

Ecotourism planning and management

Ecotourism has great potential for generating revenue in countries endowed with natural attractions and at the same time preserving natural features for sustained benefits. Scenic landscapes, unique resource ecosystems and biodiversity, and indigenous cultural heritages are sure crowd pleasers. They can be harnessed to create job opportunities and stimulate the development of enterprises, particularly in rural areas.

The APO collaborated with the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) of Fiji National University (FNU) to organize a training course on Planning and Management of Ecotourism, 25–29 November 2013. Designed to develop or enhance the competencies of trainers and consultants in planning and managing ecotourism, 18 participants from 15 countries and three local participants attended the course.

Experts Rajendra Narsingh Suwal of the KGH Group of Hotels in Nepal; Dr. Alexandra Coghlan of the Gold Coast Campus of Griffith University, Australia; and Dr. David Preece of Brigham Young University, Hawaii, delved into important tools and techniques for developing, planning, managing, and financing ecotourism projects and successful ecotourism models in Nepal, Australia, Hawaii, and North America. Their presentations showed how communities benefited and governments generated revenues for community welfare improvement and natural resource conservation activities. However, it was pointed out that the development of ecotourism areas must be carefully planned to avoid damage to the natural environment

and local cultures. NTPC Deputy Director Satendra Nair explained the importance of ecotourism to Fiji and the issues faced by the sector. He specifically cited the need for appropriate infrastructure at those sites. The experts stressed that well-planned infrastructure development and on-the-ground training can improve eco-tourism sites.

Visits were hosted by Sigatoka

Sand Dunes and Biasevu Waterfall to demonstrate the importance of managing natural resources for sustainable tourism and how communities can be involved in managing natural resource endowments to benefit from ecotourism.

NTPC Director Kamlesh Prakash lauded this initiative of the APO and emphasized the importance of educating and enhancing the knowledge of government planners and stakeholders on ecotourism, especially in countries like Fiji where tourism is a major source of national revenue and income for communities. He pledged that Fiji would be willing to cooperate with the APO and other APO members in future initiatives on this important topic. 🌐



Deputy Director of the NTPC-NFU Satendra Nai, seeking the village chief's permission for participants to visit the village during the kava ceremony.