

# **The STI Gambia Pilot Project**

**A report to the UK Sustainable Tourism Initiative**

**Dilys Roe, Harold Goodwin and Adama Bah  
December 2002**

## **Acknowledgements**

Grateful thanks are extended to members of the Gambia Tourism Authority who made this project possible. In particular we would like to thank Habib Drammeh, Kaliba Senghore and Amadou Ceesay.

We would like to thank all the members of ASSET for participating in the project, in particular Geri Mitchell, Chair.

The project also benefited from inputs from Patrick Sothern of the Gambia Ground Handlers Association and Ardy Sarge from the Hotels Association.

All the UK operators are thanks for giving up their valuable time to participate especially at such a busy point in the season. In particular we would like to thank Richard Ward from Thomas Cook for reviewing information and agreeing to act as a point of contact with ASSET.

*Dilys Roe, Harold Goodwin and Adama Bah*

## Part one: UK Government Interventions in The Gambia Prior to the STI Pilot Project

The Gambia STI project built on previous work done in The Gambia in a DFID Tourism Challenge Fund initiative. This 18-month project, which ran from August 2000 to March 2002, explored through a multi-stakeholder process the barriers that make it difficult for informal sector entrepreneurs (e.g. juice pressers, fruit sellers, local guides and craft workers) to engage in the industry.

The Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET), was established as a result of a previous British High Commission sponsored Gambian Tourism Concern Workshop on Private Small Scale and Community –Based Tourism Enterprises held in The Gambia in October 1999. The Tourism Challenge Fund project made a significant contribution to developing ASSET as a membership organisation of small-scale enterprises in tourism, which is developing trade association functions for the informal sector. By the informal sector is meant all those individuals and micro enterprises, which engage with tourists and the tourism industry but which are not members of the Gambian Hotel Association or the Ground Handlers and Equipment Hirers Association.

The aims of the Tourism Challenge Fund project were

- to increase sustainable employment opportunities and earnings for the informal sector in The Gambia by improving access for the informal sector to the tourism industry and to tourists.
- to identify and disseminate Best Practise for implementation through the Federation of Tour Operators, ABTA and AITO.

In The Gambia the project was implemented through a Project Steering Group comprising government the formal sector (ground handlers and hoteliers) and the informal sector represented through the Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET). The project worked in particular with licensed and unlicensed guides, the bumsters, the fruit and juice sellers; the craft market stallholders and the taxi drivers. The UK Operators and their representatives in the resort actively participated in the process of improving linkages with the informal sector. Martin Brackenbury of the Federation of Tour Operators and Keith Richards of the Association of British Travel Agents along with UK companies contributed to the situation analysis that laid the basis for the implementation phase of the project.

The objectives of the Tourism Challenge Fund Project were to

- increase revenues and employment by integrating the informal sector into the formal tourism industry
- remove barriers to entry by the informal sector into the tourism industry through collaboration with local private sector SMME's and business organisations.
- create additional local employment (targeted directly for the poor, women and youth) which can support opportunities for diversifying livelihoods in rural areas and which can improve supply-side linkages.
- enlist the support and participation of UK tour operators, through a UK Industry Group, in assisting the formal and informal sector in The Gambia to shape, extend and develop tourism products and services that benefit Gambians directly and that the operators can market to their European customers.

- strengthen business organisations (including the informal sector) and their relationships with government in The Gambia to enable cross sector, tourism development that directly benefits local communities.
- develop approaches (including partnerships, training, quality enhancement, marketing and insurance initiatives) that are pro-poor and transferable to other destinations (through FTO, ABTA and AITO).

In order to increase the contribution of tourism to the elimination of poverty the informal sector needed to be assisted to be more effective in selling products and services to the industry and the tourists. It was clear from the October 1999 British High Commission funded workshop that a number of questions needed to be addressed in order to make tourism more pro-poor. These were identified in the original TCF project proposal as

- 1) How can the conflict of interests between the market-led, enclave character of the industry and the demand for access and participation by the formal sector, the informal sector and other non-tourism sectors of the economy be resolved to benefit all parties?
- 2) How can the informal sector better access tour operators, ground handlers and hoteliers that purchase tourism services and products?
- 3) How can the informal sector improve its access to tourists and increase the volume and value of its sales in order to increase revenues?
- 4) How can supply side linkages be improved so that, for example, more of the food and furnishings purchased by the industry can be locally sourced?
- 5) What opportunities are available for development or extension of tourism products and services on which the informal sector could capitalise and / or gain entry to the tourism market?
- 6) What training / licensing requirements need to be implemented to provide opportunities for Gambians and confidence for tour operators to contract?

This part of the report focuses on the process which was used, rather than on the concrete initiatives which were taken in the implementation phase and tested by a follow-up survey in the 2002 season. A full report of the outcomes of the process can be found in the project team's **Tourism Challenge Fund Report on Harnessing Tourism for Poverty Elimination in The Gambia** published by the Natural Resources Institute in August 2002. This report can be downloaded from <http://www.nri.org/NRET/GambiaFinalSummaryReport2.pdf>

#### Process

Previous work in The Gambia and consultations with ASSET made it clear that there was so much disagreement about the issues associated with sustainable tourism in The Gambia that it was necessary to identify what the actual situation was by an extended process of stakeholder consultation backed by survey research of the earnings of the informal sector and the barriers which they encountered (the supply side) and of the formal sector and tourists (the demand side). This work of consultation and fact-finding was concluded with a series of workshops in May 2001. Martin Brackenbury of the Federation of British Tour Operators represented the UK operators at the final workshops and an implementation plan was agreed for Phase 2

#### Phase 1: Building Consensus

In Phase 1 the main emphasis was on clarifying the issues and problems, which needed to be addressed in order to improve the situation of the informal sector in The Gambia and to develop a consensus about what could and should be done. At a series of open workshops in May 2001 a consensus was developed about what needed to be done in order to improve

tourism in The Gambia and to improve the involvement of the informal sector in the industry. At the May workshops a work programme was agreed in open session with participation by the formal and informal sectors. This was formally agreed by the project steering group, made up of representatives of the formal and informal sectors in The Gambia, and has subsequently been implemented.

As part of the consensus building process key staff from tour operators based in the UK and in The Gambia were interviewed about their perceptions of the difficulties confronting tourism in The Gambia and in particular the strengths and weaknesses of the informal sector. Similar interviews were conducted with the ground handlers and the formal sector trade associations and with government. The earnings and the products of the informal sector groups in both the Senegambia and Kotu beach areas – the two main tourist resorts - were surveyed. A representative sample of tourists was surveyed in order to determine the critical consumer perception of the product, and in particular of the importance of the informal sector to the holiday experience.

In May workshops were held with each of the informal sector groups individually at which the results of the research were reported providing the opportunity to discuss the implications of the survey for each group. Each informal sector group was able to explore the views of their sector as expressed by other informal groups, the formal sector and tourists. Each informal sector group was invited to come along to the informal sector workshop prepared to discuss what their group could contribute to the necessary process of change and what they felt they needed from the others and from the formal sector.

At the informal sector workshop work programmes were discussed for each of the informal sector groups and the conflicts that existed between informal sector groups (for example between the taxi drivers and the guides) and between the informal sector groups and the formal sector were addressed. At the final workshop all the informal sector groups were brought together with representatives of the formal sector to agree what needed to be done in order to secure appropriate change. This process produced an agreed work plan, which became Phase 2 of the TCF project.

It was essential to achieve consensus about the changes that needed to be made in order to maximise the impact of the project and to achieve pro-poor growth. It was clear from the outset that there was little agreement about what the major problems were, in any detailed sense, and that survey information presented objectively and openly debated was important to the process of moving forward. Dialogue between the informal and formal sector and a shared perception of the problems confronting tourism to The Gambia was identified as essential to securing multi-stakeholder participation in change. Dialogue and open reporting assists in overcoming suspicions about what the formal sector is saying about the informal sector in, for example, the Welcome Meetings. The content and attitudes to the informal sector at the Welcome Meetings is a key issue as is addressing the issues of hassling and bargaining. The bumsters are a particular issue in The Gambia.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Dialogue between the informal and formal sector and a shared perception of the problems confronting tourism to The Gambia was essential to securing multi-stakeholder participation in change.
- Dialogue and open reporting assists in overcoming suspicions about what the formal sector is saying about the informal sector in, for example, the Welcome Meetings. The

content and attitudes to the informal sector at the Welcome Meetings was identified as a key issue as are the issues of hassling and bargaining. The bumsters are a particular issue in The Gambia.

- Licensing, regulation, badging (and where necessary insurance) supported by training are important mechanisms for legitimating the informal sector.
- ASSET played a key role in establishing co-operative working between different informal sector groups and in assisting them to develop codes of conduct for their own members. ASSET established a conflict resolution group and a new products group.
- Identifying and sharing best practise is a significant means of establishing, development and spreading practises in the industry which create complementary product and improve earnings and market access for the informal sector.
- The process of change is assisted by the recognition of differences between those members of each stakeholder group engaged in best practices and those who need to adopt what has been recognised as best practice.

#### **Phase 2 Implementation and Testing**

The implementation work programme was agreed during the May workshops in open session with both the formal and informal sectors represented alongside government and the Project Steering Committee subsequently ratified these decisions. A detailed work plan was drawn up for each sub-section of the informal sector and a number of meetings were agreed to take place between informal groups and the formal and informal sectors to resolve differences.

An 'appreciative inquiry' approach was used to develop the codes of conduct for each informal sector group. This involved visioning change, identifying the steps necessary to achieve it, building co-operation and self-respect. It was this approach, which enabled the creation of support for the Codes of Conduct which emerged from the individual sub-sector workshops.

Further surveys were undertaken in February and March 2002 to provide some data on the results of the project, follow up surveys were done of tourists and of the earnings of each of the informal sector groups the project worked with.

The work undertaken is described in full in the DFID TCF Project Report published by NRI and in a forthcoming report by Adama Bah and Harold Goodwin to be published by the Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership on [www.propoortourism.org.uk](http://www.propoortourism.org.uk)

#### **The Responsible Tourism Partnership**

The new Gambian Tourism Authority was established by an Act passed in July 2001, it became operational in March 2002.

In April 2002 a final meeting of the Project Steering Group was convened to which the new Gambian Tourism Authority and representatives of the overseas tour operators were invited. The Gambian Hotel Association, the Ground Handlers, ASSET, the government represented by the new Gambian Tourism Authority and four representatives of the foreign tour operators.

The group decided to continue the work started during the DfID project and to form a Responsible Tourism Partnership working closely with the Gambian Tourism Authority to

- look at the relationship between the formal and informal sector in order to continue to resolve conflicts and define operational relationships;
- look at issues of responsibility and the sustainability of the tourism industry

- consult, dialogue, review, implement (where given the mandate to do so) and generally help the Gambian Tourism Authority in its drive to regulate and improve the tourism industry;
- consult and suggest solutions to issues which affect the tourism industry in general.

The creation of the Responsible Tourism Partnership within the Gambian Tourism Authority has ensured that the collaborative style of work established in the TCF project will be continued in partnership between government, the private sector and the emerging informal sector now represented through ASSET, its own trade association.

### **A note on methodology**

The process was applied using established multi-stakeholder methodologies, which are not described in detail here. A wide range of methodologies was used in each stage of the process for information gathering, sharing and consensus building both about the definition of the problems and the way in which they could and should be addressed. The information gathering, or research phase, was essential to developing a factually based shared understanding of the issues that needed to be addressed by each of the stakeholders and by the stakeholders collectively. Only on the basis of this shared information could a viable implementation plan be established.

The methodologies used included stakeholder identification; market research surveys of tourists; semi-structured interview surveys of operators in the destination and the originating market and with the ground handlers and hoteliers; focus group discussions with each of the informal sector groups; and surveys of earnings and opinion amongst informal sector groups.

At the end of this information gathering phase a report was made verbally to each group about the results which affected them and small workshops were run with each group to enable them to understand the attitudes of other stakeholder groups to them and to evolve a response to be presented at the first of the plenary workshops where informal sector groups discussed the implications of the results for them, the basis of the conflicts between the informal sector groups and between the informal and formal sector groups. The results of this process were publicly recorded in a PowerPoint format. The second plenary workshop involved the informal sector stakeholder groups in reporting back their plans and requests to the formal sector representatives from the ground handlers, hotels and government. This process of open public debate chaired by an external facilitator was again publicly recorded in a further set of PowerPoints which formed the basis of the work plan for the implementation phase agreed by the project steering group and subsequently implemented using appreciative enquiry methods, training workshops and the agreement of codes of conduct and enforcement mechanisms.

Open debate based on factual and transparently shared information laid the basis for determining solutions and the public agreement to processes of change. The results of the process were then validated by a further round of research with tourists and the stakeholder groups to determine changes in income among the informal sector groups.

A thorough understanding of the methods of multi-stakeholder processes and the skills to use them are essential to the effective use of these approaches. There are often high levels of conflict around these issues and much is at stake for the groups involved – poorly designed and implemented processes can cause more harm than good. It is important to recognise that often the only people being paid to be present are the government representatives and

consultants – the opportunity costs for participation by the private and informal sectors are high. These costs should be recognised and their time should not be squandered.



## Part 2: The STI Process

### 1: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS IN THE GAMBIA

Dilys Roe and Harold Goodwin visited The Gambia from 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> November 2002. Interestingly the 1<sup>st</sup> November was the first date that the new £5 tourism levy was introduced. This had caused a degree of concern amongst UK tour operators but was handled exceptionally well by the Gambia Tourism Authority (GTA) and caused no delay and very little objection at the airport.

A meeting was held at the offices of the GTA on arrival with ASSET, Ground Handlers Association and GTA representatives at which the work plan for the consultations was agreed. The timetable for the meetings, coordinated by Adama Bah, and the stakeholders consulted is presented in the table below.

#### *Timetable for stakeholder consultations*

Date	Stakeholder group	Type of meeting
Saturday 2 <sup>nd</sup> November	ASSET	ASSET Annual General Meeting
	UK Tour Operators	Individual consultations
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> November	Gambia Hotels Association	Informal interview
	Craft Markets and informal sector associations in the Senegambia and Kotu beach areas	Group consultations
	Bumster groups associated with Palma Rima and Safari Garden hotels	Group consultations
Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> November	ASSET, GTA, Ground Handlers, Tour Operators	RTP Workshop
Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup> November	Gambia Hotels Association	Annual Meeting

#### 1.1 ASSET AGM (2<sup>nd</sup> November)

The Annual General Meeting of the Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET) was held on the morning of November 2<sup>nd</sup>. This provided an ideal opportunity to introduce the UK Sustainable Tourism Initiative and the objectives of the Gambia Pilot Project and to plan a series of meetings with informal sector groups for the following day.

#### 1.2 Consultations with Resort Reps

With the assistance of Patrick Sothern, Chair of the Ground Handlers Association, individual consultations were held in the afternoon with all the UK tour operators to introduce the project, scope out current issues of concern and encourage attendance at a project workshop to be held at the GTA on 4<sup>th</sup> November.

Tour operators consulted were:

- First Choice (Maureen Price)
- TUI/Thomson (Keri Chapman)
- Thomas Cook (Richard Ward)

- Gambia Experience (Chris Rowles)
- Cosmos (Louise Broadbent)
- MyTravel/Panorama (Jemma Boyland)
- MyTravel/Direct Holidays (Lisa Wilmer)

Issues of concern raised by the tour operators included:

### ***1. Activities of Official Tourist Guides (OTGs)***

Official Tourist Guides are local guides who are licensed by the GTA and who offer local trips (eg to markets etc) as well as longer excursions. A large group of guides operates outside the Senegambia Hotel in one of the main tourist areas. Other smaller groups operate outside a number of hotels in the Kotu beach area – the other main tourist district. The OTGs run their trips using tourist taxis – these are taxis which have been licensed for tourist use on the basis of meeting certain standards that are not necessarily met by the regular (“bush”) taxis. There has always been a certain degree of concern amongst tour operators about the safety of the official guides, as well as an issue about competition over excursions since the guides offer many of the same excursions as the tour operators at a lower price. Recently safety issues had come to a head since a young couple had booked a trip with the Senegambia OTGs and a road accident left one of them dead and the other seriously injured. In this case the vehicle used by the particular OTG had been an open topped jeep with no protective roll bar.

### ***2. Hassle***

The Tour Operators reported that they were still receiving complaints from the clients both about hassle in the markets and by the “bumsters” (groups of unemployed young men who approach tourists in some cases to befriend them and in other cases to extract money from them). The problem of bumsters is well known in The Gambia and at the start of the 2002/2003 season the Government of The Gambia decided that serious action needed to be taken to address the problem and deployed the National Guards to clear bumsters from the beaches and streets in order to reduce the hassle. The Tour Operators, despite being concerned about the hassle, also expressed some concerns about the use of military force to deal with the issue – some on the basis of the negative impression that the military presence has on tourists, and others concerned that some people who were not bumsters and not causing any problems were being picked up and that many of those picked up were apparently being severely beaten.

### ***3. Lack of time to engage***

The tour operators all demonstrated an interest in issues around sustainable tourism and a willingness to participate in processes such as the STI but highlighted the limited human resources available to them, the existing pressures on their time and hence the limitations to their ability to engage more actively in processes such as the STI and the Gambia Responsible Tourism Partnership (a multistakeholder group chaired by the GTA and established at the end of the DFID-funded pro-poor tourism project).

### ***4. Planning and development issues***

Tour operators had mixed perceptions about development issues such as street lighting – while some welcomed the development and the associated increase in security, others thought it detracted from the unspoilt feel of some of the tourist areas. Development of new facilities on beaches that were already suffering from severe erosion was seen as undermining the sustainability of the area.

### ***5. Environmental issues***

Some tour operators were not aware of any environmental management activities, for example recycling of plastic bottles. This does in fact occur but there is no information available to inform tourists of how to participate in this scheme.

### ***6. Tourist taxi standards***

As with the official tourist guides, tour operators expressed concern over the safety, quality and reliability of the tourist taxis – in particular the use of open top vehicles in which the fatal accident occurred. This issue is currently being addressed by the GTA.

### ***7. Food Hygiene***

Tour operators have difficulty in recommending or endorsing local food and drink vendors – eg the juice pressers – because of their public liability for health and safety of their clients under the EU Package Travel Directive.

### **1.3 Meeting with Gambia Hotels Association (3<sup>rd</sup> November)**

A brief meeting was held with Ardy Sarge, Chair of the Gambia Hotels Association. The meeting revolved around the possibility of placing the Responsible Tourism Partnership information pack (funded by the STI) into hotel bedrooms. Ardy Sarge indicated that this was not likely to be possible since it would clutter up the bedrooms and would also distract from the visitor questionnaires, which are placed in the rooms to get feedback on the hotel from the tourists.

### **1.4 Group Consultations with Informal Sector Associations**

Consultations were held with following informal sector groups:

1. Senegambia Craft Market Association
2. Senegambia Official Tourist Guides
3. Kotu Beach Official Tourist Guides
4. Kotu Beach Tourist Taxis
5. Bungalow Beach Craft Market Association
6. Women Fruit Sellers Association
7. Juice Pressers Association
8. Palma Rima Bumsters
9. Safari Garden Bumsters

Issues identified by the informal sector associations included the following:

#### ***1. Provision of fair and accurate information to tourists***

A number of the informal sector associations expressed concerns that they were misrepresented by tour operators in the information provided to tourists, particularly in the Welcome Meetings which are held by tour operator reps at each hotel on the first day of each holiday package. The informal sector wanted to have access to tourists at the Welcome meetings in order to present the services they offer and for the tour operators to recommend and endorse their services and products. They also wanted the tour operators to provide more information to tourists on acceptable behaviour – for example bargaining protocol at the craft markets.

#### ***2. Recognition by tour operators and product endorsement***

Related to point 1 above, the fruit sellers and juice pressers in particular wanted the tour operators to endorse their products and to recommend them to their clients. The official tourist guides pointed out that they had recently undergone a training session with the GTA where they had drawn up a new code of conduct and that they had been re-licensed with new badges to indicate they had gone through this training. As a consequence they felt it fair that the tour operators should support their activities. The market associations have also developed codes of conduct to reduce hassling in the craft markets and wanted the tour operators to highlight the Senegambia and Bungalow Beach markets as hassle-free.

### ***3. Local sourcing of food and other products***

Although not mentioned during the informal sector consultations, the issue of local sourcing of food, soft furnishings etc by hotels was brought up at the ASSET AGM. It was thought that hotel could do a lot more to support the local economy by buying locally – eg having curtains made from local materials by local tailors and so on.

### ***4. Inappropriate behaviour by the National Guards***

Both the bumster groups, as well as some of the tour operators, told of beatings and humiliation by the National Guards. Some people had been picked up and beaten even if they were in possession of valid i.d. cards (i.d. cards are required by all Gambians operating within the tourist resort areas – the Tourist Development Area, TDA). While it was recognised that action was needed to address the problem of hassle, it was thought that alternative solutions to military intervention ought to be tested.

## **1.5 Multistakeholder Workshop (4<sup>th</sup> November)**

Following the consultation exercise, the Gambia Tourism Authority hosted a multistakeholder workshop in order to discuss the issues raised by both sides. Potential solutions to the issues were suggested and progress made by the Responsible Tourism Partnership and the GTA up to the start of the season was discussed. The meeting was attended by representatives from First Choice, Thomas Cook, Cosmos, Gambia Experience, the Ground Handlers Association, the Hotels Association, ASSET and the GTA.

### ***Progress to date***

#### **1. Standards of Official Tourist Guides**

As discussed above, the Official Tourist Guides have undergone a retraining and relicensing session. An official complaints form has been developed (Annex 1) so that tour operators can document complaints made by tourists and pass these on to the GTA. It is hoped that this will start to reveal the real level of the problem (it is difficult for the GTA to know how significant the problem is if it is verbally reported to them that “our tourists have complained about the guides” with no indication of how many tourists have complained and what the nature of the complaints are) and identify particular individuals and/or groups involved to avoid the problem of all the guides having a poor reputation.

#### **2. Standards of Tourist Taxis**

The GTA has introduced far more stringent licensing requirements for the tourist taxis. Furthermore the taxis now have to be inspected by a third party, rather than the police. The taxi drivers have strongly resisted the new regulations but the GTA is determined to move ahead and only those taxis that meet the requirements will receive the new licences. Furthermore, the new licences include a large plate for the car as well as an i.d card for the driver – thus both

drover and car need to be licensed, and tourists should be able to easily identify those that have the new licence. Once the system is in place it will be important for tour operators to recommend tourists only to use the licensed taxis so that market forces will incentivise those that have not been relicensed to meet the new standards. Tour operators queried whether unlicensed taxis should even be allowed within the tourist development area.

### **3. Provision of information**

With funding from the UK STI, a folder has been produced which will contain information about all members of the Responsible Tourism Partnership. This will include a directory of ASSET members (also STI funded), which will highlight the goods, and services that each member can supply (see attachment to this report). With regard to Welcome meetings, tour operators highlighted the impracticality of involving all the different associations. Furthermore, the official guides could not be involved until the issue of competition over excursions had been dealt with. It was agreed that, subject to head office approval, it would be helpful to agree a set of rules covering what Official Guides can and cannot do with respect to running excursions.

### **4. Street lighting**

The issue of street lighting is being dealt with through a World Bank project.

### **5. Alternative mechanisms for dealing with bumsters**

The Safari Garden Hotel described a pilot project it was undertaking with a group of bumsters who loiter outside the hotel. The Safari Garden agreed that in return for the bumsters adhering to an agreed code of conduct they would pay for i.d. cards and encourage their guests to use the bumsters for short local trips – to the beach, to the shops etc – for a fixed tariff. The Safari Garden also bought the bumsters t-shirts so that the group is easily identifiable (see Annex 2).

It was generally agreed that many of the issues raised – especially with regard to health and safety - involve legal and liability issues for the tour operators and are thus not always as straightforward to address as it might seem. For example, if tour operators recommend restaurants etc on anything more than a personal level then they can be held liable for any accidents that their clients suffer. In addition, solutions to the issues raised need to recognise the personal and professional relationships between tour operators and their ground handlers.

From the informal sector side it was noted that it was important, especially when making complaints, for tour operators to start to talk about specific markets, particular groups of official guides and so on since some groups had made real progress in developing and adhering to codes of conduct and yet these were not recognised due to poor behaviour by other groups.

Taking forward these issues requires joint activities by tour operators, ASSET and GTA, organised through the Responsible Tourism Partnership, under the leadership of the GTA.

The issues discussed and some of the potential solutions that might be employed to address them are summarised in the table below.

## Issues of Concern to UK Tour Operators and the Informal Sector

Issues	Potential Solutions
Provision of fair and accurate information by to tourists about the informal sector; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services and products available</li> <li>• Bargaining protocol</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mango News (tourist magazine to be sold by former bumsters)</li> <li>• "What's On" information sheets and boards</li> <li>• Provision of ASSET directory (RTP info pack) in hotel rooms</li> <li>• Involvement in welcome meetings</li> <li>• Concept of "Resort rambles" introduced by some tour operators extended to include introductions to the informal sector</li> </ul>
Competition over excursions between tour operators, official tourist guides and taxi drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed rules to cover:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What official guides can and cannot do</li> <li>2. Safety &amp; security</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Endorsement by tour operators of those licensed guides who offer the best product</li> </ul>
Safety, security, quality and behaviour of official guides and taxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed rules as above</li> <li>• Formal complaints system</li> <li>• GTA licensing and badging (in the case of taxis, based on rigorous driver and vehicle safety checks)</li> <li>• Agreed codes of conduct for different informal sector groups</li> </ul>
Hassling of tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of existing codes of conduct</li> <li>• Yellow card system for market vendors</li> <li>• Tour operator endorsement and patronage of hassle-free markets</li> </ul>
Military presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiments with alternative solutions to bumster problem at Safari Garden</li> <li>• Strategies for handling negative perceptions by media and tourists</li> <li>• Recognition of efforts by some bumster groups to abide by codes of conduct</li> </ul>
Behaviour of tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tips for Tourists</li> <li>• Do's and Don'ts</li> </ul>
Food Hygiene – fruit sellers and juice pressers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crystal training programme for hotels extended to informal sector</li> </ul>
Local sourcing of food, soft furnishings etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour operators to encourage hotels to source food, soft furnishings etc locally</li> </ul>
Tourism planning and development issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• noise and light pollution</li> <li>• beach development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in decision making about developments which impact on the quality of the resort, by tour operators and other stakeholders, through the GTA</li> </ul>
Environmental management practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of information to tourists in hotel rooms and on planes eg recycling of plastic bottles</li> <li>• Operators to encourage hotels to adopt best practise.</li> </ul>
Lack of resources of tour operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UK operators to prioritise and resource local tour operator engagement</li> </ul>

## 2: HIGH-LEVEL MEETING IN LONDON

A meeting was organised in London on November 16th to coincide with the World Travel Market. This meeting was intended to bring together senior managers from the UK tour operators, together with representatives of the GTA, ASSET and the Ground Handlers Association to discuss the issues raised in The Gambia and to agree an action plan to address some of these. The list of participants is detailed below:

Name	Position	Organisation
<b>STI:</b>		
Dilys Roe	Project Manager	IIED
Harold Goodwin	Lead Consultant	ICRT
<b>The Gambia:</b>		
Kaliba Senghore	Director of Tourism and Human Resources	Gambia Tourism Authority
Lamin Saho	Marketing Officer	Gambia Tourism Authority
MS Jobe	Ecotourism Development Manager	Gambia Tourism Authority
Patrick Southern	Chair	Ground Handlers Association
Adama Bah	Secretary General	ASSET
Geri Mitchell	Chair	ASSET
<b>Tour Operators:</b>		
Pauline Wilson	General Manager, Customer Service and External Affairs	TUI/Thomson
Alan Smith	Senior Contracts Manager	First Choice
Clare Kenny	Health and Safety Manager	Thomas Cook
James Bell	Health and Safety Officer	Thomas Cook
Peter Cox	Head of Product and Planning	Panorama
Stephanie Constantinou	Customer Relations	Gambia Experience
Carol Hume	Long Haul Manager	Odyssey
Doranne Reid	Product Manager	MyTravel
<b>Observers:</b>		
Pete Shelley	Environment Policy Department	DFID

The meeting was very constructive with defining rules on what official tourist guides could and could not do being the only issue the tour operators being unable to agree to. The tour operators were of the opinion that this was for the GTA to regulate, that the excursions run by the official guides were in direct competition with the tour operator's excursions and that this was not something they could afford to lose, and that market forces should prevail in letting the tourist decide which type of excursion to participate in.

The tour operators also re-emphasised the public liability issues associated with then endorsing or recommending specific products, facilities and so on.

The action plan that was agreed is summarised in the table below.

**Action Plan for The Gambia Agreed on November 14th**

ISSUE	ACTION
<p>Provision of fair and accurate information to tourists concerning local suppliers of goods and services</p>	<p>1. UK Tour Operators agree to review information from RTP members (ASSET, GTA etc) to establish if any of the material could be included within Welcome Packs and/or hotel books subject to approval on content through the RTP</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Resort managers to agree best procedure for implementing this as different operators have different rules – eg on UK approval etc</p> <p><b>TARGET:</b> Procedure to be agreed at 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop on December 4<sup>th</sup>. <b>Any relevant</b> Information to start appearing in TOs packs and/or hotel books from January 2003</p> <p>2. There are numerous practical problems surrounding attendance in Welcome meetings. Possible alternatives include an RTP desk in each hotel – although not necessarily there permanently, extension of resort rambles.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> STI to discuss further with RTP other possibilities and to experiment with different approaches. UK operators agree to support these experiments (eg encouraging hotels to support an ASSET/GTA desk) as far as possible.</p> <p><b>TARGET:</b> Experimental approaches to be agreed at December 4<sup>th</sup> workshop. Implementation to commence January 2003 and to be reviewed by RTP in March 2003 with successful approaches then applied more broadly.</p>
<p>Standards of official tourist guides and tourist taxis</p>	<p>1. Official Guides have recently developed codes of conduct and there has been a visible improvement in standards and behaviour</p> <p>2. A complaints form has been developed for tourists to complain about Guides via their resort reps</p> <p>3. The GTA is in the process of re-licensing tourist taxis with new standards</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> New standards and forms etc all need to be copied to UK as well as to resort managers – especially important for those not present year round. Gambia Experience to coordinate submission of forms to other operators via the STI Responsible Tourism Unit once established.</p>
<p>Competition over Excursions</p>	<p>1. Not the role of UK operators to define what OTGs can and can't do. GTA to regulate the guides and TOs are happy to provide inputs into that – potentially through the RTU. Realistically TOs are unable to be in a position to recommend OTGs.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> GTA will take forward regulation but otherwise market forces will dictate share of business between official excursions and OTGs</p>
<p>Hassle in Markets</p>	<p>1. A number of markets have adopted codes of conduct and other systems to control hassle (eg yellow card system).</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Monitoring systems to be documented by STI and copied to UK TOs who can then endorse them as hassle-free. GTA award system will hopefully encourage others to improve standards.</p> <p><b>TARGET:</b> Documentation to be forwarded by STI to UK TOs by end December. Reps and resort managers to provide information about hassle-free markets to tourists from January 2003</p>
<p>Tourist Behaviour</p>	<p>1. Communications working group of the STI is including tips for tourists on the FCO Know Before You Go website.</p> <p>2. Additional items eg recycling of plastic bottles could usefully be included in the TOs tips</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> TOs agree to engage with STI communications programme to ensure coherence between different sets of tips. TOs also agree to include additional items in tips (to be advised by RTP).</p> <p><b>TARGET:</b> To be agreed with Communications working group. Additional tips to be agreed at December 4<sup>th</sup> workshop and circulated by STI to UK TOs by end of December.</p>
<p>Food Hygiene amongst informal</p>	<p>1. Crystal Grading programme already applied to hotels could be applied to informal sector</p>



sector suppliers (juice pressers, fruit sellers)	<p><b>ACTION:</b> TOs agree this is an exercise the Responsible Tourism Unit could address.</p> <p><b>TARGET:</b> To be agreed once RTU established</p>
Local Sourcing	<p>1. Many food items etc are imported. Hotels need encouragement to change purchasing practice when local alternatives exist.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> TOs will encourage local sourcing as far as possible when contracting hotels.</p> <p><b>TARGET:</b> Local sourcing raised in next round of contracting.</p>
Tourism Development Issues	<p>1. How can TOs participate in decision-making?</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> This is an issue that needs to be addressed locally through continued participation by resort managers in the RTP</p>

As well as agreeing an action plan, the second objective of the meeting was to give the UK Tour operators a chance to discuss the spending of the new tourism levy with the GTA. The GTA's own priorities included:

- Increased lighting in the tourism development area to enhance security
- Product quality development
- Landscaping

Tour operators agreed the priority for them was to address hassle from bumsters and others although Gambia Experience stressed that this needs to be done in an appropriate way. Activities should not just be limited to policing but need to include alternative opportunities. The GTA noted that feedback on current activities (via the Federation of Tour Operators - FTO) would be useful in determining effectiveness and appropriateness of approach. When this issue was raised at a final workshop in The Gambia (see below) resort reps suggested that employing bumsters to clear up litter and so on would both improve the image of the destination and also provide an alternative income source for local people.

Other priorities raised by the tour operators included:

- Destination marketing including sensitisation of overseas agents through educationals
- Local tourism awareness education and skills development. Hygiene and safety in particular are paramount.
- Developing new complementary products and attractions

Tour operators highlighted the need to address key issues first – eg hassle – before ploughing a lot into marketing. They also highlighted the need for transparency on the allocation of the funds and the GTA agreed that tour operators would be kept informed via the FTO.

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP IN THE GAMBIA

Dilys Roe and Harold Goodwin returned to The Gambia at the beginning of December to hold an implementation workshop with local stakeholders. The workshop was opened by Habib Drammeh, Director General of the Gambia Tourism Authority. Eric Jenkinson, the new British High Commissioner for The Gambia was also briefed about the STI and the project in The Gambia and sent a welcome address to the workshop.

Participants included:

- The Gambia Tourism Authority
- Representatives of all the UK operators as well as Thomas Cook Continental and MyTravel Northern Europe
- Ground Handlers Association
- Hotels Association
- ASSET
- Gambia Tourism Concern
- Official tourist guides
- Juice pressers
- Bird guides
- Senegambia Craft Market.

The objective of the workshop was to discuss implementation of the London action plan. The results are summarised in the table below.

#### *Implementation of The Gambia Action Plan*

ISSUE	IMPLEMENTATION
Provision of fair and accurate information to tourists concerning local suppliers of goods and services	<p>1. ASSET has produced a directory of all members describing the goods and services locally. Once the local FTO group has been convened, <b>resort reps</b> will review this brochure and agree which parts of it can be included in hotel books<sup>1</sup>. Factual information only will be included (no adverts) and the <b>RTP</b> will take responsibility for keeping the information updated. Date for completion: Mid February 2003</p> <p>2. The idea of RTP desks in hotels, suggested in London, was not considered to be viable in practice. However it was anticipated that the forthcoming Master Planning exercise would advocate development of tourist kiosks promoting local services eg in the markets and airport. Mango News (to be published monthly) will also include a "Whats On" section that will promote local activities and ASSET will also be further promoting its members.</p> <p><b>Date for completion: Ongoing</b> <b>Action required: Resort reps (via FTO), ASSET</b></p>
Standards of official tourist guides and tourist taxis	The <b>Responsible Tourism Partnership</b> will compile a pack of all the various codes of conduct, standards, complaints forms etc that exist and circulate this to all tour operators via the local FTO group. The local FTO group will, in turn, forward copies of the documentation to the FTO in the UK and to the new Responsible Tourism Unit – once established. Any new information that emerges during the low season

<sup>1</sup> Following the meeting, the draft directory was reviewed by Richard Ward of Thomas Cook to ensure that the text was acceptable to tour operators and to provide feedback on its utility. Richard reported no problems with the text and agreed that much of the information could potentially be included. Richard has agreed to continue a process of dialogue on the brochure with ASSET until the FTO group is convened and the chair appointed.

	<p>should be notified to <b>Gambia Experience</b> and also to ground agents who can then ensure that resort managers are fully briefed at the start of each season. The local FTO group will provide input to the RTP on future codes of conduct and standards – pulling in experience from elsewhere. Complaints need to be notified to the GTA (ideally using the official complaints form with details of the guide involved where possible, but at the very least an indication of the nature of the complaint, the number of people involved and the location).</p> <p><b>Date for compilation of pack: Mid January 2003</b>  <b>Action: Responsible Tourism Partnership</b></p>
Competition over Excursions	<p>GTA will take forward regulation but otherwise market forces will dictate share of business between official excursions and official tourist guides</p> <p><b>Action: GTA</b></p>
Hassle in Markets	<p>See point on official guides above. Information on market codes of conduct will be included in the pack to be compiled by the RTP and complaints to be dealt with in the same manner. Reps and resort managers to provide information about hassle-free markets to tourists from January 2003.</p> <p><b>Action: RTP and resort reps</b></p>
Tourist Behaviour	<p>The local FTO group will compile the various tips of the different TOs into one list and forward to the RTP who will then forward on to the STI Communications Working Group for inclusion in the FCO Know Before You Go website.</p> <p><b>DATE for completion: January 2003</b>  <b>Action: Resort reps via FTO group</b></p>
Food Hygiene amongst informal sector suppliers (juice pressers, fruit sellers)	<p>Implementation of Crystal Grading programme to be agreed once <b>RTU</b> established</p> <p><b>Date for completion: dependent on RTU</b>  <b>Action: Responsible Tourism Unit</b></p>
Local Sourcing	<p>Reps in The Gambia too feed back suggestions to UK TOs and to encourage hotels. ASSET to keep TOs informed as to new developments, products that are available, and so on. Experience with pilot approaches eg juice pressers in hotels – to be shared through the RTP.</p> <p><b>Date for completion: Ongoing</b>  <b>Action: Resort Reps, ASSET, RTP</b></p>
Tourism Development Issues	<p>Tour operators will participate in decision making through the Responsible Tourism Partnership. GTA will provide information to TOs on the level of funding raised and how the funds have been spent. TOs can then provide this information to their clients.</p> <p><b>Date: Ongoing</b>  <b>Action: Resort Reps, GTA, RTP</b></p>

#### 4. MONITORING COMPLIANCE

During the course of this project the idea was raised of hosting an international conference on responsible tourism in The Gambia. The Gambia Tourism Authority agreed this would be a good opportunity and have subsequently announced that the conference: *Responsible Tourism in Destinations* will be held in The Gambia from 23-25 April 2003. This will provide an opportunity to share experience and consider how tourism can be harnessed to bring greater benefits to developing countries and in particular how larger numbers of local people can gain employment and realise small business opportunities from tourism. It is anticipated that immediately prior to the conference a high-level summit will be held with tourism ministers from the West African region to explore how some of the issues addressed in The Gambia can be rolled out to other countries.

At this conference a half-day session will be dedicated to providing feedback on the STI Pilot project. Tour operators and the Responsible Tourism Partnership will report on progress made in implementing change.