



## *Caring for your destination-* Sustainable Tourism in Siem Reap

When most visitors plan their trip to Siem Reap, they have only one thing in mind – a visit to Angkor Wat. When this is finished, usually in a day or two, they get on a plane and leave. MPDF, a multi-donor initiative of the International Finance Corporation that promotes small and medium enterprise development in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam, hopes to change that and also promote sustainable tourism.

### Defining sustainable tourism

MPDF recently launched a 1-year pilot in Siem Reap to demonstrate the business case for economically, environmentally and socially sustainable tourism. For a destination, this means protecting the natural environment, historic or cultural assets and/or contributing to the local community.

MPDF hopes that through this new initiative: more ‘destination friendly’ tours and activities will develop; travelers will choose hotels and guesthouses that are committed to sustainable tourism; and advocacy will develop to solve the problems caused by unmanaged tourism. If successful, local accommodation providers should get more business from socially-responsible tourists, and the negative consequences of tourism should decline.

### Promoting partnerships

The MPDF pilot in Siem Reap, *Caring for your destination* is helping small- and medium-sized hotels and guest houses to link with local NGOs and community groups that offer interesting experiences for tourists. These could include: “backstage” visits to the Angkor Wat temples to help restoration workers and understand their challenges; eco-tours of Tonle Sap Lake to learn about biodiversity; village concerts with some of Cambodia’s best traditional musicians; and visits to orphanages, schools and/or hospitals to learn about development issues. MPDF is also partnering with Worldhotel-link.com to introduce a sustainability rating for the hotels and guesthouses that market through WHL web portals.

### Sustainability ratings

Under WHL’s rating scheme, if a hotel or guesthouse commits to some means of caring for the destination, they receive one star on their website listing. If they can describe how they have promoted sustainability for at least six months, they receive a second star. If their initiatives are approved by a recognized rater of sustainability, they earn a third. However, if guests report that a hotel is not living up to its promises, and this is proven, the star/s will be removed. Initiatives that would earn stars include: reducing energy consumption, water consumption, and/or solid waste; offering training and employment for disadvantaged groups; sponsoring a local school, orphanage or health center; preserving traditional music, handicrafts or art; or linking with NGOs and community groups to promote destination-friendly tours.

ADB



Australia



Canada



Finland



IFC



Ireland



Japan



Netherlands



New Zealand



Norway



Sweden



Switzerland



United Kingdom



## Partnerships

Over the next year, MPDF will work with local NGOs and community groups plus six local hotels and five guesthouses on various projects to promote sustainable tourism. This includes product development, marketing and ongoing technical advice. Below are some examples of the community groups and NGOs partnering in this initiative.

### Sangkheum Centre for Children

- Provides a home, general education and selected vocational training for around 30 orphaned, abused or neglected children
- Joint project between Progetto Continenti and KADO
- Sells the products of training in metalwork and weaving to tourists

### Cambodian Land Mine Museum

- Promotes awareness and education about land mine safety to both locals and tourists and a planned new museum will include a dormitory and school for children who are land mine survivors
- Founded by a former Cambodian child soldier, in 1999

### Cambodia Living Art

- Works to preserve and revitalize the performing arts which were nearly destroyed during Cambodia's long civil war
- Established Studio CLA in 2003 to produce commercial quality CDs; operates Wat Bo's shadow puppet troupe and a traditional wedding music ensemble

### Angkor Hospital for Children

- Seeks to improve medical infrastructure through cooperation with provincial and national hospitals and medical education programs
- Offers free outpatient and inpatient services, basic surgery, 24-hour emergency services, dental care, paediatric training and several outreach programs
- Founded by an acclaimed Japanese photographer in 1999

### Krousar Thmey

- Established in 1991 to support abandoned and orphaned children, street children and trafficking victims
- Builds schools and provides financial support for supplementary teachers and educational materials; established the School of Khmer Arts and Culture in Sisophon for 1,500 students
- 12 blind masseurs provide therapeutic massage for tourists

[www.mpdf.org](http://www.mpdf.org)

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