



2017

Annual Report

For our nature, culture
and people

TAKING MRTI'S KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION

Message from an EC Board member

“Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others; it is the only means.” Albert Einstein

CONTENTS



4
WHO WE ARE



8
WHAT WE DO

OUR PROGRAMS
AND PROJECTS

11
BUILDING THE
CAPACITY FOR
RESPONSIBLE
TOURISM



21
RESEARCH &
EDUCATION



23
REGIONAL
RESPONSIBLE
TOURISM



26
INNOVATIONS &
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT



30
KNOWLEDGE
GENERATION



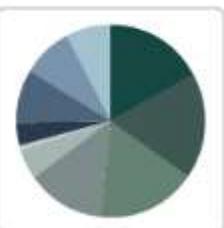
32
REGIONAL
OUTREACH



35
PARTNERS,
NETWORKS



36
PUBLICATIONS



37
FINANCIAL
REPORTS



38
LOOKING
FORWARD

WHO WE ARE

We are locally based,
with regional reach,
providing an international
level of expertise and
service



Our organization

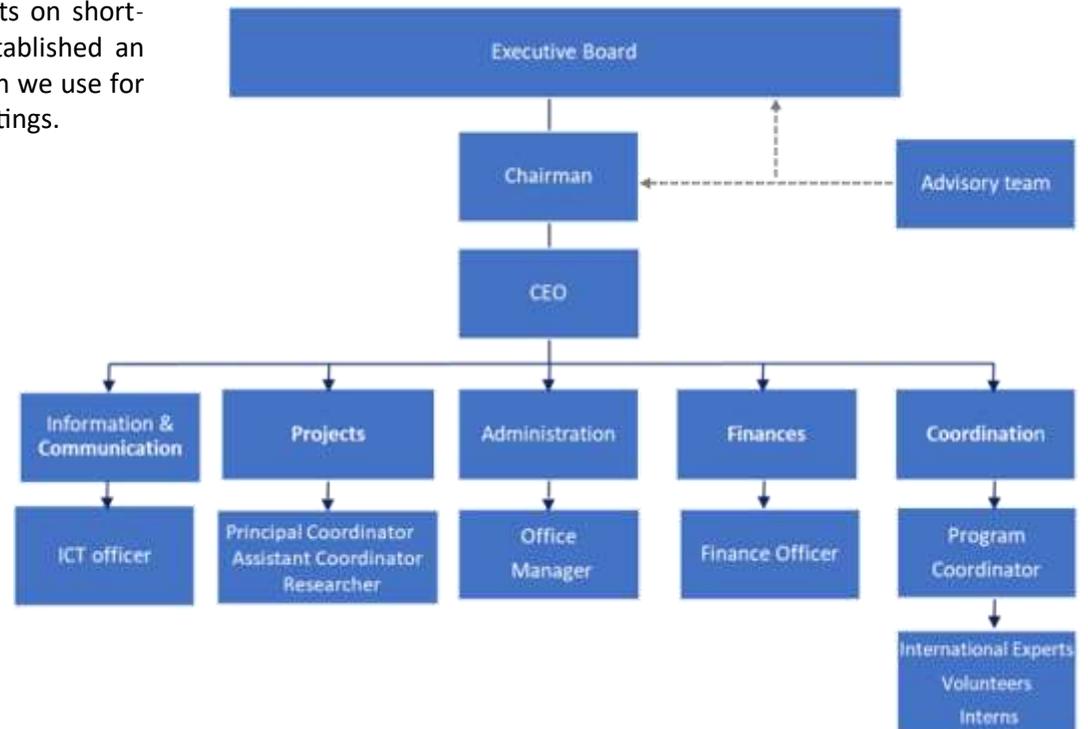
The Myanmar Responsible Tourism Institute is a knowledge and capacity building organization dedicated to delivering responsible tourism to Myanmar on a not-for-profit basis. The global challenges of making all forms of tourism responsible drive our work. We commit ourselves to pursue the principles of responsible tourism in Myanmar which empowers local communities, strives for livelihood creation, respects environmental sustainability and improves working conditions and access to the industry. Our vision is to make Myanmar a better place for people to live in and a better place for people to visit. MRTI provides training and research and serves as a knowledge hub for best practices and experiences in responsible tourism development.

Our actions are guided by social-cultural responsibility, ecological balance, economic viability and good governance. Working cooperatively, collaboratively, responsibly and with integrity with partners, government, tourism business and communities encompasses our work. Our values of Partnership, Inspiration and Integrity are embedded in all our activities and help us to achieve our shared vision.

Our structure

MRTI is run by an Executive Board of tourism professionals and is advised by experts in the tourism field. We employ an office manager and an accountant, as well as several national interns to build the capacity of Myanmar's future tourism professionals. Our work is supported by international long-term experts, volunteers and interns. In addition, we hire local and international trainers and experts on short-term consultancies. We established an on-site training facility which we use for workshops, events and meetings.

“Sustainable development is the pathway to the future we want for all. It offers a framework to generate economic growth, achieve social justice, exercise environmental stewardship and strengthen governance.” said Ban Ki-moon.



PEOPLE

Who is Who at MRTI

Our Executive Board members and our advisory team, comprised of national and international experts, have many years of technical and management experience in the tourism sector and strong networks across different sectors of the tourism industry worldwide.

The Executive Board oversees MRTI's program of work and operations. It develops and approves policies, strategies, targets and budget of the organization. The Managing Director is responsible for submitting the annual financial report, budget and salary, and expenses to the Executive Board. The Executive Board Chairman coordinates the implementation of the objectives and initiatives of MRTI.

All members of our Executive Board are volunteers who do not receive any salaries or wages. Their professional skills, connections, and insights are invaluable to the organization.

Our Executive Board



Aung Kyaw Swar
Managing Director



Nyunt Win Naing
Chairman



Rachael Htwe Htwe Hla
Director



Re Paul R War
Director



Kyay Shin That
Director

Our Advisory Team



Marlo Perry
Tourism expert on tourism product and small business development



Nicole Haeusler
PhD, responsible tourism, honorary professor sust. tourism devt.



Mike Haynes
MA, destination mngt, heritage conservation professional



Nwe Mar Myint
MA, community development, business administration

Our Project Staff and International



Than Hlaing Oo
Researcher & Nat. Trainer



Pyae Phyo Swe
Principal Project Coordinator



Ohnmar Soe
Nat. Project Coordinator



Jackie Brock
Internat. Project Coordinator



Mang Suan Lian
Finance officer



Pan Ei Phyu
Assistant Manager



Ishwar Persad
Tourism Expert CBT



Sibylle Creutz
Tourism Expert



Johanna Pelikan
Tourism Expert

Our Board members in brief

Aung Kyaw Swar, Co-Founder and Principal at Inle Heritage Foundation, Business & Change Management expert, worked in the tourism hospitality industry in mid management

Nyunt Win Naing, a certified National Tourism Master Trainer and an ASEAN National Assessor for human resource development in the tourism industry; worked in the hospitality industry since 1995; has a strong focus on community involved tourism development

Re Paul R War, an English Teacher by profession and a licensed regional tour guide, worked in the hotel sector and at the regional office of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism in Shan State

Kyaw Shinn Thant has a business development background and is a certified entrepreneurship trainer; he worked with rural communities on small business development in NGOs and international organizations

Rachel Htwe Htwe Hla, a Trainer for Community-Based Tourism and Education and particularly involved in community tourism development in Thandaung Gyi in Kayin state

Our advisory team in brief

Marlo Perry, tourism professional, experienced international tour guide, product and SME development, community-based tourism, event organizer

Mike Haynes, MA, tourism professional on international heritage and destination planning and management, member of the Association for Heritage Interpretation; value chain development, product development, PhD researcher at Newcastle University, UK on modeling and monitoring destination management planning

Dr. Nicole Haeusler, PhD; responsible tourism consultant and honorary professor for culture and sustainable development at the University of Sustainable Development in Eberswalde, Germany

New Mar Myint, MA in International Development Studies, a degree in Business Administration in Tourism, experienced international tour guide, community development, organizational development, project management



Our volunteers and interns

We offered internships as an opportunity for students to gain real-work, hands-on experience in their field of interest. A total of 12 interns and volunteers – 5 male and 7 female – contributed to the work being done by MRTI. Among them, 3 were local graduates and 9 were international volunteers from Germany, Finland, Holland and Italy.

WHAT WE DO

Driving and enhancing responsible tourism practices in the tour & travel industry



About our work

MRTI drives and enhances responsible tourism practices in the tour & travel industry that are widely accepted by the market. We advocate for the Responsible Tourism concept as standard practice in travel and tourism and promote inclusivity, accountability and sustainability of our natural resources, our people and our culture.

MRTI raises awareness for building sustainable tourism destinations among public and private sector decision-makers and travelers, while mobilizing everyone with a stake in tourism – operators, hoteliers, governments, locals, and travelers – to work together and take responsibility in making responsible tourism a catalyst for positive change.

Building capacity in the region through effective training of trainers, workshops, round tables and conferences our special capabilities include child safe tourism, tourism and human rights, and community tourism.

We assist responsible businesses and organisations that genuinely seek to provide products and services that contribute to responsible tourism and travel in Myanmar.

We build partnerships to improve collaboration between government, the private sector, academia, and civil society and. Working in partnerships means helping them to analyse their situation and develop solutions to bring change, and to strengthen their capacity to build networks to increase their degree of success.

As a regional knowledge hub on responsible tourism we facilitate the exchange of experiences through our e-library, network and research. To raise our profile and maintain our reputation as a proficient and reliable partner in Myanmar and internationally we continuously improve internal operation, capacity and effectiveness.



One of our strengths is our ability to bring people together - from public-private sector to civil society, from local to national level, closing the communication gap and tackle Myanmar's challenges. We are also helping to put knowledge into action.

Some positive results included enabling the police department to get started with internal trainings on child safe tourism, engaging hotels, tour operators and government agencies the promotion of ethical behavior among tourists by disseminating the Dos and Don'ts on responsible travel. In our campaign for child safe tourism, we involved tourism ambassadors to communicate messages to the general public and through social media.

Key issues and challenges we were facing included communication and coordination gaps between communities, government and private sector. Needs and ideas of the community were not taken into consideration and tourism businesses lacked guidance by the government and non-government sectors.



OUR PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Promoting change, packaging knowledge and experience, inspiring people

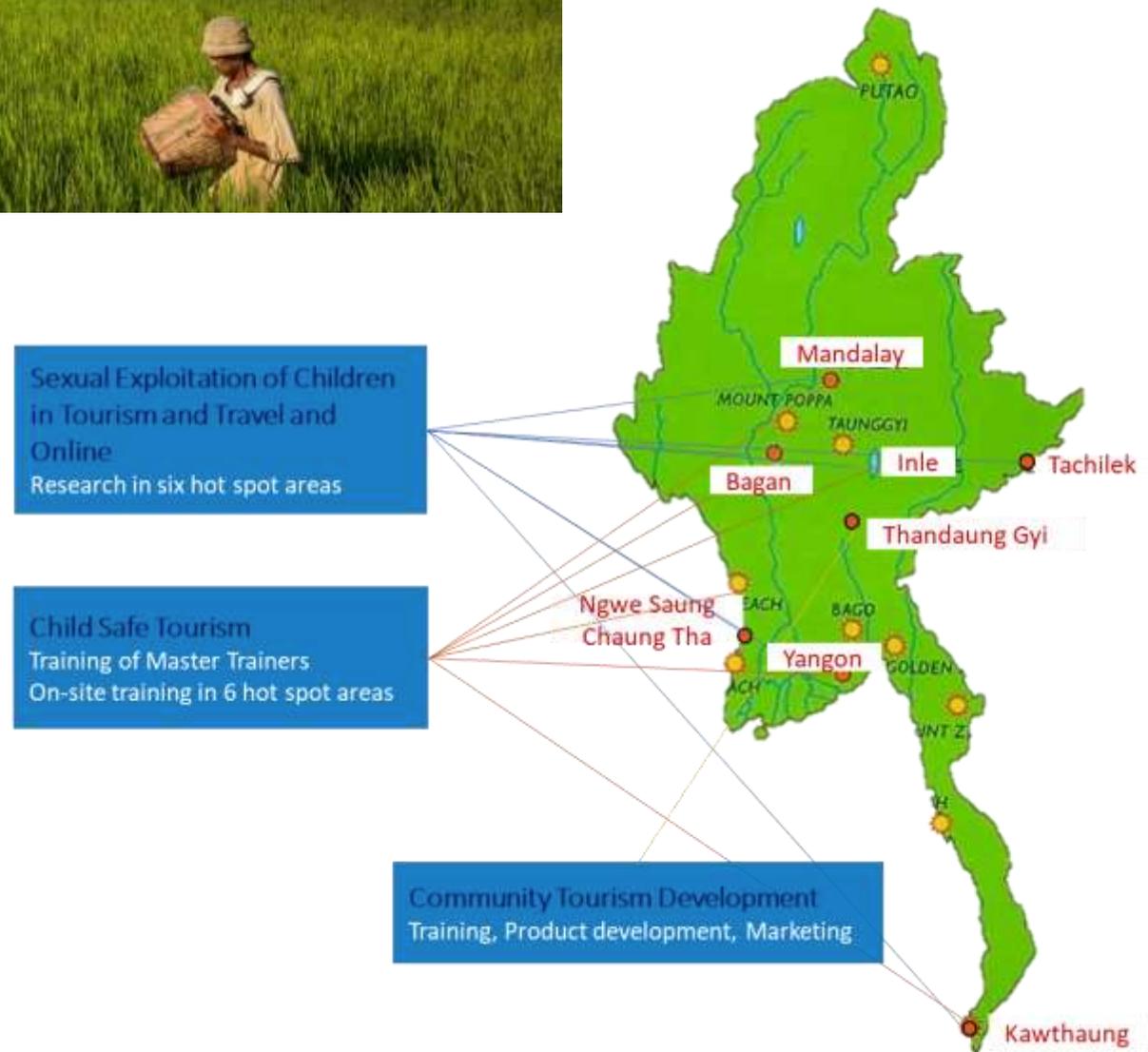




Project areas

We chose to begin our operations in Yangon as the location for our office and training center. MRTI played a key role in fostering sustainable tourism practices prioritizing Child Safe Tourism, Tourism and Human Rights and Community Tourism development. Our research and project areas for Child Safe Tourism focused on the major tourism hubs in the country, namely Yangon, Bagan, Mandalay, Nyaung Shwe, Chaung Tha, and Kawthaung.

We engaged as well in the community tourism initiative in Thandaung Gyi, a pilot project where tourism development contributes to peace building and supports reconciliation processes in Myanmar.



BUILDING CAPACITY FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Applying positive change
through improved human
and institutional capacity



Tailoring trainings and knowledge exchange to make the tourism industry more resilient

The skills and talents of tourism professionals are a critical part of ensuring a sustainable future for the travel and tourism industry and its role in supporting the global sustainable development goals.

We spread knowledge and strengthened skills of tourism professionals to ensure they understand that tourism needs to be developed in a responsible manner, so destinations can grow sustainably and for the sake of tourists, who are increasingly seeking unique, authentic and responsible experiences.

Throughout the year we trained national, regional, and local policy-makers and practitioners, tourism agencies, representatives of the private sector, representatives from social enterprises, business associations, and higher education institutions in improving sustainability practices and business performance, but also to stay competitive.

To date we have delivered training to 1,195 tourism professionals in ten tourism destinations.

“Investing in people is a critical part not only of sustainability practices but also business performance and competitiveness.” said Paul Re War, a local Trainer.



OUR CHILD SAFE TOURISM EDUCATION PROGRAM

An approach to combatting Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism and introducing Child Safe Tourism Standards

Myanmar is a country that is emerging from five decades of inward-looking policies and international isolation. The process of political and economic reforms has been well under way since 2011 leading to a rapid growth in domestic and international travellers and new tourism businesses are being established in tourism destinations across Myanmar. Mobile phone and internet coverage is increasing rapidly in the country.

Struggling with widespread poverty and ethnic conflict leaves many of Myanmar's children vulnerable to sexual exploitation. The explosion of the internet and mobile technology has given perpetrators anonymity and hidden pathways to seduce children via

social media and internet-based games. New travel and tourism services like home-stays, voluntourism, and the sharing economy have increased this anonymity and heightened children's vulnerability. Voluntourism is becoming increasingly popular in South-East Asia. Through charities and community projects, travelers can have access to young children at orphanages and in other environments. There is a large concern that Myanmar could be increasingly targeted by travelling sex offenders, both, domestic and international.



The skills and talents of tourism professionals are a critical part of ensuring a sustainable future for the travel and tourism industry and its role in supporting the global sustainable development goals. We spread knowledge and strengthened

skills of tourism professionals to ensure they understand that tourism needs to be developed in a responsible manner, so destinations can grow sustainably and for the sake of tourists, who are increasingly seeking unique, authentic and responsible experiences.



Child Safe Tourism awareness raising, training and partnership building

Advocating for a safer tourism environment for children and protecting children and young youth from abuse

In response to the rapid growth in international visitors and domestic tourists Myanmar government has developed a comprehensive framework to foster responsible tourism and apply ethical standards to tourism development in order to minimise social, economic and environmental harm. To pursue aims of the Responsible Tourism Policy and Myanmar Tourism Masterplan on child protection MRTI engaged in a child safe tourism awareness raising program which underpins the following key issues: the risk of child sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, the risk of proliferation of orphanage tourism and the risk of child abuse and exploitation online. In cooperation with UNICEF we put emphasis on improving knowledge and skills of tourism actors and improving the policy framework promoting child protection policies.

Working closely with an international expert we developed a training curriculum and established a network of local trainers. In a two weeks training of trainers we built the capacity of 12 local trainers enabling them to deliver workshops in major tourism destinations in the country. In the training they learned about responsible tourism and became familiar with the course content before taking an increasing amount of responsibility in the follow-up regional workshops.

UNICEF Myanmar, the Myanmar Police Force, the Department of Social Welfare, two national trainers and the international consultant provided valuable insights to the training. In support of the training we developed training material, a booklet on orphanage tourism, Campaign-T-shirts, flyers and posters .

The training of trainers resulted in a series of awareness-raising trainings on how to identify and address the exploitation of children in the travel and tourism industry.



“Awareness and prevention of sexual exploitation of men, women and children by establishing groups at local level and prevent abuse”
Myanmar Tourism Policy 2012, Aim 9

Using a multi-sector approach we trained the local governments in charge of child protection, upper management and middle management of tourism businesses and floor level staff. Special emphasis was given on how to take responsibility for child safe tourism/orphanage tourism, how to involve employers, how to apply reporting procedures and implement a child safe tourism policy. Vulnerable children and tourists traveling through Myanmar were further addressees of this program.





Applying responsible tourism practices on child safe travel

Engaging tourism professionals and tourists in responsible tourism practices

Travelers who visit and volunteer in orphanages may genuinely want to help, but their efforts can often perpetuate a system where children are separated from their families and, in some cases, abused. Orphanage tourism has driven unscrupulous practices and trafficking of children in other countries and may emerge in Myanmar as well as tourism is growing at an unprecedented rate. According to UNICEF 73 % of all children in Myanmar have families. Many of them come from poor families where parents believe that placing their children in temporary and long term care they will have access to better food, shelter and education. Addressing these issues we have started an awareness raising program amongst the tourism industry and travelers on the pitfalls of voluntourism and orphanage tourism together with UNICEF campaigning for child safe tourism policies and behavior.

Our experts developed good practice models in preventing orphanage tourism raising awareness among local tour operators and international tourists visiting Myanmar and encouraging tour operators, tour guides and travelers to thoroughly research before visiting an orphanage and remove orphanage visits from their itineraries. We invited travelers to learn about the negative impacts of visiting orphanages before they help, and donate to projects which are supporting children and family.

A practical guide on preventing orphanage tourism and posters encouraging travelers to act responsibly were part of our campaign. 1,500 booklets in English and Burmese language as well as 1,000 posters will be distributed in early 2018.



Boosting sustainability skills, expanding business opportunities

Tour operators have a crucial role as a link between the supply and the demand side of tourism services. Their decisions and restrictions can influence the tourism industry significantly. In response to growing demand by tourists for environmentally and socially responsible products and services, tour operators are increasingly seeking to improve their environmental and social performance, both by changing their own practices and by contracting providers that follow recognized good practices. Consequently tour operators have a special liability and can be the driver for change towards more responsible practices.

The training initiated a process that leads to responsible business procedures turning sustainability goals into tangible performance.

The participants became familiar with responsible tourism criteria and sustainability management principles and practices related to socioeconomic impacts, benefits for local communities, visitors and local cultures. They learned how to integrate sustainable practices internally and with suppliers and how to market sustainability messages and feed them into the development of new innovative products in Myanmar. Sharing best practices motivated participants to learn and get inspired.



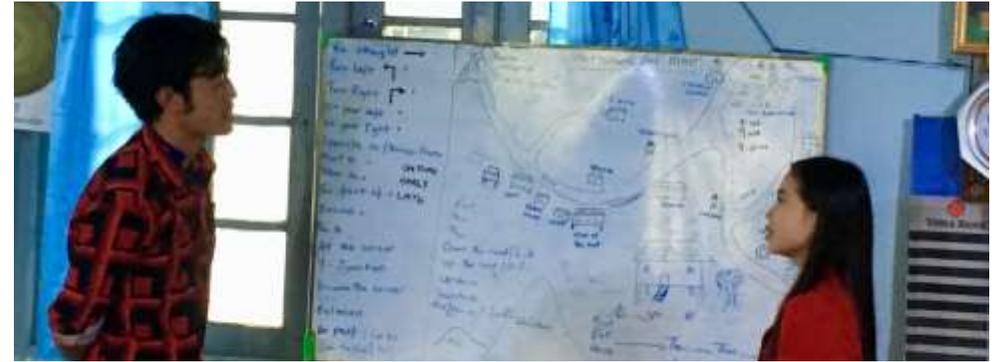


Adopting human rights principles into responsible business operations

Promoting and encouraging the human rights due diligence process into business operations of private sector tourism enterprises

In response to the rapid transformation of the country, the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business and Hanns Seidel Foundation organized the “First Multi-stakeholder Workshop on Responsible Tourism and Human Rights” in 2015 where participants expressed greatest concern on the lack of local participation in tourism planning, lack of cooperation with local communities, waste and water management, tourism’s impact on children, and human resource management. Based on these findings, together with our partners, we endorsed a Human Rights and Responsible Tourism initiative and published a booklet on ‘Responsible Tourism and Human Rights’ which we used as a tool to promote and encourage ‘Human Rights due diligence’ processes into business operations of private sector tourism enterprises.

We worked diligently to introduce Human Rights into the ongoing discussion with actors and decision-makers in the tourism industry and underlined the importance to raise awareness on ‘Tourism and Human Rights’ in Myanmar. The highlight of the project was the round table in Loikaw, an emerging destination in the country where we were able to engage communities and individuals that normally do not have access to this information, spreading the ideas of human rights and their role in tourism further and more entrenched in rural communities. The presence of key decision makers like the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, lent credibility to the subject matter, increased the visibility and the awareness of the role of tourism in addressing human rights to the state and national government.



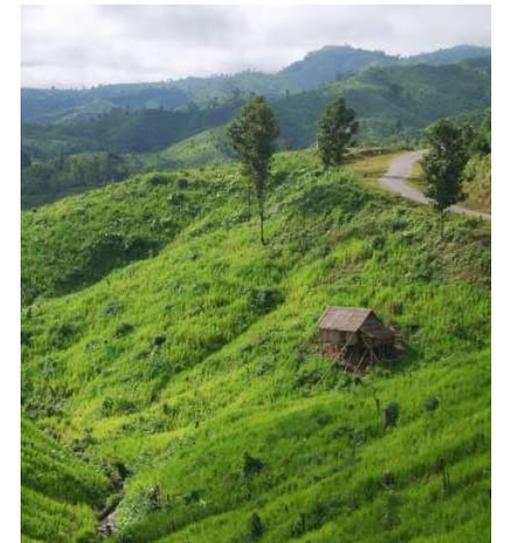
Improving communication in the hospitality sector

Opening business opportunities for local entrepreneurs

Thandaung Gyi is getting more popular on the tourism map, in particular among foreign visitors who stop by to encounter its unique beauty. However, a lack of communication skills in English were an obstacle to delivering quality services.

To close this gap MRTI supported the community in improving their communication and business skills by conducting an intensive training course in hospitality English. Upscaling skills and knowledge has improved their business performance and contributed to successfully market local products via social media. The restaurant menus will also be translated into English and plans are underway for setting up a destination website.

“The hospitality English I learnt will help me improve the service that my business offers” a participant stated.





Responsible travel practices

Promoting ethical practices among travelers

The “Dos and Don’ts for tourists” is one of the action points of Myanmar’s Responsible Tourism Policy (2012). The booklet aims to help travelers to understand Myanmar’s culture and society and avoid unethical practices during their stay. Due to further insights within the last years and dynamic changes within the country as a tourism destination, the first edition of 2012 was revised by adding topics on community interaction, child safe tourism, and water saving. In cooperation with Tourism Transparency, Hanns Seidel Foundation, Investment and Trade Center and MoHT we designed the new booklet and successfully launched it at Yangon’s International Airport in December 2017. MRTI printed 14,000 booklets; to date we distributed 4,500 copies to government agencies, private sector and civil society organizations.

encouraging them to join the responsible tourism movement in Myanmar and hereby protecting Myanmar’s culture, nature and heritage.



Partnerships with local and international research and education institutions

Developing knowledge exchange and collaboration in study on responsible tourism practices

MRTI facilitated a University Exchange Program where we assisted students in preparing and carrying out the International Field Project, a three-year joint Bachelor of Science Tourism Program of NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences and Wageningen University in the Netherlands. The program focused on the interrelationships between tourism, society, the environment and the economy. Their study in Myanmar addressed community involvement and gender roles in the value chain Kalaw to Inle trek and incorporated data collection, observations, trekking, interviews and focus group discussions. Findings emphasized on improving community involvement, in particular including women in decision making and creating more unity among community members.

Students from the University of Sustainable Development in Eberswalde, Germany contributed to our child safe tourism and community tourism program, evaluating the current situation of orphanage tourism and developing community products for sale in social enterprises.

As part of the Kant Kaw Education Center’s community leadership and social studies program students of diverse ethnic backgrounds visited our office on a regular basis learning about the principles of responsible tourism, how MRTI promotes responsible tourism, how it benefit communities and what steps are necessary for implementation. The exchange program aimed at increasing understanding of real life work situations, as well as engaging and empowering young people to achieve their goals as change makers.

Shaping responsible tourism

The Orchid Hotel in Yangon was one of the venues selected for the 'Child Safe Tourism Training for the hotel and accommodation sector'. The hotel had already adopted a sustainability policy and provided guest information on how to behave responsibly. Bringing in call girls was prohibited, but child safe tourism was not yet integrated. The workshop made them realize that sexual exploitation of children becomes a rising issue in Myanmar. They highly appreciated that MRTI and UNICEF addressed this problem and provided awareness raising workshops to a wider audience in the tourism industry. In support of this initiative the owner offered MRTI venue and refreshment free of charge for five additional training sessions on child safe tourism.



Orchid Hotel put the new knowledge into action. The management organized and conducted a series of staff trainings at different levels, and the staff now applies new standards on child safe tourism in their hotel.

The management updated the policy and included that children under the age of 18 will not be accepted in the hotel without their respective legal guardians.

“We are highly thankful now that organizations such as yours exist and those we have partners which we can call on with complex issues like this. It is also amazing that you provide trainings and awareness which is a necessity in the hotel industry right now with the boom in the industry and the influx of tourists to our country. We at Orchid Yangon truly wish to run a clean, friendly, family hotel environment for our guests and visitors and we also hope to work with organizations like yours to help educate our fellow countrymen and the public.” Tha Zin stated.

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Deepening the knowledge base and put research to use through trainings programs and PR



Fighting sexual exploitation of children online and in travel and tourism

Improving prevention and protection of sexual exploitation of children



Myanmar has become a popular tourism destination in Southeast Asia. Yet, at the same time, there is concern that the country will become a new destination for commercial sex. In particular boys and girls are at high risk to be abused by international and domestic travelers, male or female offenders, business men and tourists.

Our research supported the Child Protection Program deepening evidence on the sexual exploitation and abuse of children in travel and tourism in Myanmar. MRTI conducted a situational analysis assessing the magnitude, nature, context and trends of 'Sexual Exploitation of Children Online and in Travel and Tourism' in Myanmar (SECTT). We partnered with ECPAT international and UNICEF Myanmar and got support from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

Through desk review, on-site-consultation, field research, round table consultations and input from multi-stakeholder working groups we were able to identify where children are being exploited and by whom and how to provide child victims with the support they need for recovery and reintegration. We targeted representatives from international and national NGOs and CSOs working with children involved in prostitution, young adult sex workers and representatives of the tourism sector such as tour operators, hoteliers, restaurant owners, hospitality trainers and tour guides.

The research strongly indicated that the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism is already under way in Myanmar, with street children being the most vulnerable target. In

most cases, the children selling sex were encouraged by their parents and their relatives in order to help relieve the family's poverty and to clear debts. Often, child sexual exploitation was arranged by Myanmar middlemen with local transport service providers being involved by receiving commissions from both, the client and the business owners.

In the fight against SECTT MRTI led multi-stakeholder meetings, built partnerships with the private sector and established an exchange platform which were incredibly valuable for both, the government and NGOs working in child protection. The research is a key document enabling policy-makers to address the issue and develop interventions programs with locally tailored actions.

A major challenge we faced was how to achieve long-lasting effects on behavior and attitude which will not only be reflected in policies but in actions of empowered and informed stakeholders.



REGIONAL RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Bringing tourism stakeholders together to raise awareness, improve capacity and address shared challenges as a platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration





Facilitating regional responsible tourism

As a catalyst for responsible tourism MRTI organized and facilitated workshops, national conferences and round tables, tackling, among others, impacts on beach destinations, community tourism, which deepened the knowledge base needed to advocate for responsible tourism in national and regional agenda and support long-term monitoring.

We contributed to the Community Based Tourism Network and promoted responsible tourism through the Myanmar Sustainable Business Network. A newly established platform on regional responsible tourism development helps to continue dialogue, promote exchange of best practice and initiate action, in particular on child safe tourism, ethical travel and community tourism.



Driving Sustainability in Tourism and Hospitality

MRTI was proud to organize the first “Forum on Sustainability in Tourism and Hospitality in Myanmar” in cooperation with Swisscontact and Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). The forum offered an unique opportunity to move the sustainability agenda forward at the national level, while promoting increased engagement by tourism industry stakeholders across the country.

More than 160 representatives from hotels, officials from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, key associations from the Myanmar Tourism Federation, development partners and community based organizations shared their experiences and discussed the implementation of sustainability practice. This comprised an introduction to GSTC industry

criteria and standards, supporting sustainable development, environmental sustainability solutions, how to manage socioeconomic impacts and maximize tourism’s benefits for communities as well as market access, trends and success stories of sustainable hotel management.





Prosper with Purpose

This year we got the chance to participate in the Mekong Tourism, a cooperative platform for public and private sector stakeholders in the tourism industry to discuss the development, marketing and promotion of travel to, from and within the Greater Mekong Subregion and monitor sustainable and responsible tourism growth. The Forum was hosted by the Lao Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism in the UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang.

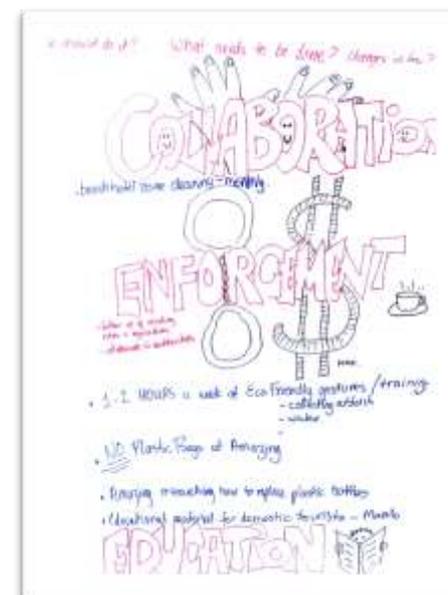
In an interactive session on Child Safe Tourism, together with ECPAT International and The CODE, our research leader presented MRTI's current activities and primary research results to tour operators, NGOs, journalists and representatives of local governments in the Mekong region. Deepening knowledge and exchanging lessons learnt is an important step towards combating sexual exploitation of children and advocating for child safe travel within the Mekong region.



Taking action for environmental management

Myanmar Responsible Tourism Institute, Hanns Seidel Foundation, and Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business co-hosted the "Second Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Responsible Tourism in Ngapali" following up on issues identified at the previous workshop a year ago. The workshop concentrated on environmental impacts on beach destinations urging locals to take action against waste pollution which resulted in a 'Trash-Free Ngapali Action Plan'.

Further urgent issues to be addressed included licensing for hotels, benefits of tourism for the local community, human resource development, and destination management planning.



Promoting Innovations and Community Involvement

Promoting and supporting innovative approaches to address change and build cohesion and resilience



Promoting best practices in Community Tourism

Supporting the exchange of knowledge between communities, private and public sector to build sustainable livelihood options, make communities more resilient and connect products to the market

Community Tourism is increasingly being promoted by the Myanmar government as a source of income and opportunities for local communities, especially in rural areas, encompassing all ethnic groups. In this concept community members are included in the development process and finally manage a business. It incorporates tourism activities and services, tours, including overnight accommodation, as well as local products and souvenirs made by community members for sale in tourism destinations.

In order to prevent failure in developing CBT, MRTI, Hanns Seidel Foundation and Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business organized the “2nd Conference on Communities and Tourism” as a platform for sharing vision, learning about existing projects as well as hurdles, skills gaps, and marketing of community tourism. The conference drew on common success factors and



Government, international organizations, tour companies and existing community tourism projects in Myanmar took part in the conference. It was also attended by legislators from communities who expressed an interest in tourism involvement.

All community tourism projects highlighted the importance of promoting environmental awareness and protecting and building pride in and knowledge of local culture.

Despite seeing a growth in visitors and income all projects encountered challenges in marketing their products and the lack of visitors during low season. MRTI supported stakeholder coordination and cooperation as a key to successfully set up community tourism.

“I hope that this conference will promote coordination between all stakeholders to make community tourism a success” said Ko Nyunt the Chairman of MRTI .



COMMUNITY TOURISM FOR PEACE BUILDING

Improving quality and standards in local tourism communities



The Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012) encourages local communities to engage in tourism development and to be aware of the impact of tourism on their environment, culture and local economy. CSOs and NGOs are invited to take a role in assisting in the development and implementation of tourism-related projects.

Thandaung Gyi has been deemed one of the success stories in Community Tourism in Myanmar to be replicated in other conflict areas of the country to bring peace, stability and prosperity to these communities. Socially and economically excluded persons who suffered for decades because of conflict, could now improve livelihood, while preserving and showcasing the natural environment and traditional cultural practices and products.

Hans Seidel Foundation, Peace Nexus and MRTI provided technical and capacity building for the Thandaung Gyi Tourism Development Working Group and the community aiming to make them self-sufficient within a couple more years.

The need to continue to keep the peace and the development of the area, motivates the community to continue the program. The area has seen a significant improvement in the number of visitors over the past few years, resulting in increased economic benefits to businesses and stakeholders in the community.

We started several product development and enhancement initiatives including the mapping of trails and key sites in and around Thandaung Gyi and the production of maps and improved signage comprising interpretation, wayfinding, and safety.

New innovate products such as cooking classes, coffee and tea production and processing will be put into practice and a cleanliness and clean-up campaign is underway. MRTI assisted as well the implementation of various marketing and promotional elements. Together we developed an online strategy including a website and social media marketing. We published a high quality promotional brochure and we added Thandaung Gyi to Tripadvisor.

All actions substantially improved the tourist experience to draw new visitors. More and more persons are seeing the benefit through increased incomes, employment and development of skills, while ensuring that tourism continues to develop in a responsible manner.

“I see peace and stability as key determinants for substantially growing number of tourists in Myanmar”, U Htin Aung Naing, Director of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism in Shan State stated.





Designing innovative, inclusive and socially responsible tourism products

Through the Business Innovation Facility, the UK Government's Department for International Development supports local tourism entrepreneurs to develop and market innovative, inclusive and socially responsible tourism products in Myanmar.

For this year's 'Product and Package Innovation Competition' MRTI was honored as a Winner for the innovative and inclusive "Yangon Neighborhood Tour – Sanchaung by Sidecar", a climate friendly tour which benefits local people, prompts dialogue, builds understanding, fosters tolerance, and nurtures a sense of pride among the community.



Promoting stakeholder dialogue in the region

The Regional Community Tourism Development Forum in Kalaw was jointly organized by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Hanns Seidel Foundation, the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business and MRTI. Kalaw, an old colonial hill station with a laid back atmosphere with many old heritage buildings still remain, is a unique tourism destination in Myanmar, set in a beautiful mountain landscape, and well known for its trekking to nearby ethnic villages.

The Kalaw Forum focused on both, the villagers from the surrounding area, as well as business owners in Kalaw. Villagers learned about tourism in communities and different existing tourism projects from the

In group work sessions and active discussions, they raised their concerns and questions. Business owners discussed future scenarios as well as opportunities and challenges for the tourism development in Kalaw. Even though many people are working towards improvement of the destination, participants agreed that cooperation between the different stakeholders in town needs to be strengthened; systematic working structures in town and villages need to be established and skills and human resources upgraded. This will hopefully increase benefits of the communities in the surrounding areas.

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND USE

Filling knowledge gaps,
engaging policy makers and
ensuring communities,
government agencies and
private business use new data
to drive positive change





Sharing knowledge, insights and best practices and inspiring innovation

MRTI was invited by ministries, international organizations and the private sector as a knowledge provider. Our main activities included sharing research knowledge on child safe tourism, contributing to policies and guidelines, facilitating multi-stakeholder meetings and focus group discussions, joining panels for discussion, changing ideas and experiences and raising awareness on responsible tourism, environment protection and community involvement.

In our e-library we are presenting up-to-date information on responsible tourism. The top downloads by end of this year were the list of Community

Tourism projects, visitor management at Bagan heritage, the Kayah Sales Manual and CSR practices in the tourism sector of development countries.



Shaping Community Tourism standards

Tourism stakeholders have high hopes that Community Tourism can contribute to grassroots human capacity development, poverty alleviation and cultural promotion. However, some basic standards are necessary to assist stakeholders in reaching a minimum level of capacity and quality in the communities. In this way, more confidence can be built among government, business partners and civil society organizations.

We contributed to the development of specific Community Based Tourism standards for Myanmar and co-facilitated a two-day conference. The standards will protect and guarantee the credibility of Community Tourism in Myanmar. They can be used as a tool to provide a clear roadmap for communities to systematically improve their performance to reach the standards and guarantee the quality of Community Tourism programs.

REGIONAL OUTREACH

Drawing attention to place
responsible tourism on
regional and national agenda



Highlighting best practices in responsible tourism and inspiring the tourism industry to do more

This year MRTI initiated the first ever Responsible Tourism Awards to shine a spotlight on the remarkable achievements in Myanmar's tourism, to increasing visibility, sharing best practices and inspiring others by example. The Awards featured best innovations and practices on Responsible Tourism throughout Myanmar's tourism industry in six categories open to all responsible tourism business, organizations and individuals who wanted to participate: Best responsible tour operator, Best responsible tourism accommodation, Best responsible tourism destination, Best responsible tourism communication/marketing, Best responsible tourism education/training program, and Best community involvement in tourism.

The Winners were presented at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Yangon by MRTI Chairman Nyunt Win Naing, and U Tint Twin, Director General of Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, handed over the certificates and trophies.



The Awards leave a mark as to where Responsible Tourism is at present and highlight businesses and organizations that are really taking tourism in a new and highly responsible direction for the future.

MRTI recognized them in order to inspire and challenge others to replicate and to do more.



Adopting ethnic travel

Recognizing that the impacts of tourism are more visible in 2017, and to keep with the goal of positioning Myanmar as a sustainable tourism destination, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism aims to ensure that visitors are culturally aware, environmentally conscious and economically deliberate.

By distributing the Dos and Don'ts booklets we engaged travelers to learn about Myanmar's intricacies, to avoid unethical behavior and undertake tourism activities with respect for dignity, safety and freedom from exploitation.



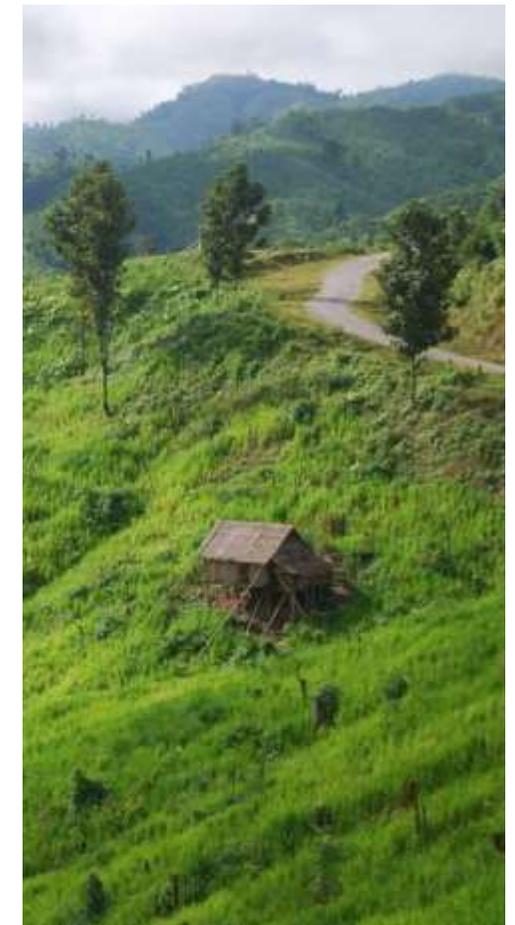
Raising visibility on child safe tourism

As part of a responsible tourism movement in Myanmar we campaigned for child safe tourism using T-shirt messages, leaflets and brochures. We cooperated with a group of Mr. World Tourism, international, tourism champions and ambassadors for sustainable tourism, to reach out to the general public. A highlight was the final celebration of the contest where disabled children promoted slogans on child safe tourism which were well received by the audience.



Building the 'Transforming Tourism' partnership

Representatives from Civil Society Organizations all over the world endorsed the 'Declaration on Transforming Tourism'. MRTI was among the 30 participants who drafted the declaration. As a signatory of this statement we are committed to achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of a just, inclusive and equal world. The declaration will help force strong alliances between CSOs all over the world to promote responsible tourism in global sustainable tourism development deliberations.



PARTNERS, NETWORKS, SPONSORS

Partnerships improve outreach and extend the impact of our work. We engaged in partnerships with local private sector actors, civil society groups, communities, national and local governments, academia, and international organizations on research and action, on sharing and learning and dissemination of knowledge, widening the scope of responsible tourism development and alleviating poverty.

Myanmar Partners

Anti-trafficking-in-Person Division
 Business Innovation Facility Department of Social Welfare
 Hla Day Social Enterprise
 Kant Kaw Education Center
 Myanmar Center for Responsible Business
 Myanmar Hotel Association
 Ministry of Hotels and Tourism
 Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement
 Myanmar Police Force
 Myanmar Tourism Federation

Myanmar Tourism Resources Development Association
 Trade Training Institute
 Union of Myanmar Travel Associations



Sponsors

Exotravel Myanmar
 Terra Verde Myanmar,
 Indo China Service
 Travel Group, Balloons Over Bagan
 Sandar Win Travel & Tours Asia Co. Ltd
 Swisscontact

International Partners

ASEAN CSR Network, Singapore
 AVI International, Australia
 CUSO International, Canada
 Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit/Centre for International Migration and Development, Germany
 ECPAT, Thailand
 Global Sustainable Tourism Council
 Hanns Seidel Foundation, Germany
 HNE Eberswalde, Hochschule fuer nachhaltige Entwicklung, Germany
 International Labor Organization, Myanmar
 Lux Development, Luxemburg
 NLVT Breda University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands
 Planet Wheeler Foundation, Australia
 Peace Nexus Foundation, Switzerland
 Swisscontact, Switzerland
 Terre des hommes, Italy
 Tourism Transparency, Myanmar
 UNICEF Myanmar

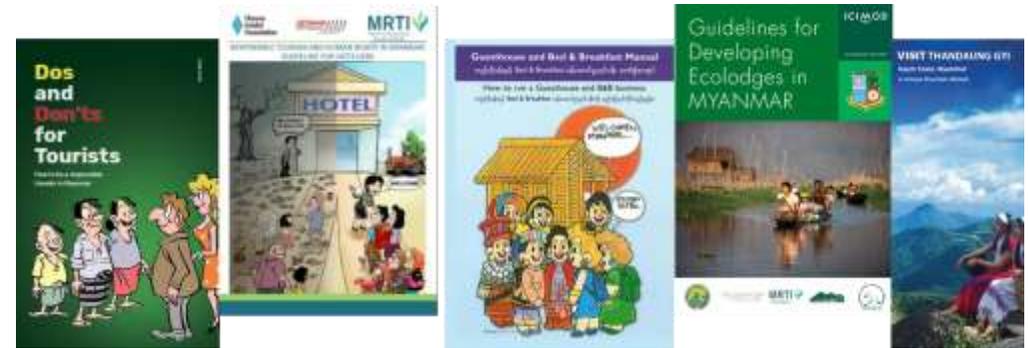
PUBLICATIONS

Through personal dialogue and networking, participation at high level events as panelists and moderators, and social media (website, facebook) we have increased our visibility and publicity as a professional player in Myanmar's tourism sector.

We disseminate much of the Information gathered during project activities via printed and digital publications targeted at policy makers, government experts and decision makers, tourism businesses, communities, students and travelers. All MRTI publications can be downloaded free of charge from our e-library on the MRTI website.

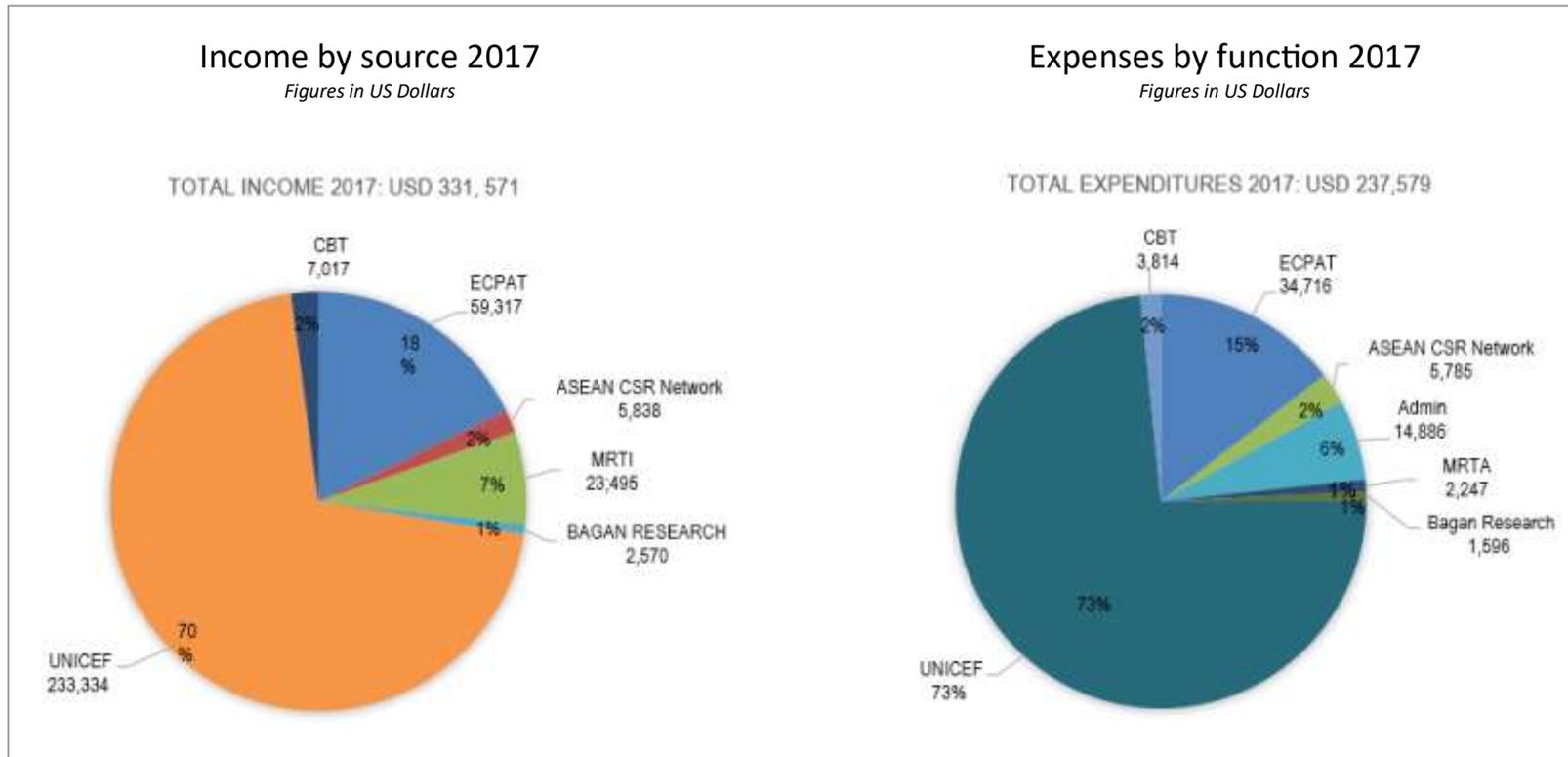
Manuals and Guidelines MRTI contributed to

- ◆ Dos and Don'ts for Tourists
- ◆ Responsible Tourism and Human Rights in Myanmar – Guidelines for Hoteliers
- ◆ Guideline for Developing Ecolodges in Myanmar
- ◆ Guesthouses and Bed & Breakfast Manual



FINANCIAL REPORTS

MRTI is funded through a mix of institutional international donors, foundations, business sponsors and individuals. The actual income received is presented in the chart below (left); the second chart (right) shows the breakdown of expenses by function. A total income of USD 331, 571 was realized during the year, and an expenditure of USD 239,495 was made. The difference in the actual income realized and expenditure made was covered by the opening balance of funds available at the beginning of the year.



LOOKING AHEAD

A short outlook to 2018

Learning from our achievements and missed opportunities, we remain committed to deepening our external focus and impact of our work and to strengthening our organization to be more knowledgeable, visible, accountable and effective.

- ◆ We will deepen partnerships and continue our vital work with UNICEF to increase knowledge and change shaping a responsible tourism industry in Myanmar.
- ◆ We will deepen the knowledge of tourism stakeholders on child safe tourism including orphanage and voluntourism.
- ◆ We will capacitate tour and travel industry on how to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse of children.
- ◆ We will educate businesses on sustainability management practices.
- ◆ We will continue to generate and disseminate knowledge and share experiences on regional responsible tourism development.
- ◆ We will continue to advocate for sound environmental practices, protecting social and cultural heritage and improving livelihoods of people in Myanmar.



THE YEAR IN NUMBERS





Imprint, Thank you

published by Myanmar Responsible Tourism Institute (MRTI)
No. 7, Ma Kye Kye Street, Sanchaung Township, Yangon, Myanmar
E-mail: info@myanmarresponsibletourism.org
Phone: +95 (0) 9442625774 | +95 (0) 9778158168
www.myanmarresponsibletourism.org

Photos: MRTI archive
January 2018

We say thank you

To all our partners, foundations, communities, businesses for their actions, promotion and support.

Our donors UNICEF, ECPAT, ASEAN CSR Network, Swisscontact, Hanns Seidel Foundation, GIZ, CUSO, AVI.

Our sponsors: Swisscontact, Exo Foundation, Ballons over Bagan, Terra Verde, ICS Travel Group, Sandar Win Travel & Tours who helped us to implement projects.

All the volunteers, interns and advisors who contributed their time, ideas, and expertise towards environmental, economic and social progress, and education in Myanmar.

That's how you can contribute to make Myanmar a better place to live, work and visit:



Be a **bronze** sponsor:
Donate \$100 – U\$1000 annually



Be a **silver** sponsor!
Donate \$1001 – U\$5000 annually



Be a **gold** sponsor:
Donate over U\$5000 annually

Myanmar Responsible Tourism Institute (MRTI)
No. 7, Ma Kye Kye Street, Sanchaung Township, Yangon, Myanmar
E-mail: info@myanmarresponsibletourism.org
www.myanmarresponsibletourism.org



Promoting change – Inspiring people – Engaging businesses