



December, 2017

Biodiversity Check Tourist Destination Samana, Dominican Republic.

Project: Biodiversity and Business in
Central America and the Dominican
Republic



Introduction

Yes – it is true, the Samana Peninsula has spectacular protected areas, beautiful semi-virgin beaches, a very considerable birdlife, the possibility of observing humpback whales, which is a spectacle that very few places in the world...

But all these natural values do not automatically make the Samana tourist destination an ecotourism or sustainable tourism destination. Samana – like all other destinations in the Dominican Republic – has serious environmental problems, some of them clearly visible to tourists, such as garbage being everywhere, including on the semi-virgin beaches. Most environmental problems would have an easy solution, considering that the technical solutions for them are known and available, such as: proper waste management, an effective recycling system, proper wastewater treatment, protection of coral reefs...

But, why does a tourist destination like Samana, which has the potential to become an ecotourism destination par excellence, not work rigorously in solving the environmental problems that seriously affect biodiversity- its most important “capital” for a successful tourism development? Natural capital (ecosystems such as beaches and forests, fauna and flora, clean water, fertile soils, clean air, minerals, etc.) are a fundamental source of sustenance for the tourism business.

Failure to act cannot just be a matter of a lack of funding, because the Dominican Republic has access to multiple funds and there are donor organizations that would support the implementation of urgent environmental measures. It also cannot be the lack of knowledge and recommendations, because there are several good studies and analysis that point out the problems and impacts in the medium term.

So, what are the reasons that so far prevent the implementation of an Action Plan with effective measures to protect and recover the valuable “natural capital”?

This question can be better answered by the actors gathered at the Public-Private Table organized by the Samana Tourism Cluster. My first recommendation is the that Cluster together with the NGOs should urgently and rigorously dedicate themselves to the environmental problems and negative impacts on the ecosystems and fauna and flora of Samana, which equal the most

valuable capital for the tourism sector. It is understood that not all serious environmental problems can be solved at once, but it would be very important to draw up and implement an Action Plan for the Protection of Biodiversity – with effective measures, responsibilities and a timetable. The recommendations of the present Biodiversity Check are a valuable contribution to this plan.

The tourism destination of Samana should aspire to “high quality” tourists who appreciate the landscapes and intact nature, to observe the fauna and flora with well-trained guides, accommodation and other high quality tourist services, discover the cultural values of the destination... Bet on having tourists who are willing to pay an adequate, fair price for high-quality sustainable tourism products and services.

These types of consumers are normally experienced and well-informed tourists. They do not expect an intact paradise, but they do expect that the tourist destination has a serious and forceful strategy to become a sustainable tourism destination in a given time. Informing tourists and involving them in environmental and social activities would be an important element of this strategy.

What type of tourists does the tourism destination of Samana want? How much tourism can the destination and its ecosystems endure without degrading? And what advantages should tourism bring to the local population?

Analyzing and finding answers to these main questions is very important to successfully develop a destination recognized as a place of sustainable tourism!

All of this is very important because thousands of tourist destinations offer semi-virgin beaches, beautiful landscapes, spectacular forests.... And many have serious environmental problems that are not mentioned in the brochures. Very few tourist destinations implement an action plan in a serious and transparent way to solve these serious issues. Doing it this way would be a key aspect, with which Samana could positively differentiate itself from so many other destinations.

With the Biodiversity Check and the assistance in the preparation of an Action Plan, we want to support the Cluster, the Ministries of Tourism and Environment, and the other actors. Hopefully Samana takes advantage of this great opportunity to position itself as a sustainable and responsible tourism destination in the highly competitive tourism market.

Marion Hammerl
President
Global Nature Fund

INDEX

- 1. Biodiversity Check Tourism 6**
- 2. Profile of the Tourism Destination Samana..... 9**
- 3. Tourism development of Samana and Biodiversity16**
- 4. Biodiversity Check Tourism Destination Samana.....20**
 - Strategy and planning..... 20
 - Protected areas and landscape development..... 24
 - Environmental infrastructures 27
 - Information for tourism companies 28
 - Information for tourists 31
 - Education/Training 33
 - Commitment to the protection of Biodiversity..... 34
- 5. Proposal for the follow-up of the Action Plan35**
- 6. Information on the EuropeAid Project Biodiversity and Business36**

1. Biodiversity Check Tourism



Biodiversity Check- Objectives:

Initiate a structured dialogue with the tourism destination about:

- Relation between tourism and biodiversity.
- Significance of biodiversity for the tourism destination.
- Impacts of tourism on biodiversity (direct and indirect).
- Possible measures to reduce impacts and protect biodiversity.
- Motivate tourism companies and administrations to integrate biodiversity into the management system.



The Biodiversity Check:

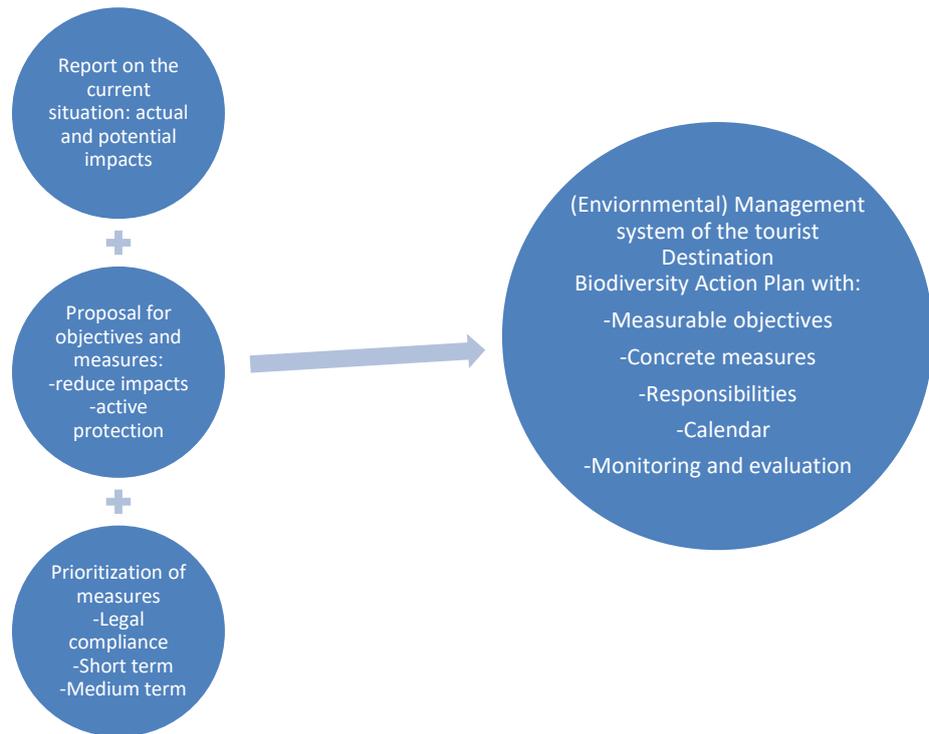
Is:

- An analysis equivalent to the “performance audit” of ISO 140001 (which equals an analysis of the current situation).
- First step to integrate biodiversity into the company’s (environmental) management system.
- Confidential.

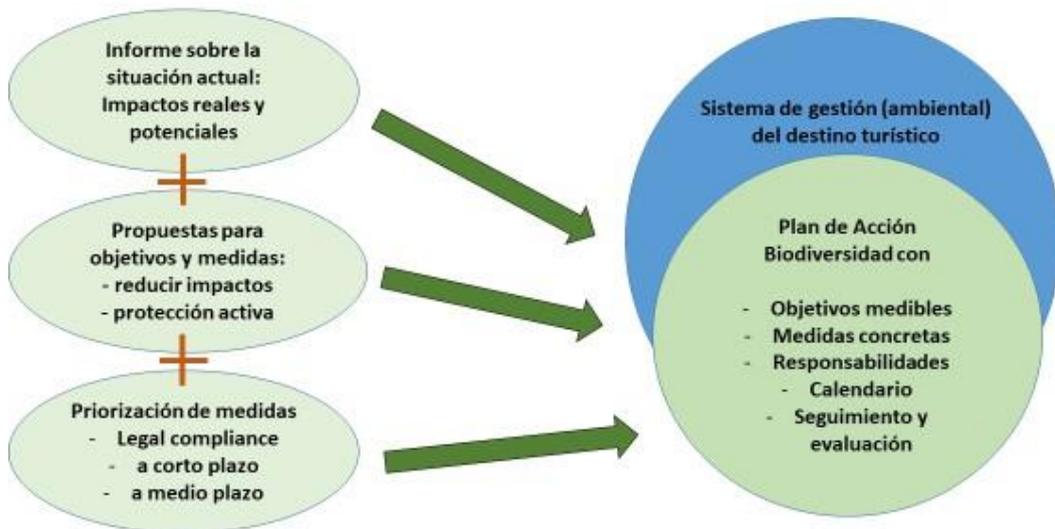
Is Not:

- A label or certificate.
- A deep analysis of the entire company and its relationship with biodiversity (Environmental Impact Study).
- A commitment by the company to continue with the issue.

Expected Results

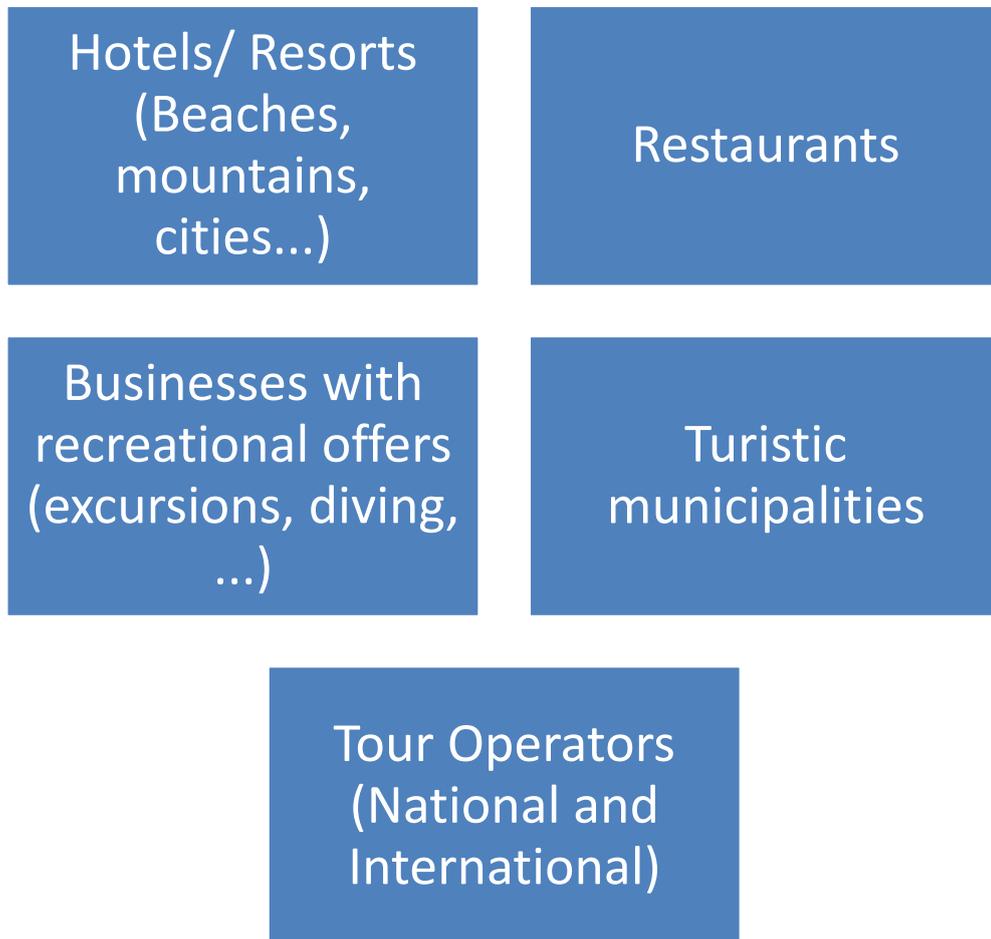


Resultados esperados



Biodiversity Check for all types of companies and tourist organizations!

Tourism Destination Samana = Responsible for the management = Tourism Cluster of Samana



Biodiversity Check para todo tipo de empresa y organización turística!



2. Profile of the Tourism Destination Samana

Sources consulted:

- Strategic Plan for Tourism Development of the Destination Samana 2014 – 2024
- Study of Coral Reefs in the Samana Province
- Interviews with members of the Samana Tourism Cluster
- Results of the Round Table: Biodiversity and the Tourism Destination of Samana

Organizations relevant to the management of the destination:

The Samana Tourism Cluster is a conglomerate of companies and institutions based in the province that have a direct or indirect impact on the tourism sector. They are organized as a group of interests to promote the Destination's value chain in an organized manner and thus enhance the competitiveness of each one of them in particular and of the sector in general.

The cluster is composed of about 62 members from hotels, restaurants, associations and institutions linked to tourism development in the province of Samana.

The Destination Management Organization, DMO, is a public-private structure that deals with the management of various aspects of the destination, both from a strategic point of view and from an operational point of view. The Samana Tourism Cluster is the natural entity that has the capacity to act as the DMO of the Samana destination.

The DMO is a necessary interlocutor between the tourism sector of Samana and the local community, which it tries to involve in tourism businesses and ventures through a series of strategies and measures that must be included in the strategic marketing plan and operating destination. The DMO is also in charge of the supervision and quality control, establishing and focusing the minimum quality levels, as well as managing, where appropriate, a brand or system of quality and tourism sustainability for the destination. One of the missions of the DMO is to define new projects to improve the destination, as well as to locate the financing and technical assistance necessary to execute them, with the support of the rest of the destination entities for each type of project.

Administration:

- Three Municipalities: Sánchez, Santa Bárbara de Samana and Las Terrenas
- Three Municipal Districts: Las Galeras, El Limón and Arroyo Barril.
- Protected Areas: The Marine Mammal Sanctuaries Silver Bank and Christmas, Cabo Cabrón National Park, Los Haitises National Park, Manglares del Bajo Yuna National Park, Cabo Francés Viejo Natural Monument, Salto El Limón Natural Monument, Cabo Samana Natural Monument and Protected Landscapes, Panoramic Roads, the Sanchez Highway.

Population:

- According to the preliminary results of the 2010 census, the province of Samana was inhabited by 101,494 inhabitants, which represented 1.07% of the national population, spread over about 2% of the territory. Plus 10 – 15% of migrants from Haiti.
- The population is very irregularly distributed in the 850 km² of its surface.
- Although the province has been reducing its growth rate, in the last half century Samana has grown at rates above the national average.
- High index of masculinity in the province.

Education /Employment

One of the main factors of the underdevelopment of the province is the situation with regards to education and consequently the quality of human capital. This is an area in which there has been considerable progress, but where the province is still in a very unfavorable situation.

In 2007, an institution conducted a national survey that covered 429 households in the province. According to this, 13% of the population over the age of ten was illiterate, 60% had a primary level or less, and only 5% had a university level. Particularly serious was the situation of several thousand children and adolescents between the ages of 6 and 17 who were not attending school. This indicated a net attendance rate of only 90%.

Although the province has experienced a notable growth in tourist activity, the jobs generated in the area are minority, and Samanenses continue to be linked to the labor market through various informal activities that are difficult to identify, which helps to explain the high rate of poverty registered in the province.

Biodiversity

In Samana there are three types of life zones: the Very Humid Subtropical Forest found in the upper parts of the mountains, the Subtropical Humid Forest, located from the coast to around an altitude of 400 meters above sea level and the Subtropical Dry Forest, located in the Cabo Samana Lighthouse.

Beaches and dunes in a completely virgin state, with forests in the mountains and tropical vegetation associated with the coastal-marine area, abundant aquifers and an indigenous/native fauna of great diversity. Today tourism development is decisively affecting these natural conditions and therefore the destination has lost part of what was its main attraction.

Legislation with relevance for Biodiversity

- Environmental legislation of the Dominican Republic
 - Law 64-00 and its sector son Biodiversity and Protected Areas
- Sectorial Plan for Tourist Territorial Planning of Samana, Las Terrenas and its Normative Regulations
- Management Plans for National Parks and Protected Areas

Landscape/Attractions for tourism

Coral Reefs

The coast of Samana presents an interesting coral reef system that can be considered as one of the important tourism resources for the development of the area. On the one hand, the shore reef is present, located at a distance of between 100 and 200 meters from the coast forming scattered patches throughout the coastal area. This reef can be visited with snorkeling gear given its shallow depth, but only in areas where the wave break allows it. Most of the coast of the Samana peninsula is within the protected area of the Scientific Reserve- Marine Mammal Sanctuaries Silver Bank and Christmas. Coral reefs are a fundamental element for the conservation of biodiversity on the coasts of the peninsula and for the sustainability of the artisanal fishing, of which many locals live off. For this reason, its conservation as one of the most important natural resources in the coastal area is essential. The most interesting reef area to enhance its use as a diving point are the external reefs, located in front of the coast at a greater depth, which allows visiting with scuba equipment. Later on we will make a count of the main external reefs located off the coast of the Municipal District of El Limon and its area of influence.

Coasts

The beauty of its coasts, together with the large number of beaches they are dotted with and the great attractions that it presents, for the most part contained within the seven protected areas declared in the province, make Samana appear as one of the most promising tourism destination attractions in the Dominican Republic.

The coasts of Samana are located to the North in the Atlantic Ocean and to the south in the Bay of Samana. **Several rivers** flow into the bay, the most important being the Yuna and the Barracote, which form large estuaries at their mouths. On the coasts that frame the Bay, from Punta Palometa to Punta Yabon, have 45.5% (63.8km) of rocky coastline and 25.8% (36.2km) of sandy coastline, with about 29% of mangroves). Mangroves are more abundant in the areas of Coson, El Portillo and El Limon.

The main **beaches** of Samana are: La Majagua, Cosón, Playa Bonita, Las Terrenas, Playa El Portillo, Morón, El Limón, Lanza del Norte, Las Canas, El Valle, Las Galeras, El Rincón, Los Cacaos, Anadel, Anacaona and Cayo Levantado, among others.

Seven Protected Areas: Los Haitises National Park (1970), Silver Bank Marine Mammal Sanctuary (Samana Bay and the waters of the entire peninsula), Salto del Limon Natural Monument, Cabo Cabron National Park and the Natural Monument Cape Samana; Gran Estero Wildlife Refuge. Samana's protected areas currently receive more than 100,000 visitors a year, interested in their scenic beauty and cultural elements.

Tourism quality of the resource according to the Strategic Plan for Tourism Development of the Destination Samana 2014 – 2024:

- Marine Mammal Sanctuaries Silver Bank and Christmas = Excellent
- Cabo Cabrón National Park = Very good
- Los Haitises National Park = Excellent
- Manglares del Bajo Yuna National Park= Very good
- Salto del Limón Natural Monument = Excellent
- Cabo Samana Natural Monument = Excellent
- Gran Estero Wildlife Refuge = Poor

Highlights of the Fauna

Humpback Whales: the trip to the **Humpback Whale Sanctuary** in Samana is one of the most beautiful excursions that exist in the Dominican Republic. Between the months of December and March, some 2,000 Humpback Whales come to breed in the warm waters off the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Almost all the populations of the North Atlantic come to reproduce and give birth in the Bay of Samana. Since 1986 the Silver Bank, Samana has become a sanctuary for the protection of whales.

According to the Ministry of Tourism, in 2016 the number of local and foreign tourists who visited the Silver and Christmas Banks and the Bay of Samana Marine Mammal Sanctuary, during the 2016 Humpback Whale Watching Season, increased 19% with respect to the year before. The number of tourists who visited the sanctuary in the Humpback Whale Season of 2015 was 44,900, while in 2016 it was 55,519 visitors.

Current Tourism Infrastructure (According to the Strategic Plan for Tourism Development of the Destination Samana 2014 – 2024)

Approximately 4,000 hotel rooms. Most are small hotels; six hotels with more than 100 rooms. Average occupancy = 75% (only higher are Punta Cana with 79% and Romana-Bayahibe with 77%).

Tourist Quality of the Resources (four categories: Poor, Good, Very Good and Excellent)

- Roads/Highways: Excellent
- Two airports: Excellent
- Cruise port: Very good
- One marina: Excellent
- Diving (e.g. reefs of the islets of Las Ballenas): Very good
- Whale Museum (Local NGO called Center for the Eco-development of the Samana Bay and its Environment, CEBSE): Very good
- Artisanal Craftsmanship: Very good
- Popular architecture: Very good (but it is fading fast)
- Casas Victorianas de Sánchez (they are in very bad condition): Very good
- The bridge of Samana: Very good
- Methodist Church of San Pedro, popularly known as La Churcha: Excellent
- Fort of the Arrows de la Flechas: Medium
- The Chasseriau House: Excellent
- The Morón cannon: Excellent
- Origin of the population: Poor
- Harvest festivities: Good
- Traditional dances: Good
- Carnival: Excellent
- Festivities (Fiestas Patronales): Excellent
- Typical gastronomy: Excellent
- Victor's Cave: Good
- De la Rosa's Cave: Good
- Religious Cave: Poor
- Railway Cave: Excellent
- Sand Cave: Excellent
- San Gabriel Cave: Excellent
- The shelter of Puerto Bomboche (Los Haitises National Park): Excellent
- The spring of Ojo del Cielo (near Los Haitises National Park): Excellent
- 16 Beach: from Very good to Excellent
- Coral reefs: Good
- Whales: Excellent
- Palmarito River: Excellent
- San Juan River: Good
- Limón River: Excellent
- Barracote River: Very Good
- Crista Lagoon: Very good
- Salada Lagoon: Very good
- Del Diablo Lagoon: Very good

- Caño de las Canas Wetland: Excellent
- Caño Frío: Excellent
- Salto del Limón Waterfall: Excellent
- Salto de la Cola del Indio: Excellent
- Salto de la Tosa: Very good
- Salto del Palmarito: Excellent
- Mirín Cave: Excellent
- Boca del Diablo Cave: Very good
- Seven Natural Parks

69% of the attractions of the destination are elements of nature!

Tourism Market (2012 – 2013) Source: Strategic Plan for Tourism Development of the Destination Samana 2014 – 2024

World comparison. Increase in tourist arrivals 2012-2013		
	2012	2013
World	4.0%	5.0%
Europe	3.4%	5.4%
Asia- Pacific	6.8%	6.0%
America	4.5%	3.6%
Caribbean	4.9%	1.8%
Africa	6.9%	5.6%
Middle East	-5.2%	0.3%

2013: Arrival of tourists to the Dominican Republic 4.7 million (2% increase)

Arrival of tourists to Samana (El Catey Airport) = 54.000 = 1,3 % of the total Tourists from Canada (67%) USA (13%) UK (11%).

From other airports?

Online Travel Purchase (e.g. TripAdvisor)

Main Source Markets Worldwide:

Russia +29%

China + 22 %

Brazil + 15%

Canada +3%

USA +2%

France + 2%; UK +2%; Germany 0%

According to the Spanish Tourism Institute: Six Tourism Profiles:

Family and ethnic

Discoverer

Pure Vacation
Vital
Cultural Vacation

3. Tourism development of Samana and Biodiversity

Source: Strategic Plan for Tourism Development of Destination Samana 2014-2024

Strengths

- Excellent beaches in the Destination.
- Virgin nature.
- Existence of a spectacular network of well-preserved protected areas that can be visited, for the most part with few conflicts of use with the surrounding local communities.
- The area is one of the entrances to Los Haitises National Park.
- Whale watching season in the Bay in February and March.
- Existence of other cultural and natural resources of great potential that are simply lacking intervention of their potential as a suitable tourist attraction, to which more detailed reference is made in the inventories of natural and cultural resources present in this document.

Weaknesses

Lack of sustainable tourism development planning

- Lack of landscape management and uprooting plans in the roads of the towns, especially at the entrance to Santa Barbara of Samana.
- Constructive disorder in coastal towns, mainly in front of the beach, with very precarious and disorderly constructions.
- Lack of plans for public use and tourist use in the protected areas of the province.
- Lack of a management plan for the entire territory agreed upon by all stakeholders.
- Lack of an updated detailed inventory and of an Intervention Plan on cultural heritage resources, including artisan and artisan products.

Lack of a sustainable tourism strategy and its implementation

- Lack of a corporate identity and a strategic operational plan linked to environmental, landscape, cultural and socio-cultural sustainability.
- The need to combine the current tourism development model with strategies for local tourism and productive development of excellence and progressive qualification.
- There is a need for a tourism innovation plan in the medium and long term.
- Lack of informative and interpretive signage of the protected areas oriented to tourist activity, including the location and access to them.
- Poor public transport network in the Destination.
- Poor management of the jetty and nautical transport activity in the bay for whale watching.
- Little regulation of intensive maritime traffic during whale season.
- Lack of an interpretive plan of the destination.

Lack of investment in the protection of natural capital

- Need to provide Los Haitises National Park with a powerful corporate image and identity as a brand of protected territory of high ecological value that involves the entire destination.
- Lack of well-trained human resources in hospitality and specialized tourism: whale watching, bird watching, driving, sport fishing, etc.

Lack of image

- Destination without a consolidated brand in the international market.
- The Dominican Republic is not recognized as a destination to enjoy nature.
- Lack of a tourist image of the destination that is differentiated and harmonized with the rest of the tourist image of the Dominican Republic.

Opportunities

- Rise in the world of sustainable and responsible tourism and the model of integration of local society in tourism activity and in the application of corporate social responsibility policies within the framework of tourism activity.
- Interest in the international market for nature tourism and the discovery of unique enclaves.
- Interest in competitive cultural tourism products, in order to enrich and diversify the stay of tourists.
- Existence of new source markets and new segments by increasing the diversity and specialization of the offer, enhancing all the resources of the destination that at this moment are not valued or can be visited.
- Generate a reference destination in training, quality and tourism sustainability in relation to the progressive qualification of the Samana offer.
- Generate a concept and a quality model of its own that reinforces the corporate image of the destination.
- Interest in the generation of complementary tourist products.
- Opportunity for a more effective and comprehensive management of the destination, based on the creation of a Destination Management Unit represented by the Samana Tourism Cluster.
- Create a qualified and differentiated model of sun and beach resort tourism, increasingly integrated with the local reality.

Threats

- Local communities living in rural Samana produce charcoal, causing deforestation and degradation of terrestrial habitats.
- Over-fishing and hunting have reduced fish, shrimp, lobster and shellfish in general.
- International whaling that affects the populations that travel to the Samana Bay.
- Lack of a national plan to raise awareness and stimulate professional education and training in hospitality and tourism.
- Sea level rise and the occurrence of hurricanes due to climate change.

- **Environmental problems reinforced by tourism:**
 - Salinization of underground aquifers.
 - Contamination of soils and groundwater and Surface waters by poorly treated liquid waste.
 - Pollution due to poorly managed solid waste.
 - Solid garbage in the coastal marine area and especially on the beaches.
 - Destruction of the dunes and their original vegetation.
 - Pollution of the beaches and coastal waters by oils and fuels from boat traffic of the coast.
 - Air pollution from gas emissions from motor vehicles and other sources of pollution.
 - Degradation of coral reefs due to overfishing and poor management of sports diving activities.
 - Degradation of forest areas due to cutting of vegetation to make charcoal, prepare conucos or dedicate plots to real estate activity.

Destination's Vision (according to the Strategic Plan for Tourism Development of the Destination Samana 2014 – 2024): Samana is a high quality sustainable destination with components of nature, ecotourism, sun and beach that cover all ranges of tourist demands, from relaxation to the most dynamic activities, within a scheme of respect for nature and characterized by the safety of visitors and the cordiality of the population.

Activities proposed in the Strategic Plan – among them:

3- Improve the environmental quality and the situation of the natural resources of the Destination.

A high environmental quality is the best letter of introduction with which Samana can present itself to the tourists who visit the Destination. The problems that generate the deficient handling of solid and liquid waste are presented in one way or another to the tourists during their stay and have a very negative influence on hotel performance. The added costs caused by the mismanagement of waste in terms of lost working hours due to illness, health scandals among tourists, loss of contracts with tour operators, etc., are enormous. For this reason, maintaining a high environmental quality is not only positive for the image of the destination, but also for its profitability. In order to significantly improve the environmental situation of Samana, we propose the following lines of action and activities:

- Sign an agreement of good practices for the management of solid and liquid waste between the main hotels and tourist developments of the Destination.
- Bring the Las Terrenas wastewater treatment plant into optimal operating conditions.
- Request the National Government to start up the Santa Barbara treatment plant and the construction of water treatment plants for Las Galeras and Sanchez.
- Request the National Government to build a regional sanitary landfill for Samana, Las Terrenas, Sanchez and Las Galeras.
- In conjunction with the Ministry of Environment, prepare a regional reforestation plan and support its implementation.
- Create environmental awareness programs and disseminate them among the employees of the hotels and tourist developments and the communities of the Destination.
- Carry out a study of the situation of the province's aquifers and implement measures to mitigate their salinization and contamination.
- Stop the deforestation and the manufacture of charcoal in the province.

- Clean up and recover the Las Terrenas river.

6 – Expand the complementary offer of the Destination.

A large part of the critical mass of tourists who can visit the Destination consider the possibility of experiencing and discovering new things, discovering cultural resources, enjoying nature experiences and ultimately exploring the Destination as fundamental. For this, it is essential to have a whole range of possibilities that can satisfy all the demands that the tourist requires during their stay. Although the offer of excursions and sports in Samana is very rich, we consider that it should be expanded even more, using little-known natural and cultural resources, that with a moderate investment can be put to use in a sustainable way. Based on this need, we present the following lines of action and activities:

- Carry out an opinion survey to find out the views of tourists on the general complementary offer of the Destination and what they consider is lacking in this field.
- Apply corrective measures to the extent possible to adapt the tourist experience to the complementary offer and adapt it to their preferences.
- Train the guides of the Destination to offer a professional service by giving true and enjoyable information to the tourist about what they are shown.
- Carry out an in-depth study of the province's cultural and natural resources and their possibilities for public use.
- Expand the offer of excursions where archaeological, ethnological and monumental cultural resources are visited.
- Make an agreement with the Ministry of Environment to promote excursions of a natural nature to the protected areas of the province.
- Create an annual event on the occasion of Carnival that brings together gastronomic and ethnic elements to consolidate it as an identity celebration of the tourist destination.

Integrate the local population in the tourism development of Samana

- Carry out awareness days on climate change, environmental, labor, hygiene and tourist treatment issues in the different communities of the province of Samana.
- Support the management of local NGOs that work supporting the Destination's communities.

Boost the cruise industry? – The authors of the Biodiversity Check recommend looking at the pros and cons of growing the cruise industry:

- What average amount do tourists spend in Samana?
- Who benefits from what cruise passengers spend?
- What expenses do cruise passengers produce, taking into account environmental expenses (e.g. increased garbage, wastewater) as well as investments in infrastructure etc.?
- What is the economic value added produced by the cruise industry?
- Is the cruise industry compatible with the objective of attracting tourists who are sensitive and interested in nature and sustainability?

4. Biodiversity Check Tourism Destination Samana

Bellow the questions used as a reference for the Destination Biodiversity Check.

Strategy and y planning

- Is there a body for the management of the destination, with clearly defined competencies and responsibilities?
- Does the Destination know and respect the environmental legislation and regulations for tourism and protected areas (legal compliance)?
- Does the Destination know the biodiversity values (ecosystems, species) of the region, as well as the threats and pressures on ecosystems and species?
- Does the Destination evaluate the possible negative effects of tourism planning on the environment/biodiversity (e.g. through strategic environmental studies), publish the results and implement the recommendations?
- As part of environmental and sustainable management, does the Destination establish objectives (measurable if possible) for the conservation and promotion of biodiversity?
- Is a person from the organization for the management of the Destination in charge of managing and monitoring the implementation of activities related to the biodiversity as well as the impact of these activities?
- Is an environmental or sustainability report published annually with information on the evolution of biodiversity (objectives, actions, monitoring results)?

Current Situation

The Samana Tourism Cluster is made up of 62 members representing hotels, restaurants, associations and institutions linked to tourism development in the province of Samana. The Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment are also represented. A Public-Private Table is organized every month, as well as a Tourism Security Table. The Cluster is in the process of consolidating itself, in an attempt to unite all the competencies. At the tables, environmental aspects are also discussed. If the problem cannot be solved at the regional level, agencies with the necessary competencies are invited.

Both the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment report on environmental laws, including the Ministry of Tourism Resolution (2012) on the regulation of building in all tourist

destinations: 25 – 30 rooms for hotels on the beachfront and a maximum of 3 floors. 60 meters away from the beach. A minimum of 25 – 30% green area. Building prohibited in mangrove areas and wetlands. But there is a serious problem of beach erosion due to the destruction of coral reefs and climate change. That is why there are buildings that today are less than 60 meters away from the beach.

The Ministry of Tourism carries out control inspections for renewal of the permit. Due to the bureaucracy and the length of the process, many establishments are without a renewed permit. Environmental inspections have improved due to the new Minister of Environment. But in general there are not enough controls to effectively monitor compliance with environmental legislation.

Environmental / sustainable tourism certifications: there are expert technicians who help hotels / tour operators to obtain it free of charge, if they are interested. Currently no hotel in Samana is certified with an ecolabel. 3 Blue Flag beaches: Los Cayos Bahía Príncipe, Playa Náutica Samana, La Honda Bahía Príncipe Cayo Levantado.

Environmental Problems:

The most serious environmental problem is garbage. Lack of safe and well-managed landfills, as well as a lack of treatment of toxic substances. Contamination of soils and groundwater and surface waters by poorly treated liquid waste.

Unsealed landfills pollute the soil and groundwater. In addition, there is solid waste in the rivers, the coastal area, on the beaches and in the sea.

Garbage is the number one complaint of tourists, especially of the ones in the cruises.

Within the framework of the “Clean Dominican Plan,” a provincial garbage treatment plant with collection centers in each municipality is being planned. The land has already been purchased, but it will still take 2-3 more years until the new plants come into operation. What will be done in the meantime to improve garbage management? It is not yet known!

Another serious problem is wastewater treatment. There is a modern plant in Las Terrenas, but it doesn't work. Other municipalities have inefficient plants or simply do not have plants. There are settlements and hotels that have only septic tanks.

Noise from loud music and motorcycles is a problem too.

Illegal logging: this problem is exacerbated by migrants = charcoal culture even coal factories are set up in the mountains. The control responsibility is under the Provincial Ministry of Environment.

Lack of control on the indiscriminate fishing. There are many problems due to lack of respect on the fish bans: Parrotfish (2-year ban), shark, lobster... There is constant surveillance of the fishmongers and other points of sale.

There are very few fishermen who fish sustainably. It is very difficult to work with the fishermen's associations. The commercialization of the Lionfish is being tried, but so far it has not been very successful.

Problems with illegal souvenirs: Dried starfish, turtle shells...

Destruction of coral reefs by boat anchors, cruise ship anchors (destroy up to 200 meters of coral / sea floor), overfishing, poorly managed diving activity, garbage and climate change.

Plan for the tourism development:

- Samana – A special destination with a semi-virgin characteristic
- Double the number of hotel rooms and tourists: 10,000 rooms to receive 500,000 tourists / year, but maintaining the regulations regarding construction.
- One of the best bays for boats and cruises
- Golf course
- Adaptation of several beaches, e.g. Playa Principal and Playa del Rincon = build parking, equip with electricity, etc.

Recommendations

Measure	Term	Comments
<p>Prepare and implement an intermediate solution to improve waste management until the provincial treatment plant is in operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a toxic / hazardous waste collection system. - Catalog of measures for the reduction of garbage. - Carry out a study to establish a system for the collection and selective collection of plastics for recycling. <p>Responsible: Ministry of Environment in collaboration with the Clean Dominican Plan (Dominicana Limipia).</p> <p>It is not the most important thing, but it would help raise awareness and reduce plastic: No Plastic Straw Campaign in hotels and restaurants.</p>	<p>Short term</p> <p>The province is currently not in legal compliance!</p>	<p>Enlist the support of large beverage companies (e.g. Coca Cola, Nestle) to implement a system for collecting PET plastic bottles. Motto: “Samana –Plastic Zero”</p>
<p>Implement a system of fines for people and companies that litter in inappropriate/prohibited places.</p> <p>Publicize this system of fines.</p> <p>Implementation: Local municipalities with the support of the Cluster and the Ministry of Environment.</p>	<p>Short term</p>	
<p>Implementation of an alternative system for cruise ship and boat anchorages.</p> <p>This should be one of the most urgent measures, because it is absurd that on the one hand investing in the recovery of coral reefs, while at the same time destroying part of the reef every day by anchoring boats and cruise ships.</p>	<p>Short term</p>	<p>There are alternative systems. Documentation of the anchors and drafting of a letter to the Ministry of Environment</p>

Implementation: Navy, Ministry of Environment, Samana City Council.		and to the ships where an alternative anchoring system is required.
Regulation to eliminate the destruction of coral reefs by anchors.	Short term	CEBSE technical guidance. Implementation and follow up?
Support to the restoration activities of CEBSE (pilot nurse in Cayo Farola) and reef conservation in collaboration with FUNDEMAR.	Short term	
Take advantage of the recently prepared studies on the evaluation of the vulnerability of the Municipality of Las Terrenas, for the Municipal Planning and Territorial Plan and a Plan of Adaptation Measures of the Municipality of Las Terrenas within the framework of the development plans and land use planning carried out by ICMA/USAID in the Program for Planning for Climate Adaptation, with measures on beach erosion and the recovery of coastal ecosystems.	Short term	
Prepare a plan for the implementation of measures to stop beach erosion and the recovery of coastal ecosystems.	Short term	
Assessment of tourism activities related to nature / biodiversity: What are the strengths and weaknesses? How to improve environmental quality? Exclusive promotion of sustainable tourism activities compatible with biodiversity: in the website, at fairs, to tour operators.	Short term	Cluster With the support of GIZ and the Ministry of Environment
Review of the strategy for tourism development in Samana: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of tourism does the province want? • How much tourism and for what? Positioning of Samana as a destination for sustainable tourism with high environmental quality. Main focus towards nature tourism for experienced tourists interested in nature and culture and willing to pay a higher price for quality services. Consistent implementation of the strategy.	Medium term	Cluster with the support of GIZ/GNF, Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Environment

Protected areas and landscape development

- Does the Destination management know the protected areas as well as habitats and threatened species in the region and regularly inform the tourism companies?
- Is the Destination in regular contact with the competent authorities on environmental conversation issues?

If a protected area management plan has not been established:

- Does the Destination influence the competent authorities to ensure the drafting and implementation of a management plan?
- Is the impact of tourism activities on biological diversity monitored by monitoring indicator species?
- Are the results taken into account in tourism planning?

If there is a regional monitoring for biodiversity:

- Does the Destination provide tourism data and respect the recommendations based on the monitoring results?
- Does the destination voluntarily commit to the definition of: No-Go areas, which equal no access zones? For example, primary ecosystems, areas of high conservation value (HCV), indigenous areas and conserved communities?

Current Situation

28% of the surface of Samana is protected area and cannot be built on. Three of the seven protected areas implement a Management Plan. For those that do not have one, the carrying capacity is not estimated, nor is tourism use regulated. This is causing problems, especially in the protected area of Salto del Limon, visited by too high a number of people (70 – 80,000 people annually) and the corresponding negative impacts on the landscape (illegal and unsafe roads, garbage...) as well as abused horses. A new co-management agreement is necessary for this protected area.

Of the seven protected areas, at least three have management plans, although these have not been implemented. These plans are: a) Management Plan for the Cabo Cabron Natural Monument 2012-2017; b) Management Plan for the Los Haitises National Park 2012-2017; and c) Management Plan for the Silver and Christmas Bank Marine Mammal Sanctuary 2015-2020. El Salto del Limon does not yet have a Management Plan, nor have any studies been carried out on the carrying capacity or regulated tourist use. The Community Association of the Salto del Limon Ecotourism (ACESAL, for its acronym in Spanish) is requesting the Ministry of Environment to carry out the creation of a Management Plan.

In general, funds dedicated to protected areas are not invested in a transparent manner in the improvement/restoration of the protected area. It would be very urgent to have transparency regarding financial funds for protected areas and the use of these funds. That would also be an essential basis, if the government wants co-financing from the private sector.

There is monitoring of the impact of tourism activities.

Guides for recreational activities in protected areas lack environmental training and tourism training (e.g. languages).

Recommendations

Measures	Term	Comments
<p>Urgently establish a regulation for visits to the Salto del Limon protected area: Limitations of the number of people per day and annually based on a coherent study of the carrying capacity of the area.</p> <p>Develop a visitor management system with delimitation of accesses (adaptation of roads), landscape interpretation and zero waste. A vigilance to ensure the welfare of the horses should be established.</p> <p>Carry out a study to turn the visit of Salto del Limon into a unique experience and an example for other protected areas (study based on positive examples of visits to protected areas in other countries) and establish a public-private co-management route for the area.</p> <p>Prepare the Management Plan for the Salto El Limon Natural Monument.</p> <p>Responsible: Ministry of Environment in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and ACESAL.</p>	Short term	<p>There are many positive examples of turning protected sites into a “unique” visitor site highly valued by tourists. That requires regulation and high-quality site management.</p> <p>The recommended tasks could be carried out within the framework of the projects currently underway to support the sustainable tourism development of the province.</p>
<p>Establish a monitoring system for the environmental impacts caused by the tourist use of the Salto del Limon protected area.</p> <p>Responsible: Ministry of Environment</p>	Medium term	Impacts on habitats and 3 – 5 indicator species
<p>Request Management Plans – including regulations for tourist use – from the Ministry of Environment for the seven protected areas of the province.</p> <p>Request the implementation of existing Management Plans.</p>	Short term	Cluster
<p>Prepare and implement a plan to promote CEBSE’s campaign for the protection of Parrotfish throughout the province.</p> <p>Publish participating hotels and restaurants. Prepare a brochure for tourists: Importance of action and recommendation to eat in restaurants who support the campaign.</p>	Short term	All members of the Cluster should participate in the promotion

<p>Campaign against illegal souvenirs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation of a list of illegal souvenirs (protected species, CITES species) and information for hotels and other tourist actors. - Preparation of a brochure for tourists: souvenirs that should not be bought and souvenirs made in a sustainable way by local communities. - Distribution of the brochure. - Controls for the sale of souvenirs on the beaches, markets, shops... 	Short term	Cluster in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism
Promotion of whale watching tours in Cayo La Farola	Short term	Cluster, Ministry of Tourism
Assessment of the carrying capacity of Cayo La Farola and planning and strict regulation of tourist use based on the results.	Short term	CEBSE with the support of the Ministry of Environment
Improvement of the environmental quality of the Cayo La Faro offer: Training of fishermen guides, binoculars for observation, brochure or App with information on fauna and flora, zero waste on the island.	Short term	CEBSE with the support of the Ministry of Environment and the GIZ/GNF
Evaluation of whale watching activity as part of monitoring and compliance with regulations, considering the new players incorporated and the increase in the number of boats to watch.	Short term	CEBSE/ASDUBAHISA

Environmental Infrastructures

- Is there adequate solid waste management at the Destination?
- Is there a structure for the selective collection of waste and for recycling waste at the Destination?
- Is there a proper structure and management of wastewater at the Destination?

In the destinations where there is no adequate treatment of waste and sewage:

- Does the Destination management strongly exert its influence to improve this situation that endangers the natural capital of the destination?
- Does the Destination know the water consumption and the volume of waste per tourist / day?

Current Situation

Garbage management is chaotic in the province. See Environmental Problems section. The Ministry of Environment does not have competences regarding waste management, it can only offer technical assistance. There are no fines for private persons or for businesses that litter. As of 2018, the Las Galeras City Council will put into effect a new ordinance and will fine people who litter. But the Municipality does not have a police force, which makes it difficult to control compliance with ordinances.

There is no systematic recycling system. There are micro-companies that recycle plastic in landfills. There is no separate garbage collection.

Wastewater: See Environmental Problems section. A REDDOM project works on water treatment through Green Filters. Most houses and hotels have septic tanks. There are emptied by companies from Santo Domingo and a company in Las Terrenas. They all have to have an environmental license. An advance is the hotels that have anaerobic wells, e.g. in the Municipality of Las Galeras.

There is a company that reuses used oils = Association of ...?

Recommendations

Measures	Term	Comments
<p>Prepare and implement an intermediate solution to improve waste management until the provincial treatment plant is in operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a toxic / hazardous waste collection system. - Catalog of measures for the reduction of garbage. - Carry out a study to establish a system for the collection and selective collection of plastics for recycling. - <p>Responsible: Ministry of Environment in collaboration with the Clean Dominican Plan (Dominicana Limpia).</p>	<p>Short term</p> <p>The province is currently not in legal compliance!</p>	<p>Enlist the support of large beverage companies (e.g. Coca Cola, Nestle) to implement a system for collecting PET plastic bottles.</p> <p>Motto: "Samana – Plastic Zero"</p>
<p>Implement a system of fines for people and companies that litter in inappropriate places / prohibited.</p>	<p>Short term</p>	<p>City Council's with the support of the Cluster</p>
<p>Develop a Project for the creation of 2 – 3 different green filters for wastewater treatment (for a hotel, for a settlement...). Present the project to various donor organizations.</p> <p>Responsible: Cluster</p>	<p>Short term</p>	<p>The hotel and the municipality should contribute the land to install the green filter as their own contribution. GIZ/GNF can support the development of the draft.</p>
<p>Demand a Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency subsidy program.</p>	<p>Short term</p>	<p>Cluster with the support of the Ministry of Environment and GIZ</p>

Information for tourism companies

Is there a working group / union that meets regularly to discuss environmental / biodiversity issues in the tourist destination?

The tourist companies of the Destination are informed about:

- The importance and the necessary measures for the protection of nature and the species.
- Sustainable tourism certifications.

Is influence exerted so that the realization of tourist activities is exclusively within the legally permitted framework?

The tourist Destination promotes among local tourism businesses (hotels, restaurants, etc.) the use / processing of:

- Certified sea fish, certified farmed fish, or fish from the region whose fishing or farming is respectful of the environment and can be verified.
 - Certified organic farming products (regional).
 - Products not grown in the country with sustainability certification (e.g. tea).
 - Products made by local communities and respectful of the environment / nature.
 - Products that respect animal welfare.
- Does the Destination help tourism companies to facilitate the purchase of environmentally friendly products, e.g. information on products with an environmental certificate, creating alliances to buy organic products more economically, supporting local initiatives to produce organic products?
 - Does the Destination promote among local tourism businesses not to buy or sell products (souvenirs or food) included in the CITES International Agreement or that are protected for any reason?
 - Does the tourist Destination encourage local tourist businesses to commit themselves to the protection of ecosystems and / or threatened flora and fauna species in the region and support (economically) protection measures?
 - Is the Destination informed about invasive species in the region and transmits this information to local tourism companies?
 - Are tourism companies informed of the ecologically sensitive areas of the region?

The Destination encourages accommodation establishments and providers of recreational activities to design and maintain at least 30% of the exterior surface in a natural way through:

- Avoid pesticides and herbicides.
- Promote structural and wilderness diversity in certain areas of the facility (uncut grass margins, dead Wood, dry stone walls, native shrub hedges, etc.).
- Use of native plants of the region.
- Facades and roofs with natural cover.

Current Situation

The Cluster organizes awareness activities for tourism actors. Training for young people from Las Galeras y currently planned. Environmental aspects could be included in the planned courses.

Calculations and negotiations have already been made with the hotels in Samana regarding the purchase of local products. But hotels need very little quantity – which is not interesting for medium-large farmers. And small farmers do not meet quality standards. In addition, hotels always diversify their suppliers, because they do not want to risk having nothing in case of hurricanes or other natural disasters. Another big problem is the delay of payments (30 – 60 days) by the hotels. Medium and small farmers cannot wait that long for payment.

Most of the actors do not see the direct purchase of primary products as feasible in the tourism supply chain. An alternative could be the production of manufactured products by cooperatives. These could be sold to hotels and other markets.

Recommendations

Measure	Term	Comments
Establish regular meetings of the Cluster to deal with environmental / biodiversity issues: environmental problems to be solved, implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan, environmental quality of the destination and of tourist offers.	Short term	Cluster with the support of the Ministry of Environment
Carry out a mailing to inform all the actors of the tourism sector about the importance of biodiversity for the tourist Destination Samana: environmental legislation that must be complied with, measures that all tourist services can/should carry out, the Biodiversity Check for hotels and for tour operators. Send a questionnaire on the environmental quality of the offers with the notice that the tourist offers that carry out measures for the protection of biodiversity will be promoted.	Short term	Cluster with the support of GIZ /GNF
Define a set of basic environmental criteria that all tourist services /offers in the Destination should meet. Publish and promote the set of criteria among the actors of the tourism sector.	Short term Continuous	Cluster with the support of GIZ /GNF and the Ministry of Environment
Develop a strategy for the promotion of tourist offers that meet the set of environmental criteria.	Short term	Cluster with the support of GIZ /GNF and the Ministry of Tourism
Prepare a list of fishermen who fish in a sustainable way as well as farmer who cultivate organic or integrated agriculture. Publish this list and inform the restaurants in the province that these potential suppliers contribute to the protection of biodiversity and that they should be supported.	Short term	Cluster with the support of CEBSE, Ministry of Agriculture, Rainforest Alliance and the Farmers Association

Information for tourists

Tourists receive information on the nature and biodiversity of the region – especially on ecosystems and threatened species. Do they also receive recommendations on how to contribute to the protection of biodiversity in the Destination and how to avoid negative impacts?

Are visits to shows with dolphins or killer whales not offered or advertised as well as other activities where animal welfare is belittled and a suitable environment for the animals is not guaranteed?

Does the Destination offer activities to explore nature and biodiversity in a respectful way?

Current Situation

Tourists do not receive environmental / biodiversity information in a systematic way. Some hotels offer information, but with limited content. There is the CEBSE Whale Museum in Samana that provides information on whale and other marine fauna.

Wide range of activities related to nature: hiking, whale watching, kite surfing, snorkeling, diving, excursions to National Parks and protected areas. The environmental quality of these offers is not being controlled. Guide training should be better.

Recommendations

Measures	Term	Comments
Develop a strategy for the promotion of tourism offers that meet the set of environmental criteria.	Short term	Cluster with the support of the Ministry of Tourism and GIZ /GNF
Develop a strategy to position Samana as a sustainable tourism destination.	Medium term	Cluster with the support of the Ministry of Tourism and GIZ /GNF
Prepare and distribute a brochure for tourists: Samana Biodiversity Hotspot– the ¿? Tips to contribute to protection. Include information on bans, not eating Parrotfish, illegal souvenirs that should not be bought, the impact of garbage, how to choose a tour /a quality guide, eat lionfish, activities for supporting the local communities..	Short term	Cluster with the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Environment and GIZ /GNF
Conduct a survey of tourists about their motivations for choosing Samana as a destination, recreational activities that are carried out, the importance of natural attractions, etc.	Medium term	Cluster with the support of the Ministry of Tourism and

		GIZ /GNF
--	--	----------

Education /training

- Do regional tourism companies have information and training opportunities on biodiversity?
- Are conservation and biodiversity an integral part of staff training?

Current Situation

Currently, the training of hotel staff and guides is carried out at a very limited level. The licenses for the guides are granted by the Ministry of Tourism and have not been renewed for a long time. The regional Ministry of Tourism has planned a training program that will include environmental aspects.

The Cluster carried out a training of 150 guides who carry out horseback excursions to the Salto del Limon.

School training includes social work, e.g. garbage collection.

Recommendations

Measure	Term	Comments
<p>Development of three training modules on biodiversity in the tourism sector for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managers of hotels and recreational activities companies, managers of the tourist destination (e.g. city halls). - Employees of hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions. - Guides for recreational activities. <p>Integration of modules in training programs in 2018.</p> <p>Development of an incentive system to obtain a high percentage of participants.</p>	Short term	<p>Elaboration: GIZ (EuropeAid Project) and Ministry of Environment (Coastal Biodiversity and Tourism Project)</p> <p>Implementation: Cluster, Ministry of Tourism</p>
<p>Guide license review; one of the requirements for license renewal should be training on biodiversity issues.</p>	Short term	Ministry of Tourism

Commitment to the protection of Biodiversity

- Does the Destination commit to the protection of ecosystems and threatened species through financial support for protection measures?
- Are staff motivated to get involved in biodiversity protection projects (corporate volunteering)?

Current Situation

Tourism sector actors do not finance environmental / biodiversity protection projects.

Recommendations

Measures	Term	Comments
The tourist Destination prepares a Biodiversity Action Plan with adequate measures and implements it seriously and consistently. The Action Plan includes indicators to evaluate the impact of the measures, the responsible parties for the execution and a schedule of completion.	Short term	Cluster with the support of GIZ /GNF
Every two years the tourist Destination publishes a Sustainability Report with the progress or setbacks with respect to the Action Plan.	Medium term	Cluster with the support of GIZ /GNF
The tourist Destination selects a project for the recovery of biodiversity in the region and informs and motivates the actors of the tourism sector to contribute to the project financing.	Medium term	Cluster with the support of GIZ and CEBSE

5. Proposal for the follow-up of the Action Plan

“It always seems impossible until it is done” (Nelson Mandela).

For a tourist destination to become an example of good practices and a model for others, it is necessary to constantly work in environmental areas and in the conservation of biodiversity. As most businesses depend on this natural capital and especially in Samana where their offer is based primarily on tourism products linked to nature. That is why the organizations and businesses in the Destination will have to increase their commitments and guarantee good practices in their operations.

As a first step, the Cluster, as the organization that manages the Destination, and its members must determine which of the measures recommended above they would like and it is necessary to implement them in the short, medium and long term.

Once selected, proceed to make an action plan for the Destination, including actions, activities, timelines and responsible parties. Likewise, present this action plan and socialize it with the actors / organizations that can contribute.

In addition to the will of all organizations, there are several projects that can support several of the measures recommended in the Biodiversity Check Destination. We propose that the monitoring and implementation be carried out through the public-private table, established by the Samana Tourism Cluster and is still in operation.

The GIZ and the Global Nature Fund through the project financed by the European Union “Biodiversity and Business in Central America and the Dominican Republic: Contribution of the tourism sector for the restoration and protection of marine and coastal biological diversity in the Caribbean Sea,” they commit to provide their support in the aforementioned areas and to follow up every 6 months to know the progress and implementation of the Destination Action Plan.

We propose to hold follow-up meetings between the Cluster, GIZ and the Global Nature Fund every six months – the first being in May 2018.

6. Information on the EuropeAid Project: Biodiversity and Business

Project Biodiversity and Business in Central America and the Dominican Republic: Support of the tourism sector for the restoration and protection of the marine and coastal biological diversity of the Caribbean Sea

Challenges

The islands of the Caribbean are considered a biodiversity hotspot for the natural wealth. They have a high percentage of endemic marine and terrestrial species. The economic sector and especially in the tourism sector depend to a great extent on biological diversity and the services provided by ecosystems, such as water, scenic beauty, food supply and protection of the coastline.

The coastal marine biodiversity of the Caribbean is threatened by various factors, among which are: pollution, overfishing, invasive species, global warming and unsustainable recreational practices, among others. These events have a negative impact on a population of close to 43 million people who depend, directly or indirectly, on coral reefs, beaches, fishing and mangroves for their livelihood and food security.

In the Dominican Republic, marine resources are at risk. Between 70% and 90% of coral reefs have died (ARCC-USAID, 2013). Likewise, beach erosion will produce a loss of between USD 53 and 100 million for coastal tourism in the next 10 years (WRI, 2010).

Our Focus

It is essential to involve the private sector in the protection and restoration of biodiversity, in the defense of natural capital that is fundamental for the sustainability of its commercial operations. The objective of the work is for sustainable coastal tourism in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Honduras to contribute to the conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity in the region.

The project is funded by the European Union and is part of the Development Program of the Mesoamerican Alliance for Biodiversity (DABIo), implemented by the German Cooperation Agency (GIZ), commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), its political counterpart being the Central American Integration System (SICA), and its environmental authority the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD).

The main recipients are owners and managers of companies in the coastal tourism sector, small-scale fishing associations, supply chains and business associations (tourism, fisheries, agriculture / food), chambers of commerce, public authorities (local, regional, national), environmental and social NGOs, scientific institutes, local communities and tourists.

Activities

1. Conservation of coastal marine biodiversity

This component includes the protection, restoration and diversification of coral reefs and the introduction of new species. The use of new coral species (e.g. brain coral or finger coral) is proposed as an innovation to guarantee the genetic diversity of ecosystems. In addition, an ex situ nursery will be created in the FGPC laboratory. At least four new coral gardens will be established.

In this component, measures will be implemented to protect threatened species, such as hawksbill turtles or parrotfish, and work will be done on the conservation of mangroves in the province of Monte Cristi. The experiences will be taken to Haiti and Honduras.

2. Coastal tourism and its supply chain

The objective of this component is to strengthen the environmental awareness of the tourism sector. New tourism products will be developed and promoted with special emphasis on the conservation of marine-coastal biodiversity. Work will also be done on sensitizing tourism companies by promoting the preference of agricultural products from sustainable agriculture and fishing. The objective is for hotels to guarantee the purchase of biodiversity-friendly food at fair prices. For greater impact, the Ministries of Tourism and Environment will be supported to establish an environmental quality label.

3. Biodiversity and Business Tables

This component involves the participation and sensitization of actors from the private sector, the public sector and civil society. Through the organization of regional round tables, action plans will be drawn-up in order to protect, restore and enhance marine-coastal biodiversity. The events will be made up of interactive dialogue elements, positive examples and working groups. They will combine the search for solutions through dialogue and the use of tools, as well as the exchange of information within the tourism sector.

4. Implementation of financial instruments

This component aims at the development of financial instruments to generate long-term support for the conservation of coastal marine biodiversity. The coral conservation network will be supported in the establishment of a financial mechanism with the characteristics of a Payment for Environmental Services (PES). This includes developing an inventory of the ecosystem services provided by reefs and creating a catalog of conservation measures. The network will also develop a monitoring system for investments in the tourism sector.

5. Knowledge transfer

Component five includes the transfer of knowledge about the value of marine and coastal ecosystem services. Among others, it will work at a regional level with the Biodiversity Partnership Mesoamerica (BPM) and at an international level with initiatives such as the CBD's Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity or the European Union's Business and Biodiversity Platform.