

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT OF MATURA:
TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE RURAL COMMUNITY
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
TURTLE CONSERVATION, ECOTOURISM AND
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose Statement

- To explore the possibility of a **sustainable tourism intervention** in Matura, using **an integrated community development strategy**.
 - Assess the level of sustainable development;
 - Assess the residents' perception of the level of development;
 - Assess the residents' attitude towards tourism; and
 - Identify existing and potential tourism activities.

DEFINING THE RURAL COMMUNITY

- **Agrarian** societies with **small population** densities and **small settlement** sizes, “**traditional**” social **structures** and a strong **cultural heritage** (OECD 1994).
- The rural environment is **more natural**; the rural population **more homogenous** and **less mobile** than their urban counterparts (Sorokin and Zimmerman 1969).

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- Rural community development examines the **trade-offs** before a decision is made **for the maintenance of rural communities** in an economically and socially viable manner that respects the environment.
- Rural development embraces the provision of rural **health, education, water supply and sanitation services**, the construction and upgrading of rural **access roads** and the provision of **electricity supply** services (Akroyd 2003).

RURAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

- population decline;
- **social underdevelopment**;
- resource depletion;
- degradation of the physical environment;
- gradual and unplanned introduction of various forms of land use; and
- **non-integrated management** of resources in an attempt to identify and tackle development challenges in a sustainable manner.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Sustainability relates to:
 - development and environmental protection linkages;
 - improving living standards for the present and future generations;
 - efficient and effective resource allocation;
 - increased economic benefits;
 - departure from previous unsustainable practices; and
 - better ecological performance and equilibrium.

SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SRD)

- SRD involves:
 - The maintenance and strengthening of **life support systems** in local communities while **respecting different cultures and evading exploitation** (UNDSD 2008);
 - Policies and strategies to encourage **active involvement** towards **sustainable livelihoods**, productivity, **agricultural biodiversity** and food security (FAO 2009); and
 - **Conservation activities** using **feasible economic activities** along with **infrastructural development, science and technologies** (IIASA 2005).

INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- The Integrated Rural Development (IRD) approach accepts the **role of other sectors** in the development process, results in a tendency **towards rural diversification** (Kostov and Lingard 2004) and is a method **to reduce poverty and manage risks** (Cohen and Afrikainstitutet 1987).

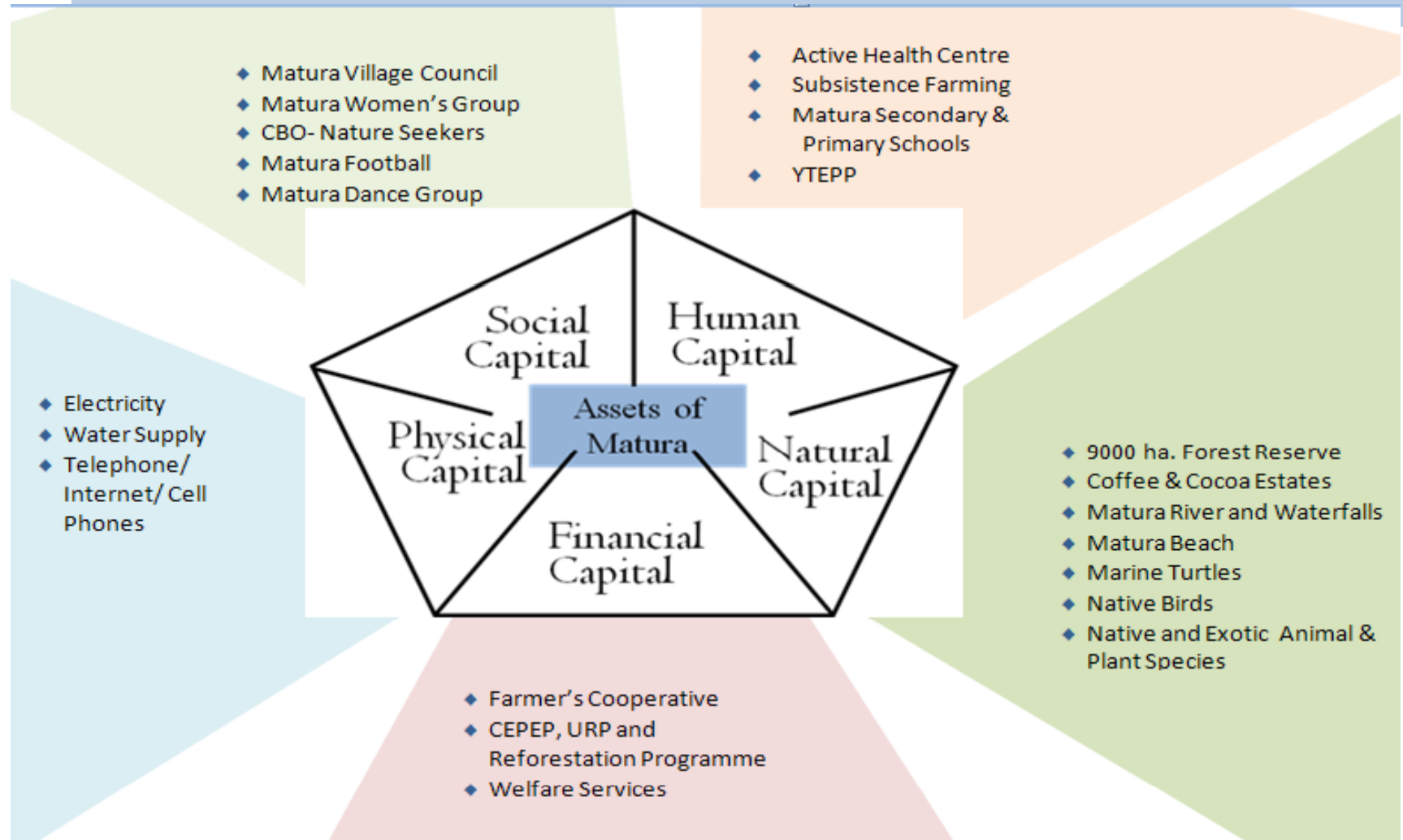
INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- IRD schemes should be “**area-based development**”; planned and executed **to serve** the perceived **needs** and exploit the identified **opportunities** of a specific geographical area.
- A combination of schemes should be suited to the **conditions, problems, human needs and capabilities** of the area and require a strong **commitment from the government**.

SOME IRD ACTIVITIES

- The identification of sustainable income generating activities;
- Research in both agriculture and natural resources;
- Training and skill development;
- The existence of an adequate labour force;
- Infrastructural development for access;
- Provision of social services;
- Disaster preparedness, management and recovery schemes;
- Linkages with existing ecotourism groups and institutions; and
- Rural-urban interface.

ASSET INVENTORY OF MATURA



METHODOLOGY

- Community Assessment involves:
 - The **identification** of causes of **development problems** in Matura.
 - An **assessments of the** economic, social, and institutional **pillars** of the community
 - An **analysis of the** various community **development needs**
 - An **inventory of the perceived needs** not currently met by current provisions and to **prioritize these needs**
 - Structured interviews to members of households

Sustainability Assessment of Matura: Key Findings



Key Findings:

Economic Dimension

Economic Sustainability

Employment Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 72% were employed. (19% employed part time and 29% full time; 24% self employed)• Mostly employed in the public service and technical/vocational jobs
Salary Disbursement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 31% monthly paid• 23.8% fortnightly• 18% weekly and daily paid
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 81% located in Matura• Sale of food items; dry goods and skills based.• Micro enterprises (2 persons or less)
Monthly Hld. Income	21% earned between \$500-\$1,999 monthly

Economic Sustainability

Savings

52.4% are not able to save

Insurance

- 11.9% had life insurance
- 7.1% had health insurance.

Food Purchases

- 47.6% spent most money on food**
- 90.5% purchased food outside the area**
- 87.8% are unsatisfied with food prices**

Standard of Living

- 42.5% indicated varying degrees of dissatisfaction**
- 52.4% indicated varying degrees of satisfaction

Key Findings:

Social Dimension

Social Sustainability

Housing

- **63% owned both house and land**
- 69.1% of the homes were concrete structures
- 61.6% had three bedrooms or more
- **52.4% were outfitted with indoor flush toilets**

Waste

- **88.1% bagged their refuse for collection**

Water Supply

- **64.3% connected to pipe-borne water supply**
- 50% rated water supplies as unreliable and of poor quality.

Electricity Supply

- 90.5% were connected to T&TEC
- **78.6% rated the supply as reliable.**

Social Sustainability

Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 53.9% utilised taxis as main means of transportation.
Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 76.2% considered the quality of roads to be adequate.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 71.4% used the Matura Health Centre• 16.7% rely on natural remedies• 57.9% rated the service as adequate
Training Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 61.9 were aware of training opportunities• 19% participated in the programmes• 30.9% viewed the programmes as inadequate

Key Findings:

Environmental Dimension

Environmental Sustainability

Dumping of Garbage	• 61.9% considers this a problem
Lack of Development	• 52.4% considers this a problem
Littering	• 50% believed littering was a problem
Environmental Education	• 64.2% stated this was insufficient
River Pollution	• 52.4% believed this was a problem
Land use & Forest Protection	• 47.6% were dissatisfied with land for agriculture and forest preservation
Watershed Protection	• 55.5% were unsatisfied with watershed preservation
Hunting Laws	• 50% adhered to hunting laws



Community Assessment of Matura:
Towards an Integrated Sustainable Rural
Community Tourism Development
Approach

Key Findings:

Political Awareness

Political Awareness

Significance of Politics

- 69%, revealed that politics played no significant role in their lives.
- 71.7% stated there was little or no representation by the Member of Parliament.

Involvement in Groups

- 26.2% were involved in community groups E.g. church groups or sporting groups.

Areas to be addressed by MP

- poor quality of the water supply
- inadequate youth training and employment opportunities.
- included poor drainage
- lack of sporting and recreational facilities for youth

Key Findings:

Tourism Perceptions

Tourism Perceptions

Reasons people visit

- 61% said Turtlewatching
- 34.2% said Beaches and River limes.

Attitudes to visitors

- 59.5% persons were happy to welcome them
- 26.2% stated that they were indifferent
- 14.3% persons stated they preferred no visitors.

Perception of Tourism

- 83% said that tourism positively impacted the community.

Impacts of tourism

- 71% believed that tourism impacted positively on the environment, e.g. through wildlife conservation
- 28.5% said there were both positive and negative impacts e.g. littering.

Matura and Sustainable Development

MATURA & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- **Strengths**
- **Rich in natural resources** and biodiversity within its protected forest reserves.
- **Active legislation**, as the Matura Forest Reserve being the first Environmentally Sensitive Area in Trinidad and Tobago;
- **Conservation initiatives** such as the reforestation programme co-ordinated by the Forestry Division, and patrols done by NGOs

MATURA & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- **Strengths**
- **Known internationally** as the “home of the leatherback turtle” with high nesting populations and an equally high number of visitors.
- A **strong community-based tourism** and conservation movement, through the work of Nature Seekers and other NGOs .
- Tours to the various waterfalls and hikes within the Matura Forest Reserve are also **popular attractions**

MATURA & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- **Strengths**
- Business activities are centred around **micro enterprises** such as village shops, bars, craftsmen and tradesmen.
- Two **accommodation** providers established.
- Businesses in Matura appear to provide some of the **ancillary services** needed to support tourism growth

MATURA & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- **Strengths**
- Noteworthy **change in the attitudes** of the residents to the idea of conservation.
- Destructive agricultural practices and other negatively impacting environmental activities have almost ceased to exist.
- An understanding of the prohibition against the slaughter of turtles.

MATURA & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- **Developmental issues of concern:**
- limited training and employment opportunities
- poor quality and reliability of water supply
- limited access to agricultural land
- limited recreation facilities
- inadequate political infrastructure to facilitate development

MATURA AND TOURISM

- Community conservation tourism initiatives can help to achieve **sustainable livelihoods**
- Tourism employs persons with a wide range of skills, knowledge and capabilities, and may provide **employment opportunities** for persons at all levels in the community.
- An **integrated sustainable rural community tourism approach** can enable economic benefits for Matura.

MATURA AND TOURISM

- Current tourism activities, while contributing to environmental and, to a lesser extent, economic sustainability, **have not yet met its potential for social sustainability and the creation of sustainable livelihoods.**

MATURA AND TOURISM

- A **perceptual gap** between current tourism activities promoted by Nature Seekers and other organisations, and the views held by the local community.
- **In some cases, residents had never seen a leatherback turtle.**

PROMOTING MATURA TOURISM

- **Benefits:**
- Increased demand for tourism services e.g. accommodation facilities, trained tour guides, food and beverage concessionaires, and craftsmen.
- Increased employment opportunities.
- Opportunity to create linkages with other sectors.

PROMOTING MATURA TOURISM

- **Considerations**
- increased **demand for resources** such as water and energy, reliable telecommunications services,
- need for adequate **access roads**
- need for **waste disposal and sewerage facilities**, which may not be supported by the existing systems and infrastructure.

Recommendations

POLITICAL DIMENSION

- Strengthening the legal and institutional framework by:
 - Enhancing networking with existing NGOs from the area.
 - Encouraging increased community participation in the operation of NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs).
-

POLITICAL DIMENSION

- Development of a stakeholder management committee:
 - Formation of an umbrella organisation for all NGOs and CBOs and government agencies to ensure that all programmes are in line with broader development goals.
 - Nomination of responsible stakeholders from within Matura should be considered to develop a representative, multi-disciplinary committee.

POLITICAL DIMENSION

- Encouraging further corporate sponsorship for programmes.
- Facilitating an easier process for the acquisition of land for agricultural activities and assisting with setting up supply links for agricultural produce (e.g. to the local hotel industry or to wholesale markets).

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

- Increased Entrepreneurial Opportunities:
 - Small accommodation providers e.g. Bed and Breakfast
 - Caterers offering a diverse local menu
 - Entertainment such as cultural shows, and displays, and heritage festivals
 - Tourism entrepreneurial training to enhance business management skills

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

- **Micro-financing opportunities** to allow for small business start-ups.
- **Credit institutions and co-operatives** should be formed to assist villagers in managing finances.
- **Linkages** should be created with other sectors and the skills and knowledge of a wide cross section of fields utilised. E.g. “farm to fork” initiatives, supply of local craft items, and utilising sewing services by local seamstresses.



ECONOMIC DIMENSION

- **Agriculture** is still a viable option and should be encouraged.
- The procedures for engaging in agricultural activities should be simplified and **incentives for production of mainstream crops**.
- Farmers can also venture into **new crop areas** and food processing (e.g. preserves, pepper sauce, jams and jellies).
- **Agro-tourism initiatives** can also be established.

SOCIAL DIMENSION

- Upgrades of secondary roads within the community including access roads to beaches.
- Ensure a more reliable and improved quality water supply (especially food establishments)
- Health services should be expanded to cater for the needs of the elderly in the community.
- A children's play park can be established as well as facilities for more female oriented sports (e.g. netball) to serve the recreational needs of the community.

SOCIAL DIMENSION

- **Expansion of the community centre** that can have multiple uses, including as a means to generate income.
- **Housing upgrade programmes** should be implemented in the community to allow persons who do not have adequate housing to access funds or material to improve the quality of their homes.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

- Visitor and community sensitisation of the ecological importance of the area should be encouraged through:
 - The introduction of signage and bins to discourage littering and a litter warden programme at peak visitor times to monitor their activities.
 - Education and interpretation projects on conservation and the importance of the protected areas and species in and around Matura.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

- Promotional campaigns that highlight the link between tourism and the environment.
- Free familiarisation turtle watching tours for the community
- Training primary and secondary level teachers in the community

ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

- Co-ordination of **training programmes** for environmental educators, and the encouragement of active learning at the primary and secondary levels in the field of science.
- **Site carrying capacity studies** and a **social carrying capacity** for Matura should be conducted.
- **Trail management practices** should be employed to ensure that there is minimal impact of visitors on trails.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- A visitor management plan should be established for Matura aimed at:
 - Attracting visitors to during the turtle season and sustaining visitor levels outside of these peak periods;
 - Increasing opportunities for engagement and understanding of tourism and conservation;
 - Improving physical access and creating linkages within the economy of Matura;
 - Providing ancillary visitor services;

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- Managing the impact of visitors;
- Monitoring and evaluation.
- A tourism site identification and classification plan should also be developed to categorise the existing tourism sites and outline the desired level of development for these sites.
- Training programmes should be conducted in tourism support services e.g. accounting and revenue management, food safety training, and marketing and customer service.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- Tourism education in the community:
 - Education and interpretation programmes geared towards all levels of the society;
 - Hosting career days in both the Matura High School and Primary School highlighting the wide variety of careers in tourism;
 - Open days at the Nature Seekers centre to allow community members to visit and learn about tourism and conservation;

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- Promote a “Meet the Community” initiative and allow villagers to interact and share their culture with visitors to foster mutual understanding of the traditions and practices between both groups;
- Tour guiding certificate courses in specific ecotourism fields such as ornithology, dendrology, entomology and other fields related to tropical rainforest and marine environments.



CONCLUSION

- Matura has **tremendous potential** for the development of an integrated sustainable rural community tourism approach.
- The inventory of existing and potential tourism products proves that the **tourism product is diverse.**
- Existing tourism activities can be expanded to ensure **mutually beneficial relationships** between tourism, conservation and the economy of Matura.

CONCLUSION

- Through an integrated sustainable rural community approach, members of the community can all have a stake in the success of the community and be proud that the area is known as

“Matura: Home of the Leatherback Turtles”



**Thank you for
your
attention!**

