative’s goal is to assist the six countries of the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF) to develop and/or accelerate a long-term approach to more sustainable nature-based tourism in the Coral Triangle.

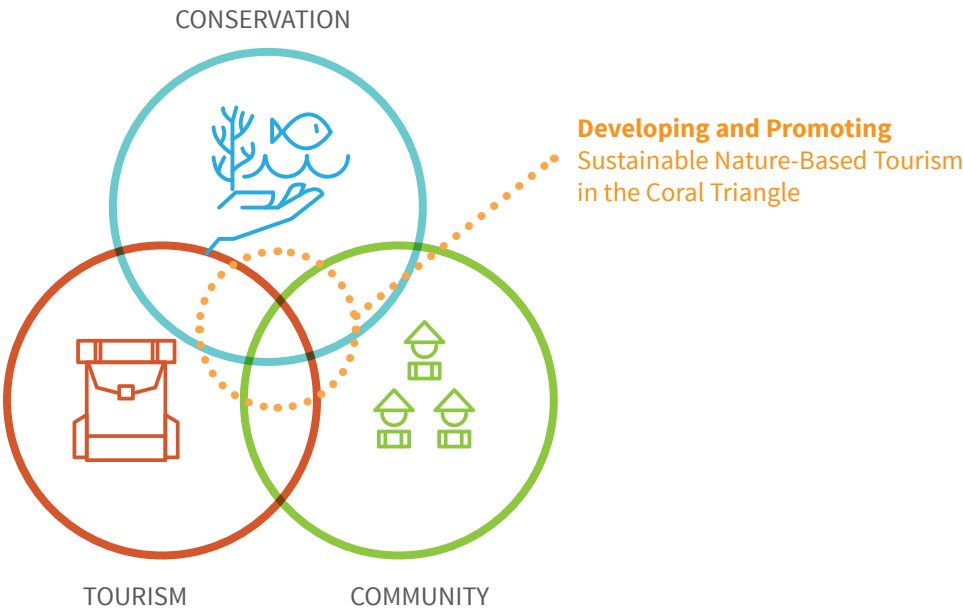
The long-term vision that guides the initiative is:

The Coral Triangle region is a renowned sustainable tourism destination with economic benefits flowing to communities, governments and private enterprise, providing a strong incentive to protect and sustain the region’s natural environment.

The aims of the project are to:

- Promote world class, high quality visitor experiences;
- Increase the value of tourism to local, regional and national economies;
- Enhance the role of marine protected areas in local communities and supporting sustainable livelihoods;
- Build support for protecting our natural and cultural assets, in particular the marine and coastal resources of the Coral Triangle.

The project aims to build a partnership between conservation, tourism and the community, as represented in the following diagram:



### Overview of the project and key stages

In summary, the objectives of this project are to:

- Provide a framework for developing and marketing a regional nature and marine-based sustainable tourism brand for the Coral Triangle;
- Conduct business planning for distinctive positioning and signature experiences to support destination management planning at three selected areas, one in each of Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands;
- Work with WWF and stakeholders to prepare an investment prospectus as well as identify and engage with potential investors; and
- Prepare a communication strategy to promote the initiative and brand with key stakeholders, communities and businesses.

In late 2015, a baseline analysis of the current state of tourism in the Coral Triangle was prepared by Richard Plumpton of 2iis Consulting, which outlined a roadmap for the future development of nature-based tourism as a socio-economic development pathway for the region. The baseline analysis included, among other things:

- Global trends in tourism and nature-based tourism;
- Tourism as a driver of socio-economic progress;
- Coastal and marine tourism;
- Risks relevant to tourism development; and
- Assessment of tourism models and the potential for nature tourism brands.

The baseline analysis informed the next stages in the project, including the positioning of each site, destination development planning and communication initiatives such as the investment prospectus. The base-line analysis may be accessed at: [http://wwf.panda.org/what\\_we\\_do/where\\_we\\_work/coraltriangle/publications/?260690/Developing-and-Promoting-Sustainable-Nature-based-Tourism-in-the-Coral-Triangle](http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/coraltriangle/publications/?260690/Developing-and-Promoting-Sustainable-Nature-based-Tourism-in-the-Coral-Triangle)

This document provides the positioning for the site selected in the Ataúro Island, Timor-Leste as well as the site’s recommended destination plan.



Vision for the Coral Triangle sustainable destinations

A sustainable and low-impact tourism industry flourishes and supports vibrant communities, strengthens local economies and contributes to the conservation of the outstanding marine and coastal environment of the Coral Triangle.

Selecting sites for inclusion in the project

The sites selected for inclusion in the project meet the following high-level criteria:

- i. High-value and well-preserved marine and coastal resources conserved under a community-managed and/or Government-gazetted Marine Protected Area (MPA) or network of protected areas (this may also include wildlife management areas);
- ii. Engaged community with an interest in supporting or participating in low-impact, sustainable tourism;
- iii. High-level support from local, regional and national Government, including support from environment, tourism and economic development agencies;

- iv. Accessibility for visitors, particularly through regular and reliable transport services (air, road or sea) linked to the national capital and/or other regional destinations.

Themes and context for destination development

In consultation with the community and stakeholders involved in the first three sites, the following experience themes have been identified for destination development and planning. It is worth noting that in each site one of the themes may offer a stronger visitor proposition. The three themes are:

- 1. Conservation through Stewardship
- 2. Experience Village Life
- 3. Adventure into the Coral Triangle

Underpinning these themes is a commitment to the conservation and protection of the marine and coastal resources of the destination; an appreciation of the importance of marine and coastal resources to community well-being and livelihoods; and a practical understanding of sustainability.

Guiding principles

The project has also developed a number of guiding principles, designed to ensure that destination planning and tourism activities are appropriate for the site. The guiding principles enable resilience and protect the point of difference for those sites within the Coral Triangle Sustainable Nature-based Tourism Project and have been endorsed by the communities and stakeholders involved in the project:

- **Conservation** of natural and cultural values is paramount to the long-term sustainability of the region for its community and visitors;
- The **visitor experience** will be grounded in the culture and nature of the site;
- Planned growth in tourism will be respectful of **local culture**;
- **Community benefits** will be achieved through the delivery of tourism opportunities;
- **Protection of marine and coastal resources** will be improved through building awareness with the local community and tourists/visitors;

- The **site’s character** will be retained through effective design, planning and management of infrastructure; and
- **Development of new visitor experiences and infrastructure** should be informed by an understanding of the needs and expectation of the target market (visitor-centric approach) and involve robust and consultative master planning and feasibility analysis to ensure the sustainability of the initiative.

Key elements of a Destination Plan

A Destination Plan is a framework for developing sustainable experiences for visitors. It identifies:

- The shared vision of the community and industry for tourism;
- How the site should be positioned in the eyes of visitors to achieve this vision;
- The signature experiences that can be used to support the positioning and attract visitors to the site; and
- Enablers to address challenges, gaps, opportunities and barriers.



This Destination Plan has been developed within the context of the overall framework for the project, outlined in the diagram opposite.



Key considerations of the Coral Triangle Sustainable Nature-Based Tourism Project

There are six key considerations with regard to the overall project. These principles help to shape the recommendations relating to each site and provide a guide to destinations considering being a part of the project.

1. The initiative should complement the existing national tourism brand, plan and strategies in each of the six CTI-CFF countries. As a result, the project aims to leverage and ensure linkages between the national tourism plan or strategies and site-specific sustainable destination planning and management.
2. The project is focused on low-impact, sustainable tourism in areas of high-value marine and coastal resources. It is not intended to include or represent all marine or coastal destinations across the Coral Triangle. Essentially, it seeks to identify and enable sustainable, nature-based tourism in the most well preserved and protected marine and coastal sites within the Coral Triangle.
3. There are significant benefits from the six countries collaborating through this initiative to raise awareness of the Coral Triangle marine and coastal destinations of high conservation value and achieve greater cut-through in a crowded tourism market. This is even more important when comparing the Coral Triangle with other marine and coastal destinations globally.

4. The target market is a niche, high yield market. Visitation to these sites is expected to be lower in terms of numbers but deliver higher economic returns per visitor. Furthermore, this market is more likely to spend more money on activities, experiences and unique or boutique accommodation. This initiative is not intended to include mass tourism destinations.
5. A key objective is to ensure that the initiative is sustainable. This requires a governance framework that is manageable within the context of human and financial resources available under the auspices of the CTI-CFF.
6. In order to ensure the sustainability of the project, it is critical that investment opportunities identified through the destination planning process are captured within an investment prospectus and presented to both potential development partners as well as private sector investors. The investment prospectus will be prepared for both audiences and provided to respective national governments to promote the opportunities at each site.

APPENDIX B  
CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN  
DURING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
DESTINATION PLAN

As noted above on page 16, three independent visits to Timor-Leste were undertaken to inform the development of this Destination Plan, specifically:

- Preliminary assessment by Dr Lida Pet Soede of Hatfield Consultants in December 2015;
- Primary field visit in April 2016, involving Ms Janet Mackay of TRC Tourism, Mr Carl Solomon and Ms Charlotte Prouse of Destination Marketing Store and Dr Lida Pet Soede of Hatfield Consultants;
- Secondary field visit in June 2016, involving Ms Janet Mackay of TRC Tourism and Ms Charlotte Prouse of Destination Marketing Store.

During these field visits, meetings were held with a range of stakeholders, including:

- CTI-CFF National Coordinating Committee
- Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture
- Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries – Fisheries Division
- Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment – Environment Division
- Special Zones for Social Market Economy of Timor-Leste (ZEESM TL) as well as meetings with representatives of the Oé-Cusse District
- Ataúro Tourism Association
- Ataúro Island Sub-District Administrator and Chefe de Sucos
- Trade Invest Timor-Leste
- Non-government organisations and community groups, including representatives of:
  - Coral Triangle Foundation and MV Ataúro (operated by Coral Triangle Holidays)
  - Asia Foundation
  - World Fish
  - Asian Development Bank
  - World Tourism Organisation (WTO) (through their consultant)
  - Conservation International

- Haburas Foundation Timor-Leste
- International Ranger Federation
- Timor-Leste Tourism Association
- ILO
- ETDA (training and capacity building organisation)
- Private sector tourism organisations including Air Timor, Barry’s Place, Timor Adventures and several dive operators, including Dive Timor Lorosae
- New Zealand High Commission, Dili
- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Charles Darwin University
- Blue Ventures

The tourism consulting team travelled across Ataúro Island and held meetings in Dili during the consultation visits. Significant logistical support was provided by the Coral Triangle Foundation, MV Ataúro and Barry’s Place, for which the consultant team was very grateful.

We also circulated a preliminary draft Destination Plan and received several comprehensive comments on this draft, which have been addressed in this version of the plan.



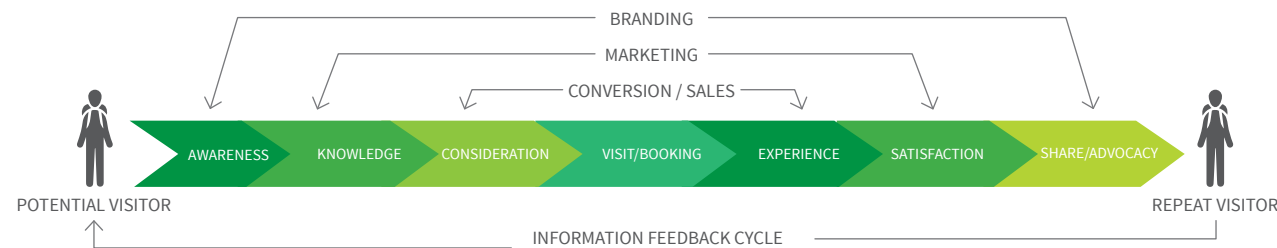
## APPENDIX C

### MARKETING MODELS

#### 1. Visitor or Customer Journey

Marketing communication requires a commitment throughout the customer or visitor journey. It starts with building awareness and knowledge of the destination and its point of difference, distinguishes it from other places to visit and assists to convert interest to an actual visit. Continuing the communication cycle is critical to ensure visitors

to the destination have a positive experience and share their experience with their peer group, who are also likely to be in the target market. By becoming advocates they help to organically grow awareness of the destination and enable more people within the target market to be reached.



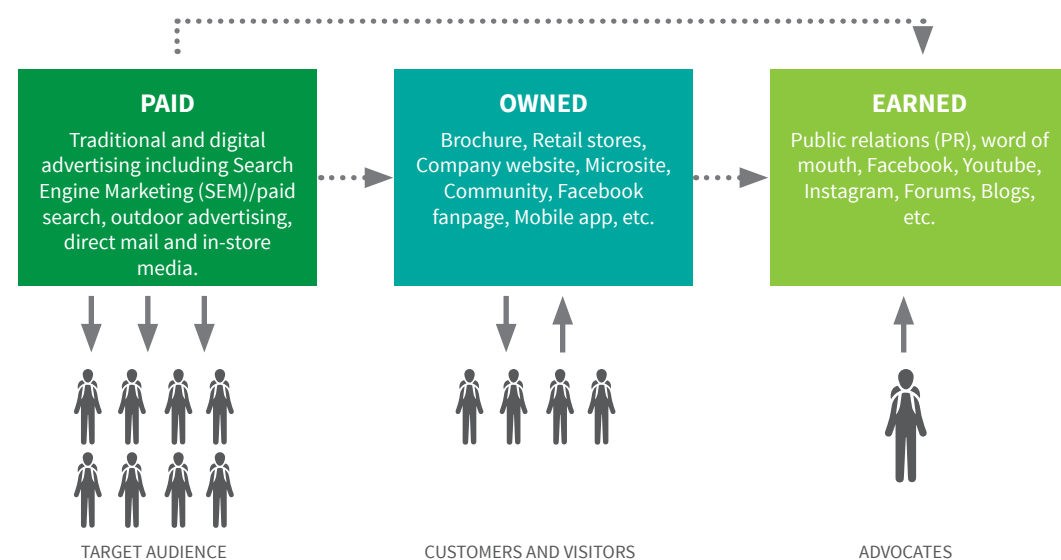
#### 2. Paid, Owned, Earned Marketing and Communication Channels

This model represents the key communication channels to reach your target market, which are split between:

- Owned - website, social media platforms and e-newsletters;
- Earned - public relations (PR) articles or reviews by key influencers (bloggers and vloggers); and

- paid - search engine marketing, or digital and traditional advertising.

The importance of this model lies in the interaction and opportunities for leveraging each channel within the overall communications or marketing mix. Getting the balance right by identifying the right channels to reach the target market will maximise effectiveness within the available resources.



## APPENDIX D

### BLUE VENTURES CASE STUDY

Content provided by: Sean Clement of Blue Ventures, Ataúro, Timor-Leste

Blue Ventures (BV)<sup>14</sup> runs conservation tourism expeditions on Ataúro Island in Timor-Leste, attracting paying international volunteers for long-term stays. BV's target customers fall very much within the Destination Plan's stated target markets. BV's plan for these expeditions is to maximise economic benefits to local communities. To that end, BV has spent the latter part of 2016 making preparations with the Beloi community on Ataúro Island to establish infrastructure to support homestays for their volunteers in the village.

Eight families within the village have since formed an independent homestay association, and received hospitality and food service training from the East Timor Development Agency<sup>15</sup> (ETDA) in late 2016. Representatives from the association, along with delegates from other communities on the island interested in replicating this model, have just completed an exchange visit to the Bird's Head Seascape<sup>16</sup> in West Papua, taking part in a knowledge exchange with members of the Raja Ampat Homestay Association (RAHA). RAHA is an extremely successful community organisation that has leveraged its proximity to Raja Ampat's famous reefs to build a community-based ecotourism sector now turning over in excess of \$1.5 million annually.

Homestays on Ataúro Island commenced in January 2017 and will continue as a core element of BV's work in Timor-Leste, with all volunteers now spending a minimum of two weeks in homestays on every expedition. Sean explains "The quality

of the homestay experience has already exceeded our expectations, and many of our 2016 volunteers indicated they would be keen to return to the island to take part in a homestay experience in future. We are committed to professionalising and improving homestay standards as part of our long-term commitment to the island. We are also planning to replicate the model elsewhere in Timor-Leste later in 2017, hoping to build the model to the point where it can represent a significant proportion of the accommodation sector on Ataúro Island - for our volunteers and independent travellers alike."

These developments will provide new economic opportunities for communities in Timor-Leste and mitigate some of the observed weaknesses recognised within the Ataúro Island Destination Plan.

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://blueventures.org/about/>

<sup>15</sup> ETDA is an independent, not-for-profit training centre in Timor-Leste. It strives to strengthen the capacity of East Timorese people so they can play an integral and active role in developing and improving Timor-Leste. See: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/etdatimorleste/about/>

<sup>16</sup> See: <http://birdsheadseascape.com/about-the-birds-head-seascape/>



# PROJECT PARTNERS



## The Australian Government

The 'Developing and Promoting Sustainable Nature-based Tourism in the Coral Triangle' project is supported through funding from the Australian Government's Coral Triangle Initiative Support Program. Australia has been a partner of the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF) since 2007.



## The World Wide Fund for Nature in the Coral Triangle

WWF has been pioneering conservation in the Coral Triangle for more than two decades, collaborating with partners in the private sector, governmental agencies and civil society. By providing technical expertise and funding, and promoting innovative public-private partnerships, WWF is committed to safeguard the health of the region's natural resources and to secure the millions of livelihoods that depend upon them.

## The consultants



## TRC Tourism - Destination Marketing Store - 2iis Consulting - Hatfield Consultant

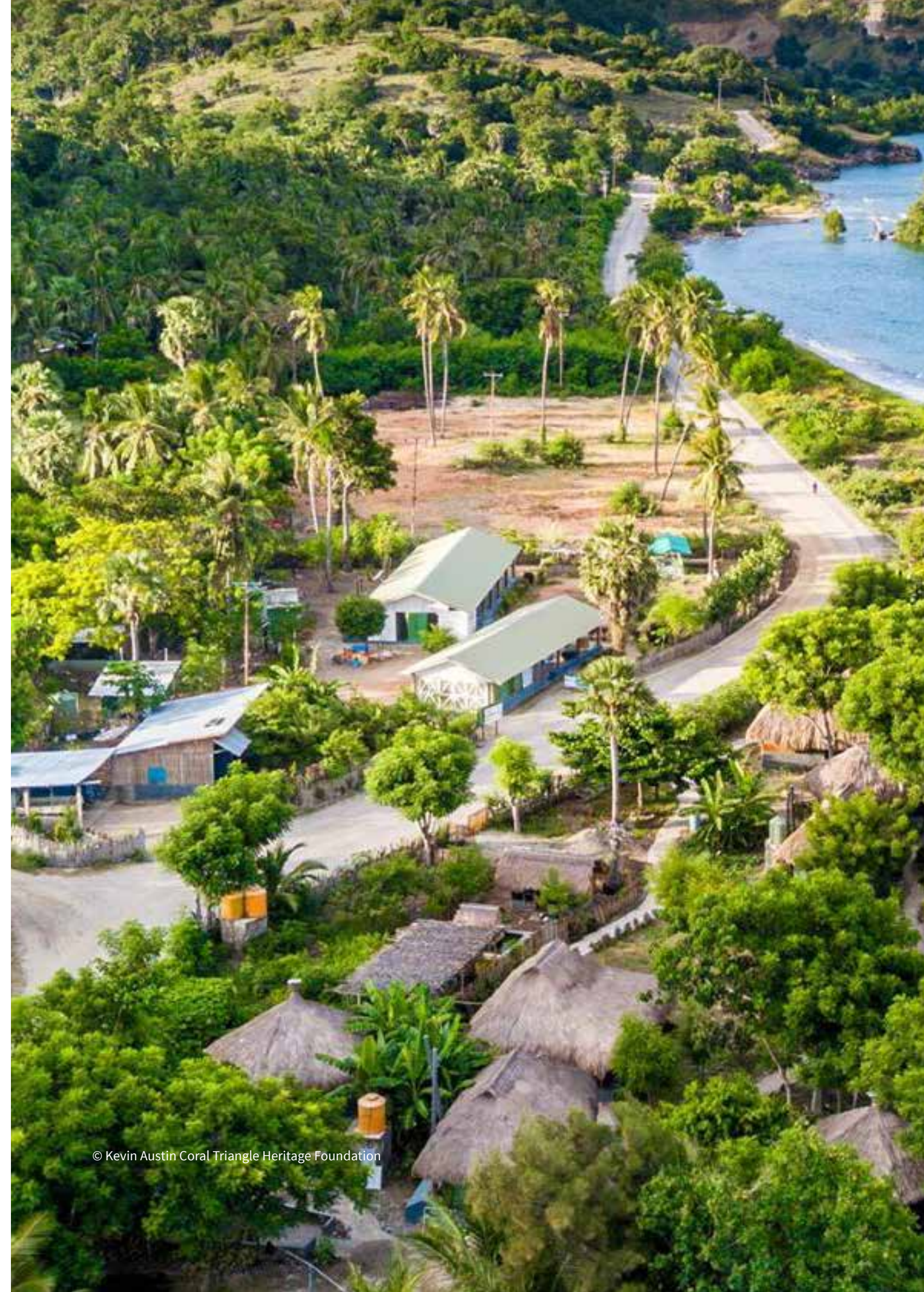
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