

# Community Tourism Enterprise Development in the Rupununi **A Blueprint**



Conservation International Guyana  
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Cover photo by Eduardo Nycander

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# **Community Tourism Enterprise Development in the Rupununi A Blueprint**

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APD	Air Passengers Duties
BBC	British Broadcasting Centre
CATS	Community and Tourism Services
CBET	Community Based Eco-Tourism
CCS	Consumers Confidence Survey
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CI-Guyana	Conservation International Guyana
CTED	Community Tourism Enterprise Development
EU	European Union
FIT	Fully Independent Traveler
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEA	Guyana Energy Authority
GNP	Gross National Product
GPS	Global Positioning Systems
GSTI	Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative
GTA	Guyana Tourism Authority
GTIS	Guyana Trade and Investment Support
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
KMPA	Kanuku Mountains Protected Area
LCDS	Low Carbon Development Strategy
MINTIC	Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce
MOAA	Ministry of Amerindian Affairs
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPAS	National Protected Areas System
NRDDB	North Rupununi District Development Board
OLADE	Organisation of Latin America Development Energy
PR	Public Relations
RCTA	Rupununi Community Tourism Association
RDC	Regional Democratic Council
RLI	Rupununi Learners Incorporated
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
THAG	Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UNWTB	United Nations World Tourism Barometer
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USPs	Unique Selling Propositions
VCIF	Voluntary Community Investment Fund
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
WWF	World Wildlife Fund for Nature
YCIG	Youth Challenge International Guyana

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The Project Team comprised Eduardo Nycander, Judy Karwacki, Marcelo Arze Garcia, Chuck Hutchinson, Vibert Welch and Gillian Albert who were tasked with facilitating the meeting and workshop sessions for the project. Curtis Bernard, Technical Manager was tasked with completing the project and compiling this document.

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## FOREWORD

The Rupununi, located in the south of Guyana is a truly special place. Resting intact for millennia between the Amazon and the Guiana Shield Proper Regions, it has attracted some of the most revered explorers over the last century. And yet so little is known about it. The unique but little studied biodiversity of the area rivals most other places of its size in South America. Combining this with the rich cultural history and hospitality of the Indigenous Peoples, drawn mostly from the Makushi, Wapishana and Wai Wai groups, we should have expected a much greater level of Rupununi tourism than we see today.

But nothing happens before its time. As the world increasingly recognises the value of ecosystems in maintaining human wellbeing, we are now more interested than ever in learning about nature and helping to maintain it for our own wellbeing. Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) serves as a model to the world of how humankind can improve livelihood through conserving and maintaining the forest ecosystems for climate stability. We are conscious that community tourism must be an important and critical ingredient in the country's low-carbon, low-emissions future.

At Conservation International Guyana (CI-Guyana), we build on our strong foundation of science, partnership and field demonstration to empower societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature - and on our global biodiversity - for the wellbeing of humanity. We imagine a healthy, prosperous world in which societies are forever committed to caring for and valuing nature for the long-term benefit of people and all life on Earth.

It is our mission and vision that over the years we have been deeply engaged with the local communities of the Rupununi, and in particular, the Wai Wais in the south and the Kanuku Mountain communities, in helping them to promote conservation and wise use of the lands of the Rupununi. More recently we have worked with the Government of Guyana, the regional administration, local communities and other stakeholders to complete the management planning process for the proposed Kanuku Mountains Protected Area. We are now working with these communities to assist in community-based enterprises that will support their lifestyles, while assisting them to build more sustainable village economies.

We hope that this Community Tourism Blueprint will provide guideposts for anyone interested in supporting community tourism in the Rupununi. Above all, we hope that the communities, which so willingly participated in the work, will find the document helpful.

We at CI-Guyana would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the people of the Rupununi and to the Government of Guyana, as together we seek to conserve and sustainably use the Rupununi's rich ecosystems for our wellbeing and for our children's future.

*David Singh, PhD  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rupununi, a part of Guyana's Administrative Region Nine, is the "home" of three groups of Indigenous Peoples: the Makushi, Wapishana and Wai Wai. The Makushis live mainly in the north, the Wapishana in the south and the Wai Wai inhabit the southernmost extremes of the region. The entire area has some 16,000 inhabitants living in approximately 60 villages. The people of the Rupununi are mainly subsistence farmers, craftsmen, fishermen and hunter-gatherers. In the late nineteenth century, cattle ranching became a major economic activity in the Rupununi, as Europeans settled in some parts. While the cattle industry has declined, the "ranch lifestyle", is still visible in most parts of the region.

The relatively pristine and fully functional ecosystems of the Rupununi include numerous water bodies, savannahs, shrubs and various types of forests. These ecosystems are also home to a large number of species found in Guyana and some endemic to the Guiana Shield.

With these characteristics, the Rupununi is one of Guyana's most attractive tourist destinations. Several of the communities in the region have begun to capitalise on the potential of the area and have established tourism businesses with support from various sources. These businesses, in some cases, provide employment and income generation in the communities, but so far the communities have not been able to fully capitalise on the opportunities presented. Most of the developments have concentrated on only a few aspects of the tourism business, to the neglect of the others, resulting in lower than expected benefits being generated. Community tourism can play the dual role of promoting conservation of nature and culture and also simultaneously providing for community development.

The Community Tourism Enterprise Development Project was conducted over a period of one year and was co-funded by the IDB and CI-Guyana. The project was aimed at assessing the current state of community tourism initiatives in the Rupununi, providing technical assistance to the communities and making recommendations for the further development of the enterprise. The Project involved ten communities in the Rupununi which have taken steps to develop tourism products.

A technical team, which comprised international and local resource persons in the fields of community tourism marketing and product development, visited the communities involved in the project. During these visits, the operations of the enterprises were discussed and assessed with the communities, and technical assistance provided for improvements. Further technical assistance was also provided to the "market ready" communities. Several recommendations were compiled with significant input from the communities.

The communities were assessed and each placed into one of three categories/tiers based on their level of readiness to accept international tourists. The three tiers were:

**Tier i (Market-Ready):** Communities already hosting guests and needing very little effort to become fully ready for the market. The communities of Surama, Rewa, Nappi and Yupukari were assessed to be in this tier.

**Tier ii:** Communities that offer products but require a significant amount of effort to be fully ready for the market. Aranaputa, Annai, Wowetta and Fair View were assessed to be in this tier.

**Tier iii:** Communities in the initial stages of preparation to be involved in the enterprise. Kumu and Rupunau were assessed as being Tier iii communities.

The recommendations proposed in this blueprint focus on the individual community and regional support. The community recommendations focus mainly on aspects of product development, such as architecture (design), trail development, signage and hygiene, among other areas. At the regional level, the recommendations included the strengthening of the support in areas such as the provision of technical assistance to communities, coordination of efforts and market linkage, *inter alia*.

The recommendations were compiled into this document for Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBET) development in the Rupununi. It is hoped that this blueprint will assist communities in the development of their

products and in capacity building, thus enabling them to more effectively and efficiently manage and market their tourism products.

The Project was implemented with full participation from the communities and members of the Rupununi Community Tourism Association (RCTA). Other agencies vital to the success of tourism in the Rupununi - such as the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA), Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana (THAG), Regional Democratic Council (RDC) of Region Nine, Ministry of Amerindian Affairs (MoAA), The Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce (MINTIC) and the private tour operators and tourism businesses operating in the Rupununi - also participated in the execution of the Project.

## Section 1 INTRODUCTION

Guyana has enormous potential as a sustainable tourism destination, containing a wealth of world-class tourism resources including vast tracts of wilderness, a variety of river systems, rich coastal habitats, numerous distinct mountain ranges (up to 2,835m) and a wide variety of cultural and historic resources. As the only English speaking country in the South American continent, Guyana also enjoys a powerful comparative advantage - providing a huge opportunity to develop as a tourism destination for the primarily English speaking North American and Northern European markets.

The Rupununi region of Guyana has a unique history and holds an abundance of natural treasures in its diverse and pristine ecosystems. It is one of Guyana's most attractive tourist destinations and has the potential for growth in many areas, especially nature and culture- based tourism.

Through the development of an appropriate tourism model, the Private Sector and free market forces could be catalysed to significantly expand the sustainable tourism industry. Yet, two crucial issues – community participation and education and awareness – must be effectively addressed, if the sustainability of local communities is to be achieved as a result of tourism development. Effective community participation ensures that the tourism which is developed benefits the local stewards of the resources, securing their continued involvement, hence sustainability of

*Figure 1: Map of Guyana highlighting the Rupununi region.*



the industry. An educated and aware sector will help to ensure that stakeholders understand that the value and viability of the industry is rooted in healthy ecosystems and strong relationships with people. Private Sector market forces often do not adequately address these issues, since the time and expense of doing so is often beyond the business cycle's financial horizon.

CI-Guyana has long recognised the potential of sustainable tourism to provide a sustainable economic activity for the communities within Guyana's interior. In collaboration with MINTIC, the organization hosted a Tourism Charette in 2003. The Charette focused on the development of a strategic plan for the development of the tourism industry at three sites: Historic Georgetown, Kaieteur Falls and the Rupununi. Following the recommendations of this workshop, a follow-up Charette, which was held in Surama in 2005, focused on the development of community tourism in the Rupununi. The Rupununi Charette recommended the provision of technical assistance and advice to the communities for the development of the industry in the region, and initiated steps towards networking of tourism operations in the region.

The Rupununi<sup>1</sup> is an area of large naturally-occurring savannah and the adjacent forests in Guyana's southwest with a population of approximately 16,000 persons, mainly of Makushi, Wapishana and Wai Wai nations. The community of Lethem serves as the administrative hub of the Rupununi and is made up

of a mixture of Amerindians and other Guyanese, many with strong connections to coastal Guyana. Given the

<sup>1</sup>Most of the Rupununi lies within Region Nine of Guyana, except for a small southern portion of Region Eight, consisting of the Iwokrama Programme Site



relatively small population of the Rupununi, tourism can provide the basis of a viable sustainable economy in the region, without the need for more intensive industrial scale activities. Indirect benefits such as the provision of local goods and services will also create spin-off benefits to a wider cross-section of the population. The growth and development of a sustainable tourism industry will, however, require the consistent and unwavering support of Government, the Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and donors in order to realise this outcome.

Sustainable tourism is an important and rapidly growing 'niche market' within the global tourism industry. It offers an opportunity to develop products that can contribute to sustainable national socio-economic and cultural development and cohesion by providing livelihoods for local communities and giving value to the maintenance of local traditions and culture. Sustainable tourism can also directly generate revenues for environmental conservation and management. However, while sustainable tourism has the potential to contribute towards sustainability of the tourism industry, it can be as damaging as mass tourism if not properly managed and regulated.

A recent and encouraging trend in tourism is the increasing involvement of and investment by local communities. There is increasing recognition that the involvement of local populations, especially native communities, is a key component of sustainability, as they take their own economic development in hand. Many communities now have an economic stake and the socio-political power to sustain the land, wildlife and other resources.

Community-based sustainable tourism is socially-sustainable tourism which is initiated and almost always operated exclusively by local and indigenous people. Shared leadership, emphasizing community wellbeing over individual profit, balances power within communities and fosters traditional culture, conservation, and responsible stewardship of the land. But, without improvements in physical infrastructure, human resource capacity and services, it is unlikely that communities within the Rupununi can develop successful community-based tourism initiatives and realise their full potential as tourist destinations.

Visible and measurable development will require that the communities take responsibility for and ownership of the management of their own affairs. However, such development hinges on greater cooperation among residents of the communities, and at the regional and national levels, to plan and implement activities in this regard. Equally important is the need for product development, marketing and promotion strategies and physical infrastructural rehabilitation and development. Communities must also engage other stakeholders and organizations involved in complementary activities, wherever practicable, and benefit from these engagements.

The concept of community-based sustainable tourism development is relatively new to Guyana but is gaining wide attention and interest. The communities in the Rupununi can therefore utilize their great potential in this sector as the basis for their own development. However, community-based sustainable tourism requires the active support and involvement of all individuals within the community. It is important to realise that host communities have a stake in ensuring that tourism does not compromise their quality of life through issues such as overcrowding at traditionally social venues, rapid changes in social values, increased demand that raises the price of consumer commodities and degradation of the natural environment.

Although the region can provide an abundance of activities which tourists, visitors, scientists, foresters and birders can take part in and enjoy, there is still quite a lot of work yet to be done if the development process is to be taken to another level.

This IDB co-funded Community Tourism Enterprise Development Project was executed over a period of one year and was aimed at assessing the current state of community tourism initiatives in the Rupununi, providing technical assistance to the communities and making recommendations to further develop the enterprise.

The project involved the communities of Kumu, Rupunau, Nappi, Yupukari, Aranaputa, Annai, Wowetta, Rewa, Surama and Fair View (see figure 1 for locations). Beginning in November 2008, a team of local and international tourism experts visited the communities to collect data and provide technical assistance in business development. Follow-up visits were made to deliver and discuss the results of the assessment and provide recommendations for the improvement and future development of the community products. Additionally, engagements were held with the wider regional and national stakeholder groupings involved or concerned with tourism in the Rupununi.

The content of this document is intended to provide a comprehensive framework of actions considered necessary for the development of a viable and vibrant community-based sustainable tourism industry in the Rupununi. It aims to

help catalyse community-based sustainable tourism to become a central sustainable economic activity for the communities of the Rupununi.

### **1.1 Sustainable Tourism– A Necessary and Integral Part of Guyana’s Green Economy**

Despite great natural riches and a relatively small population of approximately 751,000<sup>2</sup> people in 2002, Guyana remains the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Guyana exhibits both a very low human and low population density (less than one-tenth the population of Haiti in an area eight times as large) and one of the highest percentages of remaining rainforest cover of any country. Guyana’s rainforest covers an area larger than the combined rainforest of all seven countries of Central America.

Without a growing economy and improved conditions for the average citizen - and especially the disadvantaged and remote communities of the interior - the exercise of political will and the economic means to conserve natural and cultural resources will not be forthcoming unless there are other incentives available to foster such activities.

Recently, the Government of Guyana articulated a strategy for the development of the country based on the maintenance of its forests. The Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) seeks to present the maintenance of forests of the country as a part of the solution for addressing Global Climate Change, in return for revenues for development and establishment of low-carbon industries, such as tourism.

The emphasis on tourism in the LCDS coincides with the view expressed before in relation to the transformative impact this sector can have on a small economy like Guyana’s, given the huge size of the global tourism market, measured in hundreds of billions of United States dollars (US\$) versus a national economy measured in significantly less than US\$1 billion.

Unlike development options based on intensive resource extraction, well-planned tourism provides the opportunity for Guyana to benefit from its natural resources through conserving and enhancing these resources rather than depleting them over time. Through tourism, natural as well as cultural resources will only become increasingly valuable, enhancing their contribution to the nation’s economic well-being as each year passes. Furthermore, the types of tourism resources Guyana possesses – history, culture and undisturbed nature – are widely dispersed over the territory and throughout the population. This provides numerous opportunities for participation by a wide variety of Guyanese communities, businesses, entrepreneurs and, especially, the economically disadvantaged interior communities.

Through tourism, Guyana can show that one of its greatest sources of wealth lies in the cultural and historic resources of its diverse peoples and the goods and services provided by its intact ecosystems.

A relevant model for Guyana is Belize, which has very successfully developed its eco-tourism sector. Belize’s place in Central America is much like Guyana’s in South America, as the sole English-speaking country, a low population and high per cent of rainforest cover. Even as late as the 1980s, Belize was searching for a viable development model – encouraging international investment to clear virgin rainforest for plantation agriculture – a development strategy that had little benefit for Belizeans. Today the future is brighter –36% of Belize is included within its national protected area system and over 250,000 annual tourist arrivals make eco-tourism the leading foreign exchange earner and the basis of a sustainable economy. With appropriate vision and planning, Guyana could well follow Belize’s lead and develop sustainable tourism as a leading economic sector.

Sustainable tourism is ideal in that it can uniquely deliver benefits to local people in logistically isolated communities of the interior. These communities are often disadvantaged by their isolation and the high cost of transporting their products to markets. Tourism provides one of the few economic activities where their isolation can be overcome and, in fact, turned into a competitive advantage.

### **1.2 Trends in Tourism Today**

Tourism is the largest industry in the world, accounting for about 9.6%<sup>3</sup> of the world’s combined Gross National Product (GNP) in 2008. In 2008, international travel generated approximately US\$944 billion<sup>4</sup> in receipts and

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<sup>2</sup> The Co-operative Republic of Guyana Population and Housing Census 2002: National Census Report, Bureau of Statistics Guyana, 2007

<sup>3</sup> World Travel and Tourism Council Website. ([http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)) accessed April 30, 2010.

accounted for over 241 million<sup>5</sup> jobs worldwide. Historic and cultural tourism make up over half of the tourism market and while traditional destinations comprise the bulk of this market, there is growing demand for “new,” “uncrowded” and “authentic” attractions, of the kind that Guyana possesses. Although nature tourism so far accounts for only a small portion of tourism expenditures worldwide, this segment of the market is growing more than twice as fast as the industry as a whole. Because the tourism industry is so large and Guyana’s economy so small, it would require only 0.0001% of the international tourism market for tourism to become Guyana’s leading foreign exchange earner.

Between 2006 and 2007, the market share of developing countries in tourism grew to 40% of worldwide international arrivals – a significant increase from 34% in 2000. While worldwide international tourist arrivals increased to 898 million – an overall 32% increase, or an average annual growth rate of four per cent developing countries international tourist arrivals, increased to 360 million - an overall 54% increase or an average six per cent per year growth rate<sup>6</sup>. This growth and the growth of eco-tourism and green tourism overall has made governments around the world aware of the economic, social and environmental benefits of tourism development, and has encouraged more investment in tourism.

These trends fit well with the Government of Guyana’s goal of using tourism as a tool to foster sustainable economic development, especially for interior communities, while conserving the nation’s rich and increasingly valuable natural resources.

However, international tourism is likely to suffer in the short term as a result of the global economic recession. In 2008, international tourist arrivals reached 924 million, up 16 million over 2007, representing a growth of two per cent. But tourism demand slowed significantly through the year, and the second half of 2008 saw growth come to a standstill. After four years of growth averaging 3.6% per year, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that travel and tourism economy GDP growth slowed to just one per cent in 2008, the weakest performance since the recessionary period of 2001-2003<sup>7</sup>.

The negative growth trend continued in the first months of 2009. According to the June edition of the United Nations World Tourism Barometer (UNWTB), international tourism declined by eight per cent between January and April, as compared to the same period in the previous year. Destinations worldwide recorded a total of 247 million international tourist arrivals in those four months, down from 269 million in 2008<sup>8</sup>.

The WTTC forecasted two difficult years ahead, with the travel and tourism economy GDP likely to contract by 3.5% in 2009 and to expand by only 0.25% in 2010<sup>9</sup>. For Europe, the world’s largest single market, medium to longer-term outbound travel prospects are good, but research indicates that Europeans are poised to choose destinations closer to home, in the short term. Europe provides 50% of arrivals in South America. This makes their choice of closer destinations not favourable news for long-haul destinations such as Guyana<sup>10</sup>.

Meantime, in the USA travel intentions generally remain at a historically low level, according to the latest Consumer Confidence Survey (CCS) report by The Conference Board of the US. Preliminary results showed that in February 2009, 36.6% of Americans polled planned to take a vacation, domestic or international, within the following six months, down from 37.5% in December 2008. This is close to the historical low hit in June 2008 (36.2%)<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, the US Travel Association reports that more Americans are now signalling a willingness to travel for leisure purposes. According to their February travel horizons TM survey, the US Traveller Sentiment Index TM rose

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<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism>) accessed April 29, 2010

<sup>5</sup> World Travel and Tourism Council Website ([http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)) accessed April 30, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> “Developing countries lead dynamic world tourism growth”, UNWTO Press Release, March 6, 2008 [www.unwto.org/media/news/en/press\\_det.php?id=1801](http://www.unwto.org/media/news/en/press_det.php?id=1801).

<sup>7</sup> ITB World Travel Trends Report, March 2009; International tourism challenged by deteriorating world economy, UNWTO Press Release, January 27, 2009 [www.unwto.org/media/news/en/press\\_det.php?id=3481](http://www.unwto.org/media/news/en/press_det.php?id=3481); and, World Tourism in the Face of the Global Economic Crisis and Influenza Threat UNWTO Press Release, May 12, 2009 [www.unwto.org/media/news/en/press\\_det.php?id=4181](http://www.unwto.org/media/news/en/press_det.php?id=4181)

<sup>8</sup> UN World Tourism Barometer, UNWTO. June09, [www.unwto.org/facts/eng/pdf/barometer/UNWTO\\_Barom09\\_2\\_en\\_excerpt.pdf](http://www.unwto.org/facts/eng/pdf/barometer/UNWTO_Barom09_2_en_excerpt.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> The Economic Impact of Travel & Tourism: 2009, WTTC [http://www.wttc.org/bin/pdf/original\\_pdf\\_file/exec\\_summary\\_2009.pdf](http://www.wttc.org/bin/pdf/original_pdf_file/exec_summary_2009.pdf) .

<sup>10</sup> ITB World Travel Trends Report, March 2009

<sup>11</sup> Tourism Intelligence Bulletin, March 2009, Canadian Tourism Commission.

to 90.2 in February 2009 from 78.2 in October 2008. The increase was attributed to an increase in the perceived affordability of travel<sup>12</sup>.

Despite the doom and gloom predictions for the short term, top tourism organizations including UNWTO and WTTC, expect tourism to continue its leading, dynamic role in global growth, once the crisis is over. Importantly, in the short term, South America is faring much better than the rest of world. In 2008, South America achieved 6% growth in international arrivals and was outperformed only by Central America, with 8% growth.<sup>13</sup> In the first six months of 2009, South America showed a flat 0.2% growth rate but it was the only region outside of Africa (3% increase) which did not register a drop in international arrivals.<sup>14</sup>

When it comes to activity trends, since the late 1990s it has become increasingly clearer that sun, sand and sea tourism, has had its heyday. More and more of today's travellers are seeking authentic, active experiences, which create memories that last a lifetime. More people are taking trips that combine volunteering and vacationing, including expeditions, where people assist with scientific research, or conservation, a perfect match for Guyana. Charity travel – where travellers participate in challenges organized by a non-profit organization, such as hiking up a mountain or running a marathon in a foreign land, and raise money to pay for their trip and for donations to the charity – is becoming more popular.

Themed tourism, where a special interest such as food or culture is the main travel motivator, is seeing strong growth. Family trips, including inter-generational family members, which focus on nature, culture and learning, are on the rise too. So too are active family vacations such as horseback riding and kayaking expeditions.

From a marketing point of view, the internet continues to become more important. Social networks dedicated to ecotourism, sustainable tourism and adventure tourism, are popping up everywhere and new “easy-to-use” applications are making it easier for travellers to search for information and book trips online. The trend is particularly noticeable among European markets, which have been slower in adopting the internet, compared to North American. In 2007, for the first time, the proportion of holiday trips booked by Europeans online exceeded those booked without the help of the internet. Trips actually booked (if not paid for) online have been rising by about 15% a year in recent years.<sup>15</sup>

### **1.3 Guyana Tourism Trends**

Currently, Guyana receives a modest number of international visitors annually. In 2008, about 130,000 people visited Guyana, an increase of only six per cent over the five-year period, beginning in 2004. Visitor numbers in 2008 were 3.3% lower, compared to the previous year. This was in no doubt due, in part, to the global recession, but two other factors likely played a role. On the one hand, 2007 was a banner year for tourism because Guyana was a host country for Cricket World Cup, which drew many overseas visitors and gave Guyana its highest visitor arrivals ever. On the other, two massacres occurred in 2008. Although these incidents did not involve tourists or occur in tourist areas, they received much attention from the press and resulted in several governments placing travel advisory warnings for Guyana for a few weeks, negatively affecting tourist arrivals.

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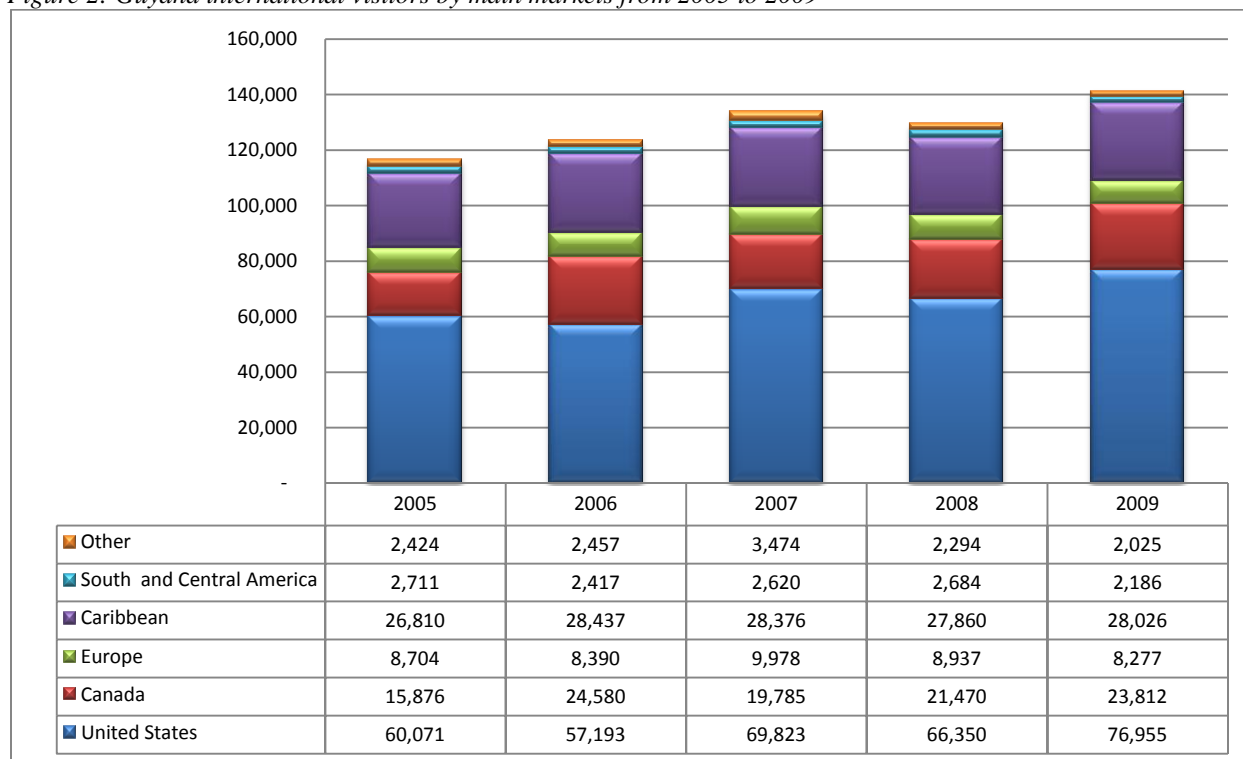
<sup>12</sup> Americans' Leisure Travel Intentions, Trend Slightly Upward, US Travel Association Press Release, March 16, 2009, [www.tia.org/pressmedia/pressrec.asp?Item=952](http://www.tia.org/pressmedia/pressrec.asp?Item=952).

<sup>13</sup> ITB World Travel Trends Report, March 2009

<sup>14</sup> UN World Tourism Barometer, UNWTO. June09. [www.unwto.org/facts/eng/pdf/barometer/UNWTO\\_Barom09\\_2\\_en\\_excerpt.pdf](http://www.unwto.org/facts/eng/pdf/barometer/UNWTO_Barom09_2_en_excerpt.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> ITB World Travel Trends Report, March 2009.

Figure 2: Guyana international visitors by main markets from 2005 to 2009



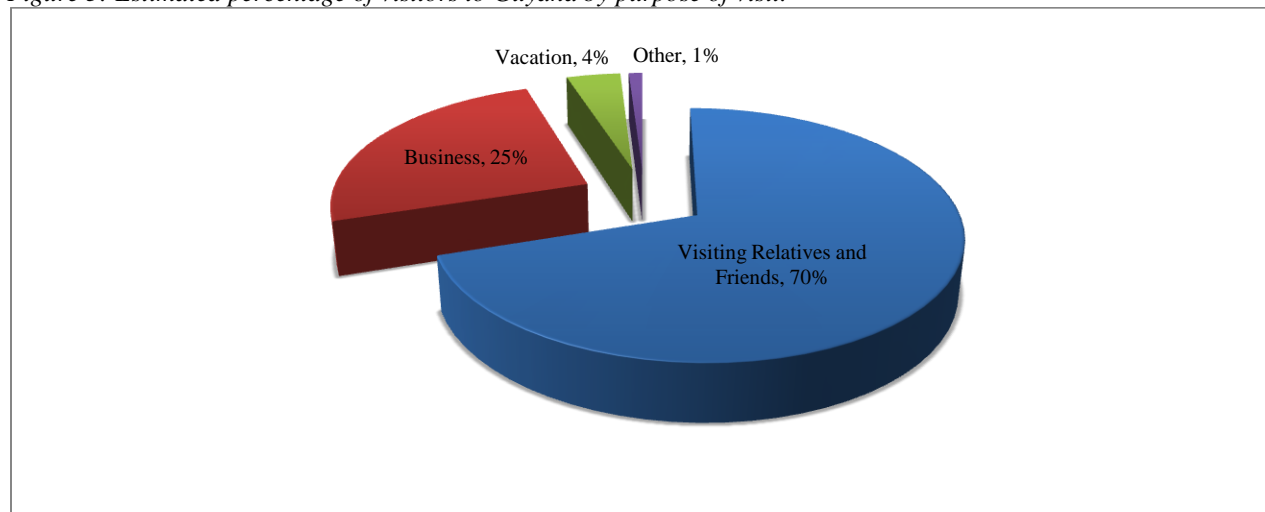
Source Guyana Tourism Authority, 2010

More than half (54.5%) of visitors to Guyana in 2009 came from the USA, the Caribbean ranked second at 19.8% followed by Canada at 16.9% and Europe at 5.9%. These rankings have remained the same for the past five years.

Guyana recently began to gather more detailed information from visitors but to date no statistics have been released about purpose of visit, regions visited, length of stay, spending or other useful information. The only estimates that are available were prepared for the Guyana Tourism Development Action Plan 2006 – 2010, which was published by MINTIC in January 2006, and estimates purpose of visit and total spending for 2005. In the action plan it is estimated that the purpose of the overwhelming majority of visitors to Guyana (70%) is to visit friends and family, about 25% come for businesses and about four per cent are classified as leisure vacation visitors.

Total visitor expenditures for 2005 are estimated at between US\$78.5 million and US\$116.5 million, of which leisure visitors are estimated to contribute between \$3 million to \$6 million. The duration of trip is not specified but it is implied that a 10-day stay is used. Per trip spending of US\$750 to US\$1500 is assumed for leisure travellers, which appears to be low based on the daily cost of packages sold by Guyana's in-bound tour operators.

Figure 3: Estimated percentage of visitors to Guyana by purpose of visit.



Source: Guyana Tourism Development Action Plan: 2006 – 2010, Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce (2006)

Table 1: Estimated Guyana tourist expenditure by purpose of visit

Purpose of Visit	Number of Visitors	Avg. Expenditure Per Person Per Trip (USD)	Total Expenditure (Million USD)
Visiting Relatives and Friends	80,000	750 – 1,000	60.0 – 80.0
Business	30,000	500 – 1,000	15.0 – 30.0
Vacation	4,000	750 – 1,500	3.0 – 6.0
Other	1,000	500	0.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>115,000</b>		<b>78.0 – 116.5</b>

Source: Adapted from Guyana Tourism Development Action Plan 2006 – 2010, pg 86; Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce (2006)

#### 1.4 Competitive Destinations

Consultations with inbound and international tour operators reveal that Guyana's primary competitors are South and Central American destinations that have similar rainforest and savannah habitats and feature ecotourism, birding and other nature experiences. These competitors include best sellers Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago as well as lesser-known destinations such as Suriname, French Guiana and Panama.

Guyana faces a number of challenges in competing with these destinations. The best selling destinations are well-known, already have high numbers of visitors and typically have generous marketing budgets. Guyana, on the other hand, is not well-known and has very modest marketing resources, making it difficult to attract the attention of international markets.

Guyana also encounters competitive challenges in selling birding and wildlife watching experiences, which are the most popular activities among visitors to the Rupununi. As regard birding, Guyana has much fewer known species to offer than many of the competitors. For example, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru and Ecuador each have more than 1,400 species of birds compared to 815 species in Guyana. In addition, although Guyana is home to many Guiana Shield endemic bird species, there are no species that are endemic only to Guyana.

For wildlife watching experiences, Guyana is becoming known as destination where there is a high probability of seeing rare charismatic mega fauna such as jaguars, giant river otters, giant anteaters and black caiman as well as, many species of primates and near-endemic birds that are difficult to see in other parts of South America. However, the main competitive issue is that, other destinations that promote such experiences, such as the Galapagos Islands and the Pantanal, offer more consistent viewing opportunities. Although, the wildlife is there, Guyana often lags



behind in understanding the tactics that the other destinations use to boost viewing opportunities, which are needed to allow it to realise its comparative advantage as wildlife watching destination.

The most difficult competitive disadvantage Guyana faces is pricing. Tours operators say that Guyana tour prices are 15 to 20% higher than other key competitors. To a large extent this can be attributed to the much higher costs of transportation in Guyana. This issue cannot be addressed by tourism businesses alone. Government policies and concessions have been instrumental in reducing costs and facilitating the growth of tourism, in many other countries – Costa Rica, Ecuador, Barbados and Jamaica – where the sector has become an important economic contributor. It would help the tourism industry in Guyana to become stronger and more fully established, if these models are considered as possible ways of reducing the cost of fuel, vehicle duty and taxes.

### **1.5 Tourism as a Sustainable Community Development Tool**

The main objective of community-based sustainable tourism is the betterment of communities through the development of sustainable economic opportunities based on sustainably using shared natural and cultural resources. This type of tourism provides each community with the opportunity to develop enterprises that provide jobs by developing unique communal and individual resources. It empowers communities and individuals to take control of their own futures.

Community sustainable tourism enterprises are ideally based on the commercial development of sustainable tourism products and services in a **Tourism Zone** ideally sited on lands set aside by the community as a **Community Wildlife Reserve** and the coordinated development of research and education. All services offered to domestic or international tourists including transportation, housing and guided visits, within the community's Tourism Zone should be considered sustainable tourism activities. The sale of craft, local produce and foodstuff, cosmetic or medicinal products produced by community members for tourist-related use, must also be considered as complementary sustainable tourism services.

The marketing and sales of sustainable tourism services should be based on a vision and under the conditions described in the community's **Sustainable Tourism Master Plan**, which should result from the community's **natural resource management plan**.

Ideally, through community development planning, the community authorities in villages seeking to utilize sustainable tourism for their development should undertake a community consultation process to delineate the Wildlife Reserve, with the approval of community members. If there is a protected area adjacent to the village lands, it is preferable for the Wildlife Reserve to be located adjacent to this biodiversity reserve, and the community should obtain official recognition of the Community Wildlife Reserve. The community should further delineate a Tourism Zone within or adjacent to the communal Wildlife Reserve. Also, traditional family houses and their surrounding private areas should not be considered objects of the sustainable tourism activities unless the community and the homeowners give explicit permission.

### **1.6 Community Participation**

Fostering community enterprises is the most effective means of achieving true participation and the active involvement of communities.

Participation by local communities is critical to the success and sustainability of tourism development. The more people enjoy tangible benefits from their resources, the more they become advocates for its conservation. But beyond that, much of Guyana's attraction to international tourists is based on cultural and natural resources that are collectively owned or controlled by local communities. If communities are empowered to decide what and how they share with the outside world, and directly benefit from doing so, the tourism product will be both authentic and sustainable. A primary goal in all tourism development must be community benefits – this is the only way that long-term sustainability of tourism is addressed and effective long-term conservation of resources truly attained.

At the same time, sustainable tourism must not be seen as the only means of addressing a community's problems or its sole economic activity. Sustainable tourism activities must endeavour to support the development of other enterprises within the community by the purchase of local agricultural produce, handicrafts and other products and services. Every attempt should be made to maximise the benefits that accrue to the community and its members and to use the tourism business as the means to create a diverse economic base. Purchasing indigenous and local art, handicraft, food products and other souvenirs are favoured by most international travellers and destinations.



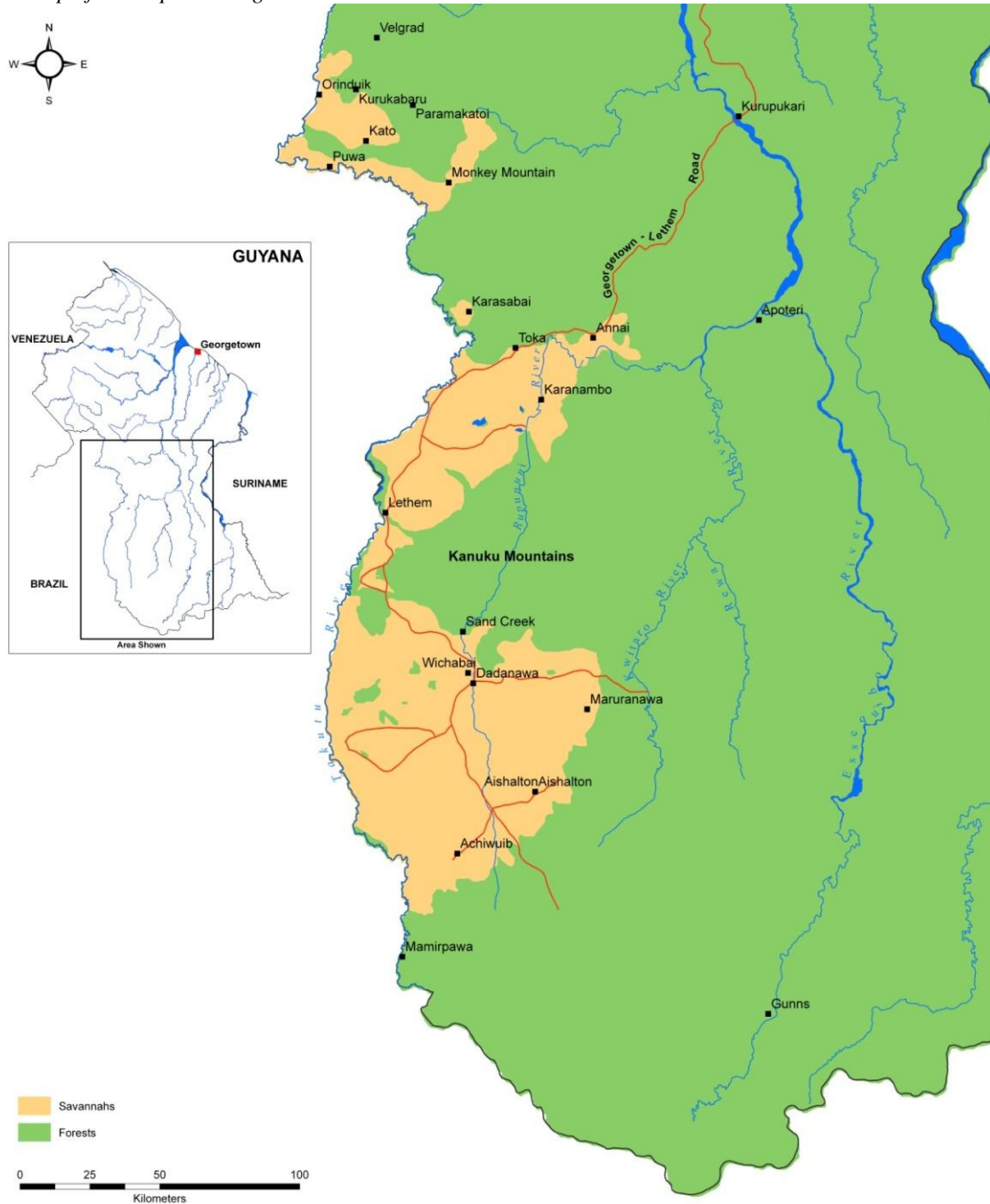
### **1.7 Education and Interpretation**

Education and interpretation are crucial to the successful development of a sustainable tourism industry. Developing the ability to tell the stories of the place and its people is a critical element of good tourism development but is especially important when the tourism resources are like Guyana's – unique and endemic. Both Guyanese and international visitors must be provided with accessible information to foster their understanding and appreciation of resources. Research, as a component of the tourism development programme plays an important role by expanding knowledge of natural and cultural resources, providing the content for interpretation to visitors and informing better management and monitoring of the resources themselves. The development of effective mechanisms to deliver information in a variety of formats is also critical including curriculum development for guide training, brochures, field guides and other publications, exhibits, film and digital media.

## Section 2 COMMUNITY PROFILES

The Rupununi region (or Rupununi) presents a unique combination of natural and cultural resources. An extensive natural savannah area, it is divided into a northern and southern region by the rainforest-covered Kanuku Mountains which provides a picturesque backdrop to the savannah landscape. The Kanukus are a long-isolated and biodiversity-rich range of mountains extending up to 900 meters in elevation. The savannah, the mountains and surrounding forests are further divided in two by the Rupununi River running south to north through their centre.

Figure 4: Map of the Rupununi region



Until recently, a characteristic of the region has been its inaccessibility. A broad band of rainforest has separated the Rupununi from the coast, and the bulk of Guyana's population and national attention. This situation is rapidly changing as the road from Georgetown to Lethem has been improved, supporting a regular passenger-bus service and use by several other private commercial operators. A bridge across the Takutu River at Lethem, linking Brazil to Guyana, has also recently been completed.

*Figure 5: Photograph of the Guyana-Brazil Bridge. The old pontoon crossing is in the foreground.*



Three main Indigenous Peoples (Amerindian Groups) live in the flat, alternatively dry and flooded savannah – the Makushi mainly in the North, the Wapishana and the Wai Wai mainly in the South. The rest of the population is made up of inhabitants from the coastlands who have settled in various areas, especially in the frontier settlement of Lethem,<sup>16</sup> and descendants of Europeans who homesteaded the area in the late nineteenth century, building large cattle ranches in the process.

In the early twentieth century, European settlers established large cattle ranches in the savannah and the labour force was drawn from the Amerindian communities. Cattle, raised on the open savannah were rounded up and driven to market – weeks through the rainforest to Georgetown. Since the cattle business became marginal in the last thirty years, the economy of the Rupununi has become more tenuous.

The Rupununi maintains a unique lifestyle that mixes historic European and Amerindian aspects in architecture, cuisine, social life and activities. In 1999, the Kanuku Mountains were identified as a priority site for the establishment of a protected area by the Government of Guyana. The government had invited CI-Guyana to lead the participatory process (involving the local communities) of consultation and planning for the development of the proposed Kanuku Mountains Protected Area (KMPA). Tourism is expected to play an important role in making the KMPA an economic engine for the development of the Rupununi and promoting enhanced livelihoods of the local people.

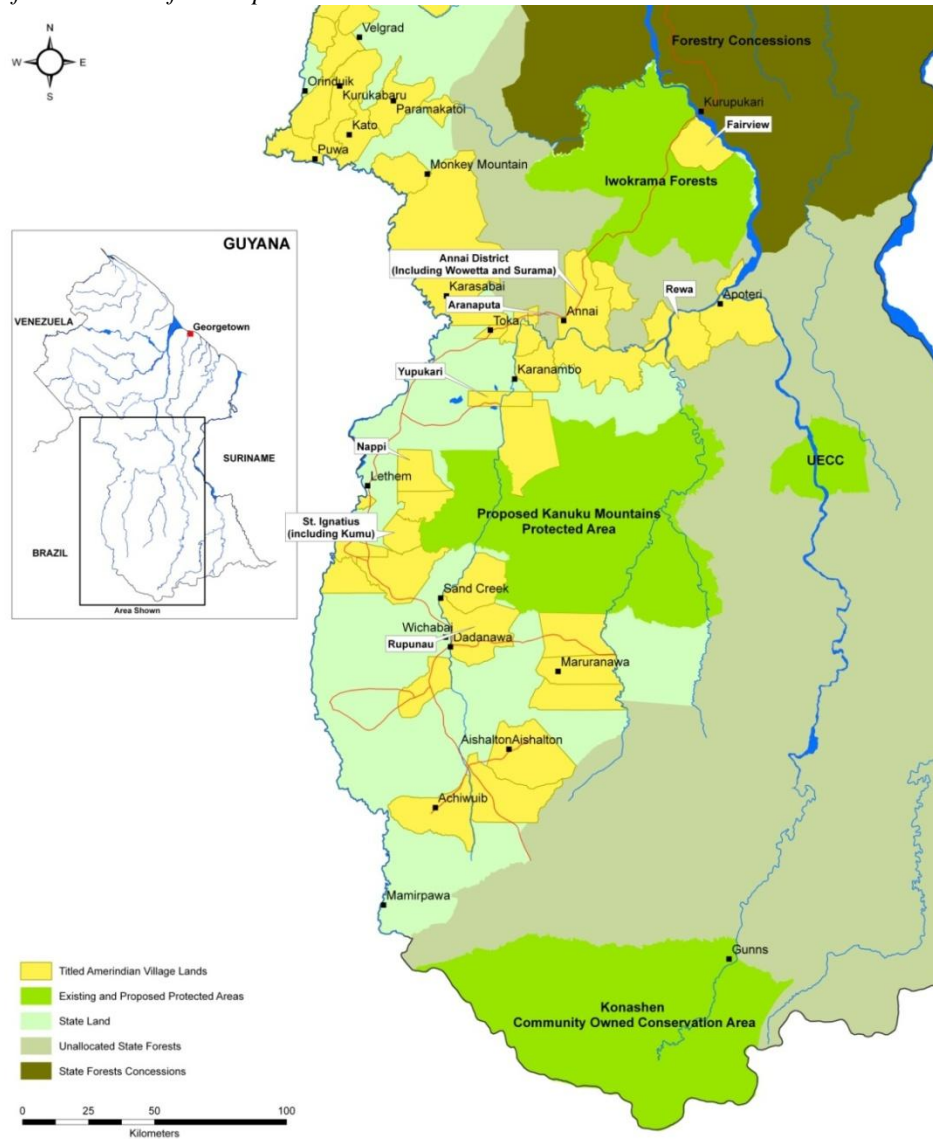
The administration of the region embraces tourism and promotes the conservation of its culture and nature. A regional councillor is tasked with the coordination and management of tourism and conservation and these two topics play a prominent role in the business of the Council.

The land in the Rupununi is owned mainly by the State and the Amerindian Villages. The village lands are held communally by its residents under the Amerindian Act (2006), which grants them irrevocable tenure and appoints them as sole managers of their land. Much of the State land is unoccupied, but is used by the communities for their sustenance.

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<sup>16</sup> Lethem is yet to be declared a town. It is a rapidly growing community that serves as the administrative gateway to and from Brazil, and the administrative centre for Region Nine.

Figure 6: Map of land tenure of the Rupununi



Note: Approximate boundaries of titled Amerindian lands.

The development of sustainable tourism in the Rupununi faces many current and anticipated challenges. There is growing interest in extractive industries and large scale agriculture in the region especially with the improved access to the region. The improved access to the region facilitated by the improved Georgetown to Lethem road corridor and the opening of the Takutu Bridge across the Guyana-Brazil border, though potentially positive for tourism and the development of the wider region, is creating greater demands on the resources of the region. This infrastructure development is a part of the Initiative for the Integration of regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA).

Concessions have been granted for logging, petroleum exploration and gold mining in the region. There are also interests in establishing large scale rice and soybean farming in the savannahs and the threats of over exploitation of the wildlife and fisheries of the region are growing. It will be vital for these developments to be considered against the sustainable tourism potential of the region, and to ensure that environmental and social safeguards already enshrined in Guyana's laws, are stringently followed to ensure the survival and growth of Rupununi sustainable tourism.

Even though there is better access, the cost of transportation in the region is still high and poses a challenge to tourism. The success of community based sustainable tourism in the Rupununi and tourism on the whole in the region will depend on measures to properly manage these challenges.

The following community profiles are for selected communities in the Rupununi. It covers those communities that have an interest in tourism and had taken steps towards realising their interests at the time of the execution of the project.

## **2.1 Surama**

Surama, a small Amerindian community with about 300 residents mainly of the Makushi group, is located on a large patch of Savannah (about 13km<sup>2</sup>) surrounded by the forested Pakaraima Mountains. The community is a satellite of the Annai Village which has title to 65,141ha of land in the North Rupununi. Residents depend largely on hunting, fishing and subsistence farming for their sustenance. Most of their homes are simple buildings of clay-brick walls and thatched roofs. Surama could be reached via a 7km access road off the Georgetown-Lethem Road and is situated about 29km from Annai.

With over seven years of eco-tourism experience, Surama is a model for community sustainable tourism. It has created employment for residents especially youths, who otherwise leave seeking employment. It is proving that the environment can be conserved and through sustainable tourism bring substantial economic and other benefits to communities.

Surama is an excellent birding and wildlife viewing location with populations of several mammal species including Giant River Otters, several species of monkeys and a wide range of bird species. The community offers river and canoeing trips with excellent bird and wildlife viewing opportunities and many birding trails and hikes up the Surama Mountain. There are also opportunities to overnight, in hammocks at the Burro Burro Camp. Besides its natural wealth, Surama also possesses a rich cultural heritage which it fosters, maintains and presents to visitors through the staging of cultural presentations, village tours and the cuisine at the Surama Eco-lodge.

Development in Surama started in 1974 by a group of sixteen families led by two brothers, Robert Frederick (Uncle Fred) and Theopheilus Vanavus Allicock (Uncle Theo). Surama was the hunting and fishing grounds of the Makushi People for many years, however, this area was also controlled by the Rupununi Development Company Limited, the principle company involved in the cattle industry in the area at that time, and responsible for driving cattle along the Cattle Trail from the Rupununi to the Intermediate Savannahs just south of the coast of the country.

The period was marked by serious social and economic difficulties triggered mainly by the decline in the main Rupununi industries (beef, tobacco and balata). The drive for agricultural development was also hampered by the lack of markets and competitiveness and caused great concerns within the community.

To find a solution the leaders decided to use the old system of 'MAYUE', working together for self sufficiency with the understanding that there is "Strength in Unity". This started to show results when in 1988 the visit of a youth group known as Operation Raleigh became interested in community development and tourism in the community. During the period 1989 to 1991 scientists and other officials from the nascent Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development (IIC), workers with the road construction company Paranapanima, and visitors to Annai, all visited the village seeking meals, accommodation and guides. They were also interested in purchasing handicraft. Between 1992 and 1995 tourists from Torong Tours and students from Wartburg College visited Surama. The College made the first substantial payment for services provided and the sum received was used to establish Surama's first accommodation facility, the construction of which was supported by volunteer labour from Youth Challenge International Guyana (YCIG).

Surama's present tourism facilities consist of a two-storied central benab which serves as the kitchen and dining area, four self-contained benabs and one benab for lodging. The buildings are constructed in traditional style, with clay-bricks, wood and thatch, and are perched on a hill which provides a panoramic view of the surrounding savannahs and mountains. The accommodation comprises has eight beds and eight hammocks.

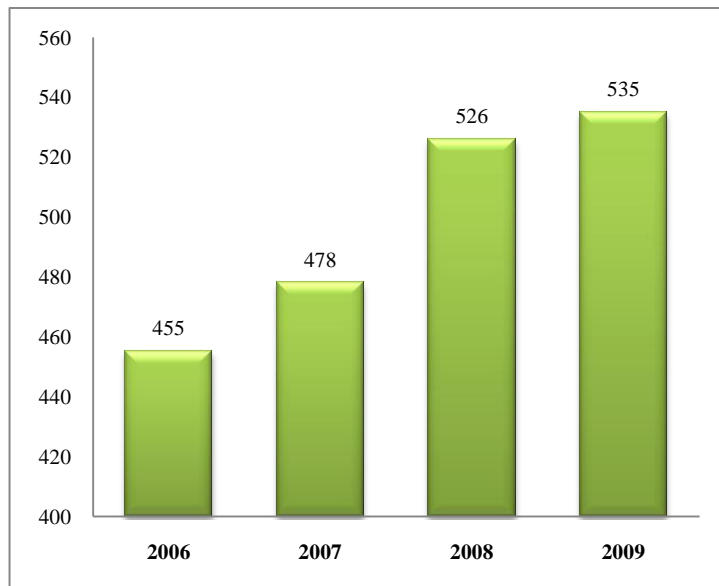


Figure 7: A guest cabin at the Surama Eco-lodge.



In 1998 Wilderness Explorers, a Guyanese tour operator, signed a Memorandum of Understanding for partnership development with Surama. The initial agreement was for a two-year period but the partnership has continued. Surama's Tourism Business started in the same year with 47 tourists visiting in that year. The business has continued to grow and 526 tourists visited in 2008. More than half of the visitors to Surama have come from the United Kingdom (55%), 24% came from the US, 10% from Canada and 11% from other countries

Figure 8: Number of visitors to Surama from 2006 to 2009



Source: Surama Village.

(mainly European, Australia and New Zealand).

Surama has also developed partnerships with the IIC, the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB), Rock View Lodge, Torong Tours, Dagron Tours, Bushmasters, Ayanganna Tours, Karanambu Trust, Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative (GSTI), GTA, the Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana (THAG), the Government of Guyana, communities and others (groups and individuals) such as CI-Guyana.

Surama has established a fully community owned and operated sustainable tourism business which has resulted in increased revenue and jobs to the village. The business has also received awards and recognition both nationally and internationally including from

THAG, the President's Award; the GTA Award; and the Educational Travel Conference (ETC) for Responsible Tourism Award.

In the interest of furthering the business the community has invested in:

1. Organising tourism committees and new tourism lodges.
2. training guides, caterers, drivers, mechanics, accountants and other human resources for the business and
3. Acquiring and installing internet capabilities, radio sets, internet phone, buses, photovoltaic power systems, boats and engines.

However, the community is challenged by

1. the lack of understanding of the business,
2. dearth of skilled people in many areas,
3. community conflict, mistrust, inappropriate behaviours such as alcohol abuse and improper garbage disposal and the
4. lack of proper communication and transportation

Surama's success was earned by trial and error. It is also important to note that comments and criticisms from clients, who were encouraged to be honest and frank, were taken very seriously. As a result, the community was able to adapt and modify its activities to make the visitor experience more enjoyable and memorable for its clients.

## **2.2 Rewa**

Rewa is a small village of about 35 households with a population of approximately 210 mainly Makushi inhabitants. It is located at the confluence of the Rupununi and Rewa rivers. The village holds title to a 44,791ha parcel of land in the North Rupununi and is accessible via a 45km boat ride from Kwatamang landing about 3km from Annai. It is the most isolated of the currently known tourism destinations in the North Rupununi. The village has one of the most beautiful settings and surpasses many other villages as a destination for adventurous tourists. Its location on two of Guyana's most diverse rivers and in the heart of the Rupununi wetlands, as well as being surrounded by intact rainforest, Rewa is a great destination for eco-tourists looking for a new experience.

The Rewa River presents excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing especially jaguars, ocelots, tapirs, capybaras, brocket deer, giant armadillo, peccaries and seven different primates. In addition, there are healthy populations of giant river otters, black and spectacled caimans and giant river turtles. The river is also teeming with fish species including peacock bass (lukunani), pacu, sword fish, byara, arawanna and several species of large catfish, presenting great potential for sport fishing. Many ox-bow lakes and ponds are found along the Rewa River with relatively healthy populations of arapaima, the world's largest fresh water scaled fish.

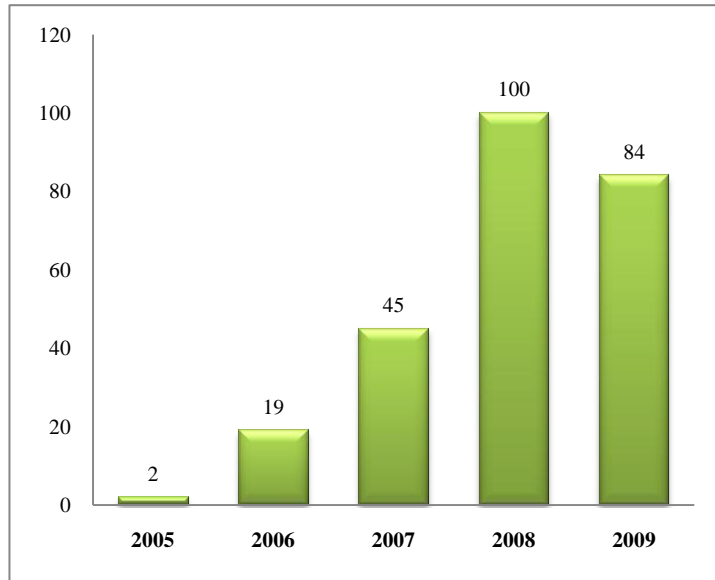
Rewa is not only a haven for tourists, its rich biodiversity has also made it a laboratory for researchers, scientists and organisations interested in helping to safeguard its natural surroundings. The villagers are recognizing greater value in sustainable utilizing their resources, a growing sustainable tourism business is also assisting in this regard.

Rewa and its vicinity is also attracting extractive industry interest. Oil exploration is ongoing in the area, logging concessions have been advertised for the surrounding forests and miners are staking claims in the Rewa River. These activities conflict with the maintenance of the assets which make the village a rich sustainable tourism destination if they proceed without sound social and environmental management plans in accordance with national requirements. They may ultimately result in destruction of Rewa's potential as a sustainable tourism destination.

Rewa's tourism business started in December 24, 2005 with two guests and has steadily grown over the years. In January and February of 2010 the village hosted 25 guests. The majority of these guests arrived either through direct bookings or through the NRDDDB tourism unit. Visitors originated from England, the USA, Canada, Australia, The Netherlands and Germany and have come in groups of between two and 14 persons between the ages of 13 and 60 years. The village approximates that about 60% of its visitors are repeat guests.



Figure 9: Number of visitor to Rewa from 2005 to 2009



Source: Rewa Village.

Rewa's tourism infrastructure currently consist of two guest lodges boasting a capacity of eight beds, 15 hammocks and a kitchen and dining area. The facility was built with funds from the Voluntary Community Investment Fund (VCIF) associated with CI-Guyana's Upper Essequibo Conservation Concession. The village has almost completed an additional three guest lodges, also funded through the VCIF and the community, which will increase the capacity of the lodge to accommodate 14 beds.

Rewa has no marketing plans, tools or strategies in place. However, Shirley Melville, the NRDDDB, Wilderness Explorers and the Torong Tour Operationmarket, all of whom help with bookings market the community. Some marketing is also done by "word of mouth". Rewa currently does not have internet access in the village but it acesses emails at Rock View, Bina Hill and Iwokrama to communicate with costumers. The village usually responds to clients within 48 hours either directly or through

their booking agents. Net rates are provided and commissions paid to tour operators.

There is a tourism committee that has a semi-organised system in place. However, there are no records on the operation of the business. Revenues generated by the business has been used for the maintenance of the eco-lodge, purchase of water pump, brush cutter, kitchen utensils, fuel, payment for handyman, cooks, transportation of the sick to Annai, mattresses and contributions to village work. The brush cutter is also used by the village.

Figure 10: The Rewa Eco-lodge.



### **2.3 Nappi**

Nappi is a small dispersed village located in central Rupununi, approximately 39km from Lethem. The mainly Makushi Village lies along the foothills of the Kanuku Mountains and together with its satellite communities of Parishara and Haiowa, Nappi has a population of about 1,500 residents and holds title to 23,595ha of land. This very friendly and hospitable community depends on subsistence farming, fishing and hunting for its livelihood. In order to earn an income, some residents (mostly men) leave the village to find work in mining or forestry, or migrate to Brazil in search of jobs. Living near the species-rich Kanuku Mountains, many villagers also depend on the (sometimes illegal) wildlife trade, as a source of income.

Tourism started in Nappi through the intervention of Melville and the Foster Parrot Group, an overseas-based NGO that seeks to foster the protection and conservation of the several species of the parrots, parakeets and macaws. The Maipaima Eco-lodge was built in 2005, with funding from the Foster Parrot Group and technical assistance from Melville. It sits immediately on the boundary (a stream) of the proposed KMPA, about 7km from the main village. The lodge currently consists of two bungalows with two rooms each. Each room is self-contained. The lodge can be reached by four wheel-drive vehicles in the dry season or bullock cart, or by hiking in the rainy season.

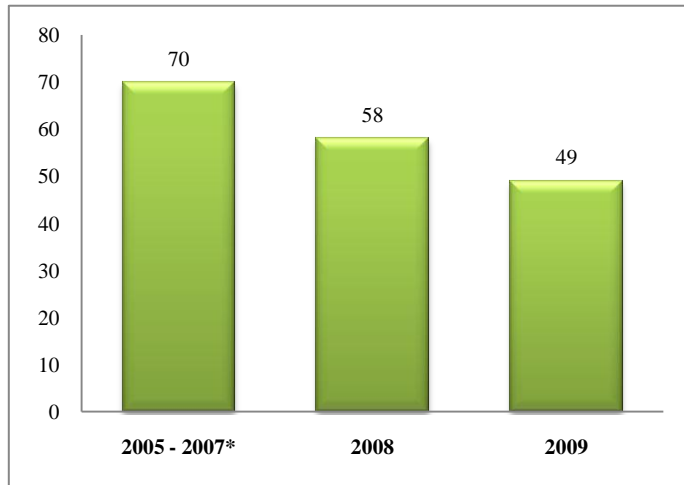
*Figure 11: The Maipaima Eco-lodge at Nappi.*



Nappi's clients are secured through Melville, several universities in the USA, the Foster Parrot Organisation, the Tacubin Farm/Manari Ranch, Wilderness Explorers, the Bushmasters Tour Operation as well as a few embassies in Georgetown. To date the village has hosted tourists coming mainly from Europe and North America. The visitors come in groups of between four and eight persons and within the age range of 20 and 60-years-old. Approximately five per cent of their visitors are repeat customers.

Currently Nappi has no marketing plans, tools or strategies in place. However, they are assisted with marketing by Melville, the Foster Parrot Organisation, the Tacubin Farm/Manari Ranch, Wilderness Explorers and the Bushmasters Tour Operation all of whom also help with bookings. Some marketing is also done by "word of mouth". A website for the lodge is being developed by Mr. Paul Farias, Manager and Dr. Pixie Gorinsky of the Tacubin Farm/Manari Ranch. Nappi accesses emails in Lethem. Bookings are being done as much as two years in advance and at the moment no net rates are provided nor are there any commissions paid to tour operators. There is a tourism committee and a semi-organised system in place.

Figure 12: Number of visitors to Nappi from 2005 to 2009



Note: 2005-2007\* reflect total for the period, data was not kept on the number of visitors for the individual years.

Source: Yupukari village.

#### 2.4 Yupukari

The mainly Makushi village of Yupukari in the northern savannahs has a population of about 500 and title to 13,740ha of land. The village is situated on a hill located about 1.5km from the Rupununi River. Stunning views of the Kanuku and Pakaraima Mountain Ranges can be seen from Yupukari. The village also provides an ideal location for river trips, to observe giant river otters, water birds, water lilies, giant river turtles and arapaimas among other aquatic wildlife. Yupukari is also a very traditional village with most of the houses constructed with handmade clay bricks and thatched roofs. Bullock carts are a common means of transportation.

The 'Caiman Project' started in 2005 by a researcher from the USA who studied the Black Caiman. The Project is 'not-for-profit' and has a board of directors comprising six community members and village councillors. Tourism started alongside the research project as visitors became interested in accompanying the researcher to witness his work, where caimans are captured, studied and released during the nights. Caiman House, the guest house, was completed in June 2007 as the number of visitors grew.

The construction of Caiman House was financed by Mr. and Mrs. Peter Taylor, Caiman Researchers. It boasts four self-contained rooms and a deluxe suite, with a double bed. The guest house can accommodate eight persons comfortably. An additional four persons can also be accommodated in simple rooms with shared bathroom facilities. Another 15 persons could be accommodated in hammocks at the lodge.

The management of Caiman House functions as the tourism committee. They report to the Toshao, Village Council and community members.

Caiman House has strong links with the Karanambu Trust/Ranch, Wilderness Explorers, Foster Parrots Group, Rock View Lodge and Ashley Holland – all established tour operators – who assist with marketing and from whom Caiman House gets its tourism business. During the years 2005 to 2007, Caiman House Research Station had about 50 visitors and since the guest house was built and officially opened, there had been an additional 150 visitors. Most of Yupukari's clients come in groups of between four and eight persons from age 20 to above 60-years-old. Approximately 20% of the visitors are repeat customers.

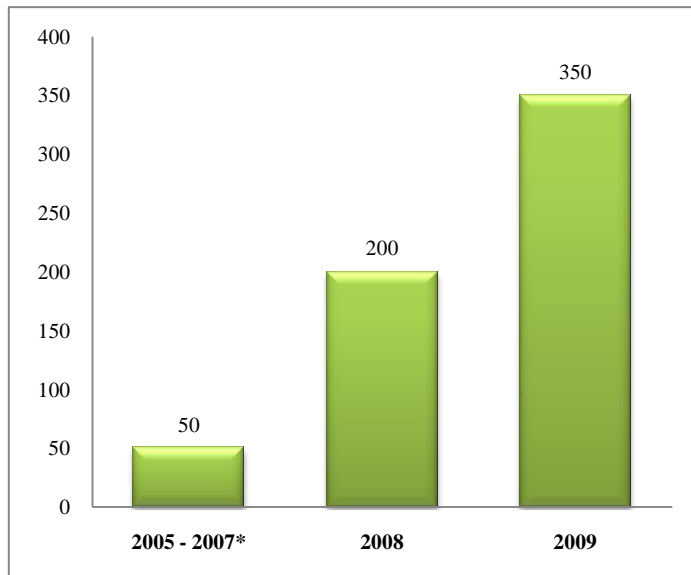


Figure 13: Photograph of Caiman House.



Yupukari has internet access. The Managing Director of Caiman House answers all emails and responds to clients within 48 hours. He also communicates with some past customers, but has no established policy to do so. Most of the guests come from Europe and North America, the rest are Guyanese. Visitors to Karanambu Trust/Ranch also spend time at Yupukari. More than half of the visitors to Caiman House book directly.

Figure 14: Number of visitors to Yupukari from 2005 to 2009



Note: 2005-2007\* reflect total for the period, data was not kept on the number of visitors for the individual years.

Source: Yupukari village.

Marketing of the Yupukari tourism product is done through their website ([www.rupununi.learners.org](http://www.rupununi.learners.org)). Help is also received from Wilderness Explorers. Assistance is being received for the development of a marketing plan and associated tools from Wilderness Explorers and the USAID-Guyana Trade Investment Support (GTIS) project. Caiman House can take bookings two years in advance and gives tour operators a net rate.

Tourism is only one of the activities of Caiman House. Funds generated from this activity are redirected to support education in the village through its library. The Rupununi Learners Incorporated (RLI) is a not-for-profit Guyanese registered company, which includes Caiman House and related projects and makes monetary contributions to village activities. Strict accounting is followed and village fees per person are collected and handed over to the Toshao at community meetings which are held quarterly. All

other revenue is used for infrastructure development and maintenance and for the operation of Caiman House: salaries and procuring supplies. An account is maintained by RLI.

## **2.5 Rupunau**

Rupunau is located about 129km south of Lethem and can be accessed by road. It has a population of approximately 275 mainly Wapishana residents with title to 47,691ha of land. The villagers live in traditional homes (adobe, clay bricks and thatch roof), which are widely spread out over the Savannas. They are mainly subsistence farmers and hunter-gatherers. Some residents work as ranch hands (vaqueros) on the nearby Dadanawa Ranch, Guyana's largest cattle ranch, which is owned by the Rupununi Development Company Limited.

Tourism does not currently feature in the economy of Rupunau but is being considered as a community enterprise. To date about five tourists have visited the community, brought through Dadanawa Ranch. There are plans to introduce more tourists to Rupunau and its attractions which are mainly Jaguar Caves, Turtle Pond, Red Siskin, Fish Falls and Petroglyphs (rock carvings).

The Jaguar Caves are located about 5km from the village and Turtle Pond about 45 minutes by a 4 x 4 vehicle from the village. The exotic and globally endangered Red Siskin can readily be heard and seen in the area, especially very early in the mornings or late in the afternoons, but they tend to be nomadic. At Fish Falls, in July and August every year, small fishes can be found in abundance leaping out of the water, villagers from Rupunau and the surrounding communities make it a ritual to harvest at this time. There are two sites within the village with Petroglyphs with legends that surround them.

Rupunau has no community owned tourism infrastructure but there is one resident with privately owned accommodations which usually facilitates guests through arrangements with Dadanawa Ranch.

## **2.6 Kumu**

Located about 11km south of Lethem and easily accessed by road, Kumu is a beautiful satellite community of St. Ignatius Village which has title to two parcels of land totalling 18,716ha. Kumu has a population of about 375 mainly Makushi residents. Villagers live in traditional homes (adobe, clay bricks and thatch roof), which are widely spread out across the Savannas, with the Kanuku Mountains in the background. The residents are mainly subsistence farmers, fishermen and hunter-gatherers. Because it is near to Lethem the villagers can access fair medical facilities and modern forms of communication.

Visitors, who arrive at Lethem, particularly during the annual Rupununi Rodeo at Easter, Amerindian Heritage Celebrations in October and Rupununi Exposition in November, usually visit the Kumu Falls, one of the community's main attractions. Residents of Lethem and neighbouring Brazil sometimes picnic at the Falls. In the past use of the Falls was not regulated and monitored. However, on December 12, 2008 the Quatta Mirror Tourism Committee was formed to put systems in place to monitor all visitors and tourism activities within Kumu and to ensure that revenues are not lost. Kumu also offers spectacular views of the Kanuku Mountains, especially Schomburgk's Peak.

Kumu is also in the process of establishing tourism infrastructure consisting of three guest lodges and a kitchen and dining area. The lodge is being constructed with funds provided by the German Government, through the KfW Small Grants Programme linked to the Guyana Protected Areas System project.

*Figure 15: Kumu Falls, Kumu.*



## **2.7 Aranaputa**

Aranaputa is located on the Georgetown-Lethem road some 380km south of Georgetown, 70km north of Lethem and 5km west of Annai. Aranaputa is unique in the Rupununi because it was started on State land that was identified for agricultural development. As such it is considered a Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) under the Laws of Guyana rather than an Amerindian Village. People living along the coast were encouraged to move to the area to cultivate tobacco and peanuts and rear cattle. An airstrip constructed at Annai facilitated transportation of supplies to the district and produce to the markets on the coast. The current approximately 450 residents of Aranaputa are mainly Makushi Amerindians mixed with Afro and Indo Guyanese. Farming continues to be a major activity in and around the village but on a relatively smaller scale.

The Aranaputa tourism project had its genesis in a G\$360,000 “Conservation Contract” the community secured from IIC, in 2002. The community selected a site, Clarence Mountain, as a community conservation area. It subsequently invested in tourism and built a cabin and nature trail with a loan from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funded community revolving fund. This loan, which was approved in 2004, was amounted to G\$542,000. The cabin can accommodate eight hammocks.

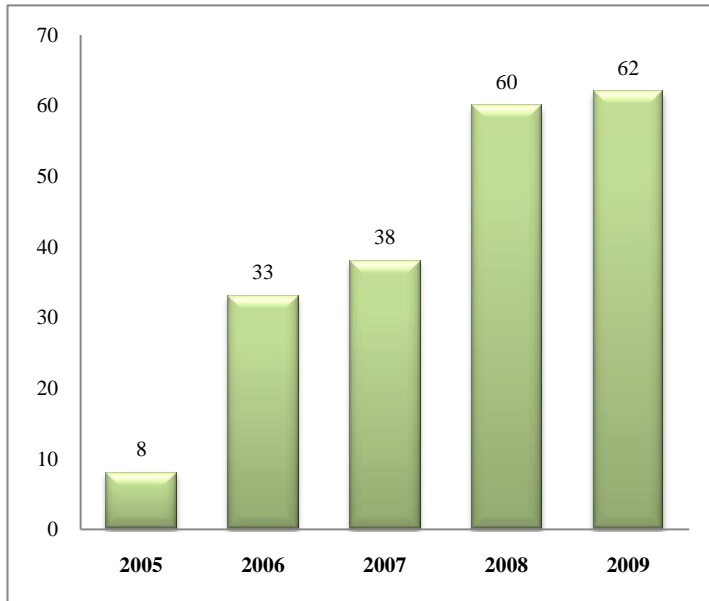
In addition to the cabin, the community recently built a guest house with a President’s grant of G\$1,000,000. This building can accommodate a total of eight persons. The Guest House was completed in 2009.

The community has had several visitors over the years who arrived through the NRDDDB Tourism Unit, Wilderness Explorers, Rock View Lodge and Surama. Visitors were mainly Guyanese, and from Trinidad, England, the USA, Canada and Australia. They came in groups of between two and nine persons between the ages of 25 and 55-years-old. About 10% of visitors are repeaters.

There is a tourism committee and a semi-organised system in place to manage the tourism business on the behalf of the community. Record keeping is not properly managed and total revenue for the years of operation cannot be calculated. Revenues from the business were used for the maintenance of trails and the cabin, payment for guides, repayment of the loan, purchase of equipment and contributions to village work.

There are no marketing plans, tools nor strategies in place; however, the community is assisted with marketing through the NRDDDB, Wilderness Explorers, Surama and IIC. Some marketing is also done by “word of mouth”. The community has email access at Rock View and Bina Hill and utilize this to communicate with customers.

Figure 16: Number of visitors to Aranaputa from 2005 to 2009



Source: Aranaputa Village

Aranaputa has been taking reservations as far in advance as one year and usually responds to clients within 48 hours. At the moment net rates are provided and commissions paid to tour operators.

## 2.8 Annai

The traditional village of Annai is better described as central Annai as it refers to the administrative hub for Annai Village that includes a number of satellite villages stretching all the way to Surama. Annai has an administrative office, health centre, police station and guest house. It is located about 2km south of the Georgetown-Lethem road and has a population of approximately 450 mainly Makushi residents. The entire village has title to 65,141ha of land. The thatched-roofed houses are mainly made of clay brick and are built close together along the top of a hill. The picturesque layout of this hilltop community cluster, contrasts with the sprawling neighbouring villages, located on the flatlands of the Savannas. It also makes the village more accessible to visitors.

Annai is often referred to as the home of the “adobe bricks”. It is called the “Adobe Village” and has all the resources for cultural tourism. The functioning tourism committee is also the committee responsible for the village culture group and cultural presentations.

Tourism in Annai started in 2004 with Rock View Lodge located near the village. Tourists are taken on village tours which provide the opportunity to take photographs and there are also cultural presentations, craft making and demonstrations and the reputed largest thatched benab in Guyana.

Proper records are not kept of the number of visitors the community has received. The only information available was for 2008, with a recorded number of 32 visitors mainly from England, the USA, Canada, Holland and Italy.

Annai has not invested in tourism infrastructure but had received G\$1,000,000 from the Government of Guyana to construct a guest house which was completed in 2010.

Annai is assisted with marketing through the NRDDb, Wilderness Explorers, Surama and IIC. Some marketing is also done by “word of mouth.” Villagers can access the internet at Rock View Lodge and Bina Hill.

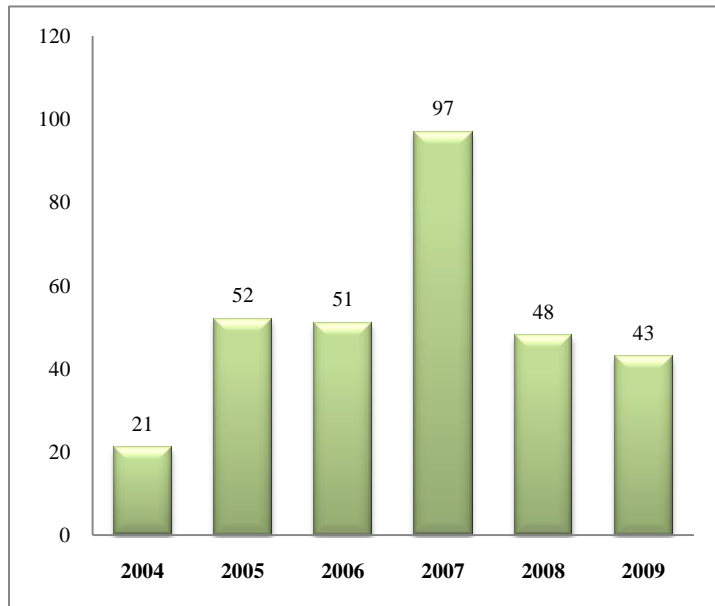


## 2.9 Wowetta

The village of Wowetta, a satellite of Annai Village, is spread out on both sides of the main road on the northern edge of the Rupununi savannah. Wowetta has about 230 inhabitants mainly of mixed Makushi and Arawak peoples. As with most villages in the area, villagers depend on subsistence farming and fishing, with cassava being the main staple.

Wowetta was selected to be a pilot community for the installation of solar lighting systems by the Organization of Latin American Development Energy (OLADE), through the Guyana Energy Agency. Through the project each household was provided with a solar lighting system. A community organisation, Wowetta Business Enterprise Incorporated, manages the project on the behalf of the community. The community uses this system to support tourism and craft making.

Figure 17: Number of visitors to Wowetta from 2004 to 2009



Source: Wowetta village.

Tourism in Wowetta began in 2004, with Rock View Lodge taking tourists/visitors there to view the Cock-of-the-Rock Leks. Over the years the community has had several visitors (see chart below) arriving through the NRDDDB Tourism Unit, Wilderness Explorers, Rock View Lodge and Surama. Tourist who visited Wowetta originated mainly from England, the United States of America, Canada and Belgium. Visitors to Wowetta usually come in groups of between 2 and 9 persons between the ages of 18 and 65 years old. Approximately 5% of Wowetta's visitors have visited the village more than once.

The major tourism resource at Wowetta is the Cock-of-the-Rock lek located about three hours walking distance in a north easterly direction from the village. There are many opportunities for observing wildlife along the trail to the lek. In their quest to improve their tourism business and identify new products another site closer to the community has been identified where the

birds can be seen. There are plans to develop the site to accommodate older tourists in particular. Shocking Pond, situated about 10km from the village, is another potential resource for interpretation. There is a belief that the vibrations felt and sometimes turbulence of the pond is caused by a huge anteater which lives at the bottom which has been seen on several occasions. There is also a belief that the Pond never dries up in the dry season as other ponds in the area. The area around the pond is also a habitat for birds.

Access to the Rewa oil exploration site is considered to be a serious threat to the tourism resources of the community, as the proposed access road passes alongside the forested area of Wowetta and through the Cock-of-the-Rock site.

The village has a tourism committee in place but there are no marketing plans, tools or strategies. Wowetta's tourism is marketed by the NRDDDB, Wilderness Explorers, Surama and IIC. Some marketing is also done by "word of mouth". Villagers can access the internet at Rock View and the NDDDB office located at Bina Hill. Bookings are being taken as much as one year in advance. At the moment, net rates are provided and commissions are paid to tour operators. Other revenue generated by the business is used to maintain trails, pay guides and contribute to village work.

## 2.10 Fair View

This small village has a population of about 253 inhabitants. While the majority of the inhabitant is Makushi, there is a fair number of residents from other groups including Wapishanas, Patamonas and Arawaks who reside in the village. The village holds title to 29,641ha of land located within the Iwokrama Programme Site near the Kurupukari crossing at the Essequibo River and the Iwokrama River Lodge and Research Station. Fair View is situated on the

bank of the Essequibo River and is very close to the Georgetown-Lethem road. The village also has a recently completed laterite covered airstrip which allows for scheduled flights, conditions permitting.

Kurupukari, as the village was previously known, played an important role in Guyana's booming cattle and balata trade, during the early twentieth century. It was the most important stopping point along the cattle trail, since it was the point at which the Essequibo River was crossed. It was also a major transshipment point for balata. When the markets for both the cattle and balata collapsed, Kurupukari suffered significantly and most families migrated leaving very few inhabitants behind. The improvement of the Georgetown-Lethem road with the expected increase in traffic, and the establishment of the IIC field station nearby have fuelled a rebirth in the village with the new name, Fair View.

Tourism in Fair View started in 1996 through the IIC as all tourists visiting the Field Station were taken to visit the community. Records kept by the village indicate that in 1996 the community received 96 visitors and in 1997, 50. There are no records of the number of visitors for the following years. All of the clients to Fair View come directly through IIC and have hailed from England, the USA, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Italy, Spain, Trinidad, Barbados, Suriname, French Guiana, Brazil, Venezuela and Australia. Locals also visit. They arrive individually and in groups ranging from two to 15 persons with an age range of between four and 70-years-old.

Funds generated from tourism were used to purchase a brush cutter and contribute to community work. There is no tourism infrastructure in the village as tourists are usually accommodated at the Iwokrama River Lodge. There is a tourism committee and a semi-organised system now in place in the village. Internet access is available at the Iwokrama River Lodge. All of Fair View's booking is done through IIC.

### Section 3

## Community Tourism in the Rupununi

### Assessment and General Recommendations

The Rupununi region presents a unique combination of natural and cultural resources, which can be developed to attract many visitors. It is already an icon of tourism in Guyana and has the potential for further development. Tourism in the North Rupununi is much more established and advanced than in the South. This is due, in part, to the fact that logistics are much easier in the north. Iwokrama has also played a very significant role with substantial investments in the North Rupununi serving as a magnet for visitors to the area.

However, the South Rupununi should not be overlooked. Its stunning beauty rests in its “wildness”, a feature that is highly attractive in the growing nature-based tourism sector.

Historically, tourism in the Rupununi developed around the ranches such as Manari, Dadanawa and Karanambu where a few guests, mainly from Europe visited from time to time. The Rock View Lodge was established in 1993 as a private partnership and the Iwokrama River Lodge in 2003 as a part of the IIC management efforts. The Atta Rainsforest Lodge was built in 2005 close to the site of a canopy walkway which was established within the Iwokrama Forests in 2003. The canopy walkway and the Lodge are managed by a community/private sector partnership Community and Tourism Services (CATS).

Since the hosting of the Tourism Planning Charette in 2003, and with encouragement, technical and financial support from a wide variety of organizations, many communities of the Rupununi have followed the lead of Surama and have developed community tourism lodges and businesses. Although these efforts have been largely uncoordinated, they have led to an impressive quality of tourism initiatives including infrastructure, interpretation, facilities management and food and beverage services. The communities are far more aware and prepared for the growing tourism industry. Generally, the villagers are happy and proud of what they are doing and, more important, they are eager to learn more.

Most impressive is the level of preparation of the guides in the region. The guide training programmes have certainly achieved their goal, though the guides are now primarily focused on birding. Bird watching groups are an important target market, but in order to develop a profitable sustainable tourism business there must be a focus on a wider market. There are only a handful of lodges in the neotropics that have been successful in developing birding as their primary market.

The quality of food, beverage management and service at the lodges is also impressive. The food at every location is delicious and boasts a high level of quality, hygiene and presentation standards.

The amount of infrastructure that has been built in the communities (and sums available for this) is also impressive. However, the communities have had little advice on design and construction to maximize the benefits of their infrastructural investments. Many of the built infrastructures can be modified to become more effective with more effort and resources, but some projects will be difficult and/or costly to adjust.

In the long term, most communities can be involved in sustainable tourism. For this project, the focus was on near term efforts needed to propel Rupununi tourism forward, and as a result emphasis was largely concentrated on the steps the most advanced communities can take in order to meet this objective and become a model to other communities.

#### 3.1 Situational Analysis

Based on the work carried out during the project and in particular the site visits, the following key findings are particularly relevant to tourism development for the Rupununi and marketing of the Rupununi tourism product.

1. International tourism arrivals are likely to continue to decline in the short term. Although the current global economic crisis makes the situation less certain, the tourism industry typically emerges from

crises stronger and healthier. International arrivals are also expected to rebound above pre-crisis levels, this time too. In addition, South America is currently one of the world's hottest tourism destinations.

2. Although total visitor numbers increased significantly between 2007 and 2009, current levels of tourism in the Rupununi are low. Based on the results of the survey of tourism attractions, it is estimated that the Rupununi receives about 1,500 to 2,000 leisure tourists annually, half of the total of visitor's to the country and the number is growing. The majority of tourism businesses receive low numbers of visitors and many businesses are planning to expand. Marketing efforts are therefore needed to improve results and create demand for expansions.
3. With outstanding natural and cultural assets combined with global trends toward nature, adventure and volunteer tourism, and authentic, personal, travel experiences, the growth potential for Guyana and Rupununi is excellent. Building from the existing strengths-base, Rupununi tourism development should encourage and support scientific research and education tourism, in particular.
4. A key criticism of international tour operators is that the level of quality of tourism experiences is lacking in Guyana compared to other destinations. To compete with other leading destinations and capitalise on Guyana's potential, focused product development is needed. Identification of important locations, seasonality and timings, are needed to improve wildlife watching experiences. Experiential and interpretative value and more interactivity must be woven into all products to create unique and memorable tourism experience, today's market is seeking. Themed experiences must be included in the Rupununi tourism product mix.
5. Rupununi tourism partners should take steps to address issues to adjust Guyana's tourism packages to prices closer to those in other destinations. Although Guyana should compete based on value-for-money, the tourism industry must work with public and private sector partners to find ways to reduce transportation costs, which is the biggest challenge.
6. The average length of stay is relatively short in the Rupununi, with 27% of lodges reporting a one-night stay and another 27% a stay of two nights. Taking action on the product development recommendations outlined in this document will help to increase visitor satisfaction levels, as well as encourage multiple night stays. This may also help to reduce transport costs and address the pricing issue. The importance of product quality cannot be overstated, and actions to enhance existing products and develop new experiential products should be priority.
7. Currently, the UK, USA and Canadian origin markets provide the most visitors to the Rupununi. The "Other Europe" market is also significant and these are the markets that Rupununi tourism partners should focus on. Although the Caribbean has potential, with limited marketing resources, it is recommended that regional marketing be left to the GTA and THAG. Efforts should be made to ensure that these partners have Rupununi marketing material and that their marketing efforts, such as, media relations and familiarisation trips, are supported.
8. The high percentage of UK tourists received by Rupununi tourism businesses is no doubt a function of the fact that most of the marketing efforts of GTA, GTIS and Wilderness Explorers (the three entities that do most of the marketing) have focussed there. Although the USA is an important source of visitors, compared to other competitive destinations the USA market share is low, indicating that more attention should be focused on promoting the Rupununi to this large and well-matched market.
9. Lack of awareness within international tourism markets, is among the top barriers to success for the Rupununi tourism sector. To address this key issue, fostering media relations is a critical marketing strategy. It is also important to host more researchers and open up the Rupununi to far greater and deeper research. Scientific research publications serve as independent validation of the value of the area and generally provide revenue for services rendered by local communities including employment for guides and local researchers.
10. Rupununi tourism businesses are highly dependent on the inbound tour operator sales channel; therefore, it is important that they foster relations with these operators. At the same time, steps should

be taken to encourage more direct booking by consumers over the internet, a key trend today. Urgent e-marketing initiatives include the development of a Rupununi tourism experiences website and posting of information on third party eco-tourism, sustainable tourism, responsible and ethical tourism.

11. The high percentages of indigenous people employed in tourism and of indigenous-owned tourism businesses provide opportunities to secure support from international funders.

## **3.2 Market Readiness Tiers**

### **3.2.1 Tier One**

The community tourism products of Nappi, Rewa, Yupukari and Surama are considered to be at this tier. With relatively little targeted investment, training and marketing they can begin to enjoy a much larger and more consistent flow of tourists.

These communities have made significant investments in tourism infrastructure and all have sufficient natural and cultural resources to become a destination in their own right. In order to generate a greater return on the infrastructural investments and maximize benefits of the currently limited number of visitors to the communities taking into consideration the high transportation costs in the Rupununi, these communities should develop general sustainable tourism packages to encourage visitors to stay a minimum of three to four days. The packages should allow the tourists to participate in a variety of full or half-day activities from the lodge. Depending on the visitors overall programme, the itineraries can be packaged with other products.

Nappi, Rewa, Yupukari and Surama are already hosting a steady flow of international tourists. These communities have been working in tourism for several years and they have a fair understanding of tourists' needs. But before they can be aggressively marketed the following four main areas must be addressed.

1. **Infrastructure:** Some improvements in the infrastructure will enable these communities to provide accommodations that will better meet standards expected by a significant portion of the sustainable tourism market.
2. **Guide Training:** The communities are well prepared for hosting primarily birding tours. They can all approach birding tour companies in the United States and Europe, once attention is given to the issues of accommodation. But in order to promote these communities internationally as destinations for general ecotourists, they need to broaden their appeal. The guides need to acquire more knowledge about the forest and other ecosystems in the communities and develop their knowledge of other fauna, flora, culture and history of the area. With this they will be able to provide quality interpretation, on a broad range of topics.
3. **Interpretive Activities Development:** The interpretation activities currently offered by the communities are not geared fully to the needs of the general eco-tourist. New topical activities need to be developed; further development is also needed for those already being offered. The activities should be more varied, offering a range of points of interest and goals. Generally, ecotourists tend to like activities that offer different objectives, topics, and points of view about the region. General natural and cultural history interpretation can provide visitors with deeper insights about the Rupununi's environment and people.
4. **Expanded Itineraries:** Finally, the Tier one communities need to develop a series of interpreted activities that can be packaged and sold as set three-to-four-day itineraries. These must be activities that can be easily performed repeatedly, since once they are offered they should remain on the market for several years. Tour operators require products that are well designed, polished and reliable, to avoid having to make regular changes to the packages and information they provide to potential clients. Tour operators do not typically welcome modifications to the tourism product. Once focused itineraries are established, then other quality products can be developed and offered as *a la carte* extensions to those itineraries. It is usually easier to sell extensions to a medium length itinerary, than trying to sell a long itinerary that most people will not buy.

### 3.2.2 Tier Two

The community products of Annai, Wowetta, Fair View and Aranaputa, which are grouped in this tier, possess excellent tourism resources and enjoy locations easily accessible from transportation routes and existing tourism accommodations. They should organise their enterprise management structures, strengthen their offerings of day tours, develop longer itineraries and invest in tourism infrastructure, only after developing a successful activity-based product. These communities need to make significant investments to develop their products, for access to a much larger market and stream of tourists. As such they should endeavour to properly analyse the market and developments in order to maximize the efficiency of their investments. Several of these communities, also have the advantage of being well suited to cater to domestic tourists.

### 3.2.3 Tier Three

Kumu and Rupunau are at the very beginning stages of establishing themselves as tourism destinations. These communities currently do not regularly offer products to tourists, but do have an interest in doing so in the future. There has been some investment in infrastructure at Kumu.

## 3.3 Rupununi Tourism Trends

Data and information on business and visitor characteristics, preferences marketing activities and needs were gathered from the export-market ready tourism attractions/operators, including businesses owned by private individuals and communities in the Rupununi as a part of a market analysis.

### 3.3.1 Business Characteristics

Sixteen entities participated in the survey. They are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Rupununi tourism business characteristics: Attractions

Attraction/Operator
Annai Eco-Tours (AET)
Aranaputa Eco-Basin Tours (ABT)
Bushmasters (BHM)
Community and Tourism Services /ATTA Rainforest Lodge (CAT)
Fair View Village (FVV)
Iwokrama River Lodge and Research Centre (IRL)
Karanambu Lodge (KBL)
Maipaima Lodge at Nappi (MLN)
Rewa Eco-Lodge (REL)
Rock View Lodge (RVL)
Rupununi Learners Incorporated / Caiman House at Yupukari (RLI)
Rupununi River Drifters (RRD)
Rupununi Trails (RTL)
Savannah Inn (SVN)
Surama Village Eco Tourism (SVL)
Wowetta Kwanru Tours (WKT)

The data reveals that there is a very high rate of Amerindian participation in tourism in the Rupununi. Half of the entities are Amerindian-owned and most of them employ Amerindians. All of the businesses indicated that 60% or more of their employees are Amerindian while 13% of them reported 95% or more Amerindian employees.

For the most part, Rupununi businesses are new to tourism. Seventy five per cent of the businesses opened their doors after 2000. Nine of them started operating in the last five years. Only four businesses have more than ten years of experience.

The 16 tourism businesses employ about 300 persons, with 63% of them working only part time. Most of the businesses offer bed accommodation, but Aranaputa offers only hammock accommodation at this time. In total, the accommodation base comprises 78 rooms and 208 beds. In addition, hammock accommodation is available for 60 persons. Almost all of the attractions plan to expand or improve their businesses in the next five years. Planned

changes include capital investments in new and upgraded accommodation facilities, with five businesses planning to add new rooms. Investments in boats and other equipment are planned, along with product development, training and increased marketing initiatives.

*Table 3: Summary of Rupununi tourism business characteristics*

Category	Details
Years in operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75% of the businesses opened since 2000, nine of them after 2005</li> <li>• four have more than 10 years of experience</li> <li>• Karanambu is oldest, welcoming their first tourists in 1978</li> </ul>
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumulative total of employees reported by all sixteen businesses is 285</li> <li>• 37% of the employees are employed on a full-time basis, and 63% work part-time</li> </ul>
Amerindian participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% of the attractions are Amerindian-owned</li> <li>• All the businesses indicated that majority of employees are Amerindian. Fifteen per cent of the businesses said that 80% or more of their employees are Amerindian, with 13% saying that 95% or more of their employees are Amerindian</li> </ul>
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eleven or 68%, of the businesses offer accommodation. Six offer both beds and hammocks, and one, the Aranaputa Eco-Basin Tours, has hammocks only</li> <li>• Cumulative total accommodation of 78 rooms, 208 beds, 60 hammocks and three hammock shelters</li> </ul>
Future plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 94% of attractions, plan to expand or make improvements to their businesses in the next five years</li> </ul>

### **3.3.2 Visitor Characteristics**

#### **3.3.2.1 Visitor Numbers**

In 2008, a total of 5,145 day and overnight tourists/visitors were reported by the tourism businesses, compared to 4,270 the previous year, an increase of 30.5%. Overnight visitors made up 4,300 of 2008 visitors and 3,330 of 2007 visitors.

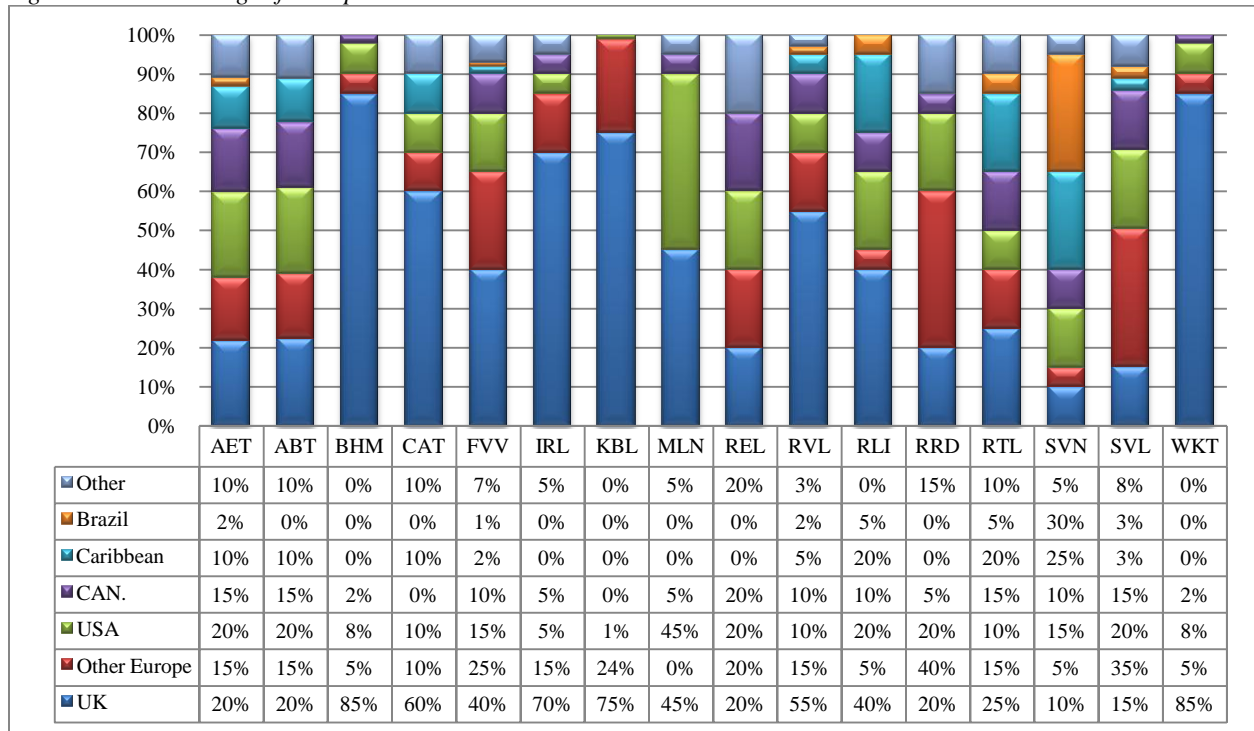
The results appear to have improved for many individual businesses between 2007 and 2008, but their annual visitor numbers are nonetheless generally low. In 2007, 69% of the businesses recorded 100 or fewer guests; two businesses had more than 1,000 guests and the remaining businesses had between 200 and 500 guests. In 2008, 56% of the businesses recorded 100 or fewer guests, two businesses had more than 1,000 guests and the remaining businesses had between 200 and 800 guests.

#### **3.3.2.2 Visitor Origins**

Rupununi visitor origins differ significantly from the visitor statistics for Guyana as a whole where the USA, Canada and the Caribbean are the top markets. In the Rupununi, the UK is clearly the most important market with half of the businesses reporting that more than 50% of their visitors come from this market. The US and Canadian markets are also important to the Rupununi representing the second and third most important origin countries respectively. Only three lodges reported healthy percentages of visitors from the Caribbean. The other key market for the Rupununi is ‘Other European Countries’. Only one business, Savannah Inn in Lethem, currently receives a significant percentage of visitors from Brazil.



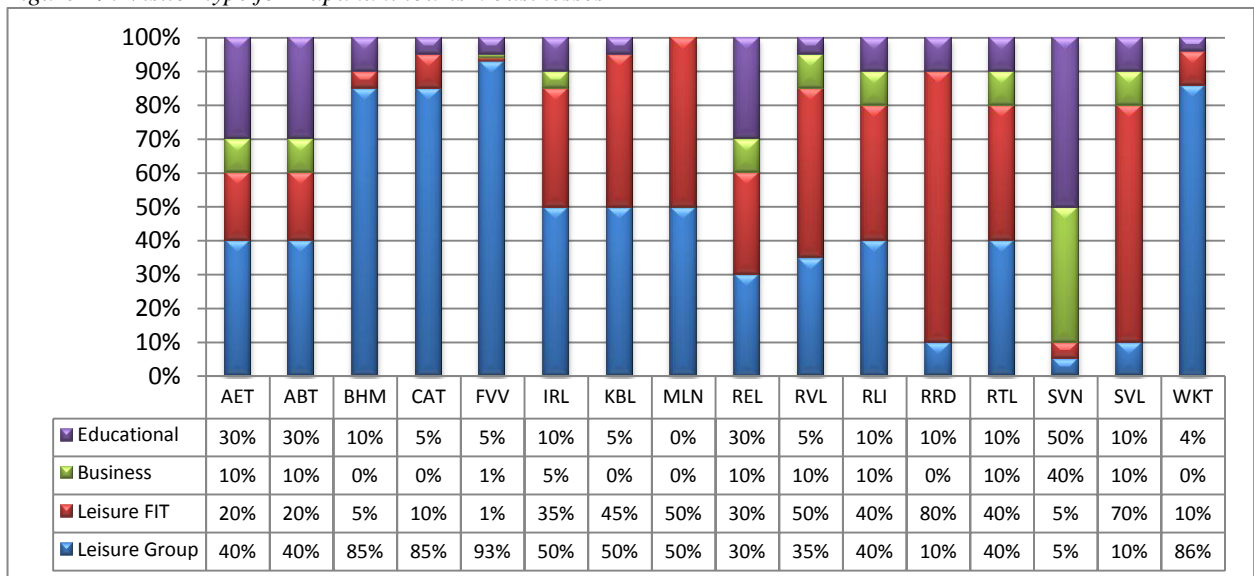
Figure 18: Visitor origin for Rupununi tourism businesses



### 3.3.2.3 Visitor Types

Leisure Tour Groups and Leisure Fully-Independent Travellers (FIT) are by far the most important visitor types for Rupununi businesses. Ninety- four per cent of the businesses receive the majority of their visitors from these two groups. Forty four per cent of them receive 50% or more of their visitors from Leisure Tour Groups making this the single most important category of visitors. Educational groups are important for a few of the businesses, but business visitors are an important visitor type only for the Savannah Inn.

Figure 19: Visitor type for Rupununi tourism businesses

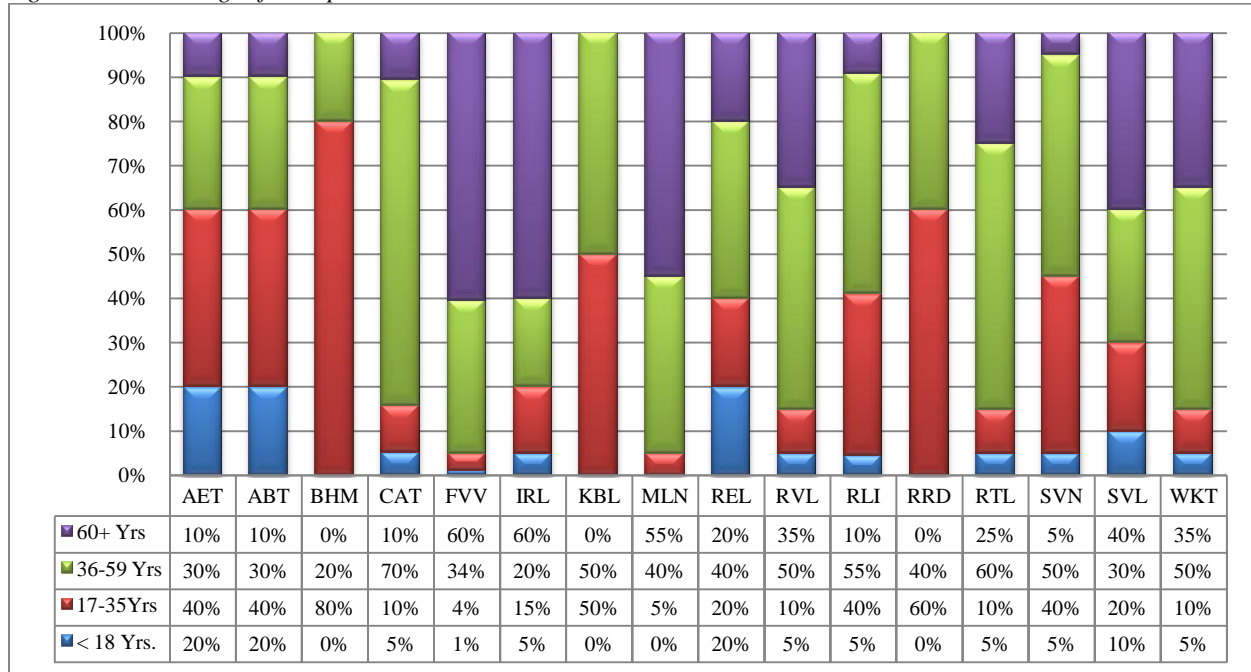




### 3.3.2.4 Visitor Ages

Seventy-five per cent of the businesses surveyed reported that half or more of their visitors are over 36 years old. The most important age group is the 36 to 59-years-old with 44% of businesses reporting half or greater of their visitors from this group. The 17 to 35-years-old and 60+ years are also important. The least important visitor group is the under18-years-old.

Figure 20: Visitor ages for Rupununi tourism businesses



### 3.3.2.5 Visitor Activities

Tables four and five provide information on which activities visitors participate in and which are the most popular. It is clear that the number one activity for guests is birding, according to 94% of the lodges. Other high participation activities are wildlife watching, 88%, rainforest/nature interpretation and indigenous culture, 75%, walking and fishing, 69%, hiking/trekking, horseback riding and wilderness expeditions, 57%; and rest/relaxation, farm tours/ agritourism, purchasing arts/crafts and educational tours/ workshops 50%.

Table 4: Guest participation in activities offered by tourism businesses in the Rupununi

Activities	% of Businesses	# of Businesses
Birding	93.8%	15
Wildlife watching	87.5%	14
Rainforest/nature interpretation	75.0%	12
Indigenous culture	75.0%	12
Walking	68.8%	11
Fishing	68.8%	11
Hiking/trekking	56.3%	9
Horseback riding	56.3%	9
Wilderness expeditions	56.3%	9
Rest/relaxation	50.0%	8
Farm tours/agritourism	50.0%	8
Purchasing arts/crafts	50.0%	8
Educational tours/ workshops	50.0%	8
Botany walks/tours	43.8%	7
Boat-based tours	43.8%	7
Volunteer travel experiences	37.5%	6

Birding proved the most popular activity among guests, receiving a total of 12 mentions while viewing wildlife recorded nine mentions. No other activity received more than three mentions.

Table 5: Most popular activities among tourists to the Rupununi

	Most Popular Activity	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most Popular Activity	3 <sup>rd</sup> Most Popular Activity
AET	Community tours	Arts and crafts classes	Indigenous culture
ABT	Birding	Wildlife watching	Indigenous culture
BHM	Jungle survival	Jungle trekking	4x4 off road
CAT	Bird watching	Wildlife watching	Rest/Relaxation
FVV	Historic sites	Educational tours	Birding
IRL	Birding	Wildlife watching	Nature interpretation
KBL	Birding	Wildlife watching	Fishing
MLN	Wildlife watching	Trip to waterfalls	Art/craft classes
REL	Wildlife watching	Fishing	Birding
RVL	Wildlife watching	Bird watching	Cultural
RLI	Boat Based tours	Educational tours	Birding
RRD	Wildlife watching	Bird watching	Fishing
RTL	Nature interpretation	Wilderness expeditions	Birding
SVN	Educational/Business	Events	Tours
SVL	Birding	Wildlife watching	Trekking / Hiking
WKT	Birding	Nature interpretation	

### Average Length of Stay

Among the 11 businesses that offer accommodation most guests stay one to three nights. Twenty-seven per cent of the businesses reported an average stay of three nights, another 27% reported an average stay of two nights and another 27% reported an average stay of one night.

Table 6: Guests average length of stay for guests at Rupununi lodges.

Average Length of Stay	% of Attractions	# of Attractions
1 night	27.3%	3
2 nights	27.3%	3
3 nights	27.3%	3
4 nights	9.1%	1
10 nights	9.1%	1

### 3.3.3 Sales and Marketing Initiatives

Eighty-one per cent of Rupununi tourism businesses said they did not have a written business plan and 69% do not use guest comment cards or customer surveys. When asked which marketing and sales they undertake, websites were ranked highest at 69%, followed by familiarisation trips, 63% and listings in travel guides, 38%. Almost 31% of businesses said they used brochures, others said they used internet marketing, tradeshow and direct mail.

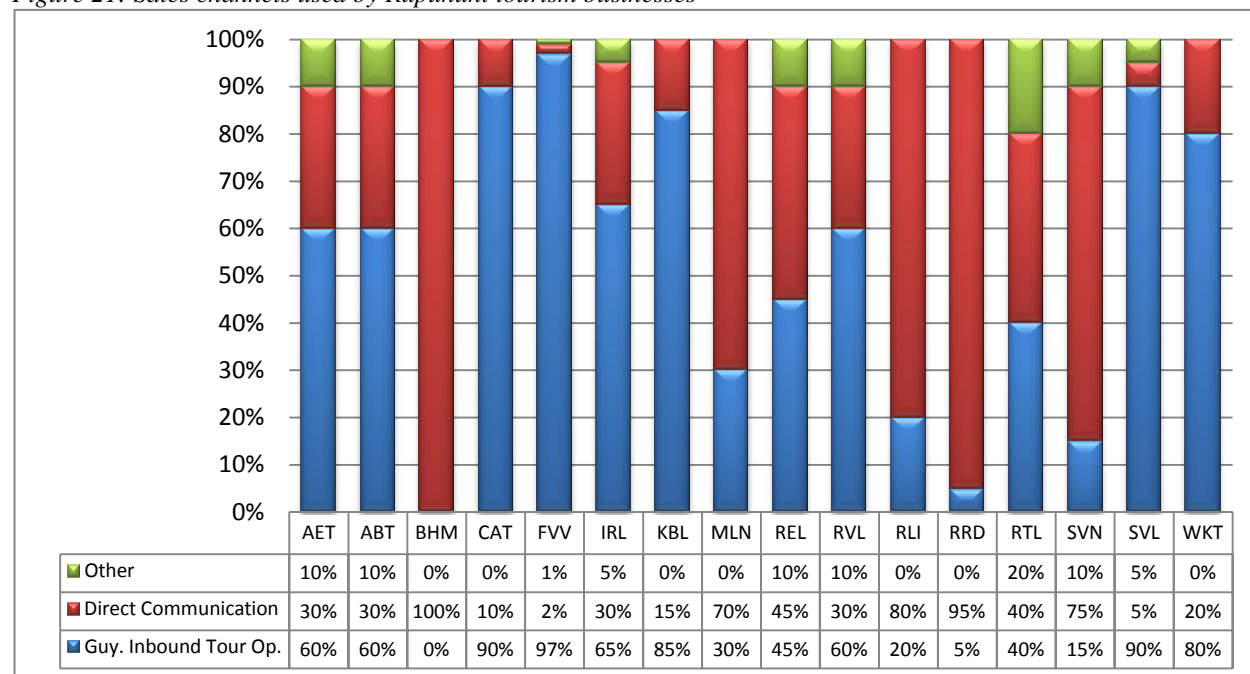
Table 7: Sales and marketing initiatives of Rupununi tourism businesses

Marketing and Sales Activities	% of Attraction	# of Attraction
Website	68.8 %	11
Familiarization trips	62.5 %	10
Travel guides	37.5 %	6
Brochure	31.3 %	5
Other internet marketing	31.3 %	5
Trade shows	31.3 %	5
Direct mail	31.3 %	5
Media relations	18.8 %	3
Co-op advertising	12.5 %	2
Videos	6.3 %	1
Contests/Promotions	6.3 %	1

### 3.3.3.1 Sales Channels

Guyana inbound tour operators are the most important sales channel for Rupununi tourism businesses. The majority of businesses, 63% said they get 45% or more of their visitors through inbound tour operators, six of them receive 80% of their business from this sales channel. Direct bookings are important as well, five businesses depend mostly on this sales channel.

Figure 21: Sales channels used by Rupununi tourism businesses



### 3.4 Collaborative Partners and Initiatives

A number of current and recent initiatives by the GTA, USAID and several NGOs are aimed at facilitating sustainable tourism development in Guyana. All of these initiatives have the potential to contribute to funding, training and other assistance needed to support Rupununi tourism development.

*Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative (GSTI):* A joint initiative of USAID and GTA receives support from USAID's Guyana Trade and Investment Support (GTIS) Project. GSTI began in January 2006 and, following a successful first phase, has recently been extended to 2011. Originally focussed on birding tourism, GSTI has been expanded to include other nature tourism niche markets. Activities to date, include product assessment and packaging, development of birding and nature tourism marketing materials along with a website [www.guyanabirding.com](http://www.guyanabirding.com), media and PR activities, product familiarisation tours, birding and tourism events attendance (e.g., American Birding Association Annual Convention, British Bird Watching Fair, Adventure Travel World Summit) partnership development with tour operators, media and NGOs. GSTI combines market-responsive and partnership approaches, and has enjoyed many marketing and partnership development successes.

*Networking the Rupununi:* This programme was recently approved and is jointly funded by IDB, Iwokrama and other tourism partners. The overall objective of the programme is to create a consortium or 'product club' of export market-ready businesses, organisations and communities engaged in tourism to support and push the development of a range of sustainable tourism experiences in the Rupununi region. Project deliverables include product development workshops, an image bank, e-marketing content and a Rupununi Tourism Experiences Guide.

*Rupununi Tourism Website:* Building on and complementing the networking of the Rupununi Project, the Canadian High Commission's Canada Fund has agreed to fund an online version of the Rupununi Tourism Experiences Guide.

*Rupununi Wetlands Centre:* The NRDDB has secured assistance from the European Union (EU) to plan for this interpretation centre.

*Ecotourism Good Practices:* Conducted in 2008, this British High Commission funded project, aimed to promote sustainable tourism development in Guyana through adoption of the proper planning, management and promotion of environmental and social good practices. It included two-day interactive workshops in four locations including Lethem, Annai and Iwokrama based on CI-Ecuador's publication *A Practical Guide to Good Practice for Tropical Forest Based Tours*. Created in collaboration with the project partners and the tourism sector, the key deliverable of the project was the "Birding Tours Self-Assessment Checklist", a guide to good practices for conducting bird watching tours, the first of its kind in the world.

*Guyana Indigenous Tourism Training:* This project was implemented by NRDDDB and funded primarily by CIDA's Indigenous Peoples Partnership Program. Conducted in 2008, the project delivered tourism basics training workshops for 32 representatives from 10 North Rupununi Makushi villages, train-the-trainer training and product development assistance.

*Birding Guide Training:* This training programme was implemented by Iwokrama in 2008 and was funded primarily by the EU's Guyana Micro-Projects Programme. International Neotropical birding experts trained 16 intermediate-level birding guides.

### 3.5 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

An analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (or issues) facing the Rupununi region, and Guyana in general, from a tourism marketing perspective was prepared based on input from inbound and international tour operators; and representatives of Rupununi attractions. The key findings of the SWOT analysis are presented below.

Table 8: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis for Guyana and Rupununi tourism

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only English speaking country in South America</li> <li>• Kaieteur Falls, the world's longest single drop waterfall</li> <li>• Government's avoided deforestation policy</li> <li>• 'New and undiscovered' destination</li> <li>• Undisturbed wilderness</li> <li>• Extensive primary rainforest</li> <li>• Diverse and interesting habitats</li> <li>• Rich biodiversity</li> <li>• Endangered wildlife species (e.g., Jaguar, Giant Anteater, Giant River Otters, Black Caiman)</li> <li>• Avifauna diversity, including near-endemic, rare and specialty species</li> <li>• Fauna and flora diversity – primates, butterflies, bats, orchids, trees, Amazonia water lilies, etc.</li> <li>• Rich, authentic indigenous culture</li> <li>• Scientific research and conservation programmes including community-based initiatives</li> <li>• Iwokrama, a national treasure</li> <li>• Accommodating, friendly, hospitable people</li> <li>• Fantastic food: quality, healthy, variety, taste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of awareness in international tourism markets</li> <li>• No system of national parks, lack of protected areas</li> <li>• Weak or negative brand identity</li> <li>• Limited marketing of Guyana</li> <li>• Limited marketing of the Rupununi</li> <li>• Limited and inconvenient international air links, especially from UK and Europe</li> <li>• Limited and costly domestic air links</li> <li>• Pricing structure - significantly higher costs compared to competitors</li> <li>• Limited accommodation choices and basic quality</li> <li>• Wildlife, bird watching and other nature experiences lacking compared to competitors (e.g. chances of seeing, interpretation)</li> <li>• Tourism experiences generally lack depth in interpreting natural and cultural assets</li> <li>• Guides lack knowledge of ecosystems, biodiversity, etc.</li> <li>• Hospitality and service standards need upgrading</li> <li>• Transportation issues – expensive, difficult access, poor equipment; limited availability of mini- and maxi-buses, no options for independent travellers</li> <li>• Safety issues: condition of vehicles; lack of wilderness first aid training; inadequate safety equipment; lack of communication, medical and back-up equipment, etc.</li> </ul>	Weaknesses
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link research, conservation and tourism</li> <li>• Supportive partners willing to cooperate on initiatives</li> <li>• Grants and other project assistance can be obtained</li> <li>• Green season packaging and pricing</li> <li>• Media is interested in Guyana as a tourism destination and for government's climate change international leadership</li> <li>• Takutu Bridge linking Guyana and Roraima, Brazil</li> <li>• Niche tourism market growth opportunities - ecotourism and wildlife watching, birding, eco-indigenous, Equestrian, volunteer conservation, fishing, overland expeditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current global economic situation</li> <li>• Brazil road brings range of environmental, social and cultural threats</li> <li>• Environmental and sustainability threats, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No national land management plan or NPA system</li> <li>- Lack of hunting and fishing legislation and laws</li> <li>- Expansion of unregulated and unsustainable mining, logging and seine and guild-net fishing</li> <li>- Lack of monitoring and enforcement</li> <li>- Competition from well-funded, better-known destinations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Threats



### **3.6 Rupununi Tourism Product Development and Interpretation Recommendations**

Product development, interpretation and management are crucial to the successful development of a sustainable tourism industry. Developing the potential to tell the stories of the place and its people is a critical element of all good tourism development, especially when the tourism resources are like Guyana's – unique and endemic. Both Guyanese and international visitors/tourists must be provided with accessible information to foster their understanding and appreciation of the resources. Research, as a component of the tourism development programme plays an important role by expanding knowledge of the resources; providing the content for interpretation to visitors and informing better management and monitoring of the resources themselves. The development of effective mechanisms to deliver information in a variety of formats is also critical, including curriculum development for guide training, brochures, field guides and other publications, exhibits, films, and digital media.

There is also the need to provide visitors/tourists with activities that will extend their stay to two to three days or more. Principle to this is product development and interpretation. The geology, ecology, botany, golden frogs, Amerindian culture etc. are all important assets and as they relate to product development, the issue is proper and skilful interpretation. The provision of high quality interpretation is very critical to tourism in the Rupununi and as a result therefore, experts should be contracted to provide the basic information necessary for the natural history content of the guide training programme.

The Rupununi's natural resources provide a varied and valuable basis for tourism development. A wide range of ecosystems - a number of forest types, savannahs, varied rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands – characterise the region. A range of charismatic mega fauna are locally abundant, including giant river otters, giant anteaters, and eight species of primates. Bird diversity is also high with several species of macaws and parrots, cock-of-the-rock, toucans, wetland species (including Jabiru Storks) and rare and endangered species, like the red siskin and the sun parakeet. The Kanuku Mountains harbour the world's highest known density of harpy eagles. Fish diversity in the Rupununi is also extremely high with a unique mixture of Guiana Shield and Amazonian species including a number of species of interest to catch and release anglers.

*Figure 22: Two species of animals found in the Rupununi: the Giant Anteater (left) and the Giant River Otter (right)*



The Rupununi's culture and history; indigenous cultures and history of cattle ranching, also provide a strong basis for interpretive development. Even as cattle ranching has declined as a viable economy the cattle ranching culture is very much alive. This information can be used as a basis for the development of a calendar of regional events providing a roster of unique cultural activities in the region throughout the year. It is usually difficult to use only one annual event like the Rupununi Rodeo, as an international cultural tourism attraction therefore; smaller activities can be developed and scheduled throughout the year. Local markets could be combined with cultural activities to attract tourists.

Although there are many skilled artists and a range of agricultural products produced in the communities there are few crafts, food products or souvenir items available for sale to visitors. This means that the communities are losing out on an important source of tourism jobs and revenues. A tourism products retail strategy with a strong focus on arts and crafts development and marketing is sorely needed to address this situation. The cultural dimension of such a venture is also vital because it promotes and preserves Amerindian cultures and values.



The following are specific actions recommended to be undertaken to further develop the interpretation aspects of the Rupununi tourism product.

### **3.6.1 Lists of Flora, Fauna and Avifauna**

Official lists of fauna (mammals, reptiles, etc.) and flora of the areas should be produced, identifying and emphasizing those that can be easily seen much like the bird checklists available in some communities. Some of this data already exists but efforts are needed to make it available in formats (both printed and digital) useful for marketing the region as a nature destination. These lists can be used to facilitate the recognition of Guyana and the Rupununi as a destination with high biodiversity that compares favourably with other more successful ecotourism destinations like Costa Rica and Belize.

### **3.6.2 Natural Resource Inventories**

Efforts should be made to identify and map all natural resources within the region with a potential for interpretive development. This would include locations such as scenic overlooks, waterfalls, cliffs, mountains, caves, different habitats, forests by type, wetlands, savannahs, ponds, creeks and swamps. Special features like large trees, hollow strangler figs, nesting sites, bird leks, bat colonies, rookeries and predictable seasonal features like favourite fruiting trees with monkeys or birds should all be included. GPS technology can be used to achieve this.

### **3.6.3 Socio-cultural Inventories**

An extensive census and mapping of the socio-cultural assets of the region should be inventoried. The inventories should include historic sites, petroglyphs, sites with pottery or other evidence of early settlements and/or historic events. The community's human resources such as artisans, musicians, story tellers, historians, herbalists, traditional healers, trackers or renowned hunters or cooks should also be documented. Efforts should also be made to record the community's traditions such as characteristic foods, drinks, games, songs, stories, celebrations, performances and dances. Traditional livelihood activities such as farming, fishing, forest product and medicinal gathering should also be examined for potential interpretive development. For example, traditional foods of the Rupununi, which could be offered as part of the tourism experience include:

- bakes and bread made in wood-fired ovens;
- cashews and peanuts (including butter and brittle);
- a range of fruits such as mango, citrus and passion fruit (including juice, preserves and chutney);
- beef (including jerked beef/tasso);
- cassava products such as farine, cassava bread, cassareep, paricari, shebe and pacoca; and
- stewed dishes such as curries and pepperpot

### **3.6.4 Trails Development**

Based on the information compiled and mapped, a variety of themed trails should be developed. Transects, short-cuts, loops and connections, should be created to allow for "mixing and matching". All the trails should have a destination and/or a theme and simple markers should be placed at regular intervals (50m or so). If possible, mixed hiking/boating trails can be produced as well as bicycle trails. A large map of the trails (possibly carved into wood), should be available at the respective lodges. It should be understood that hiking tourists and general nature tourists have very different expectations. Normally, hiking tourists expect to hike long hours and for several successive days. General nature tourists may be willing to hike one day, if they are coming back to a comfortable bed at the end of the day. If it was a long hike, general tourists may not want to hike the following day. Hiking should be offered as a full-day activity for the general tourist who does not want to camp in a hammock. A longer itinerary should be offered for those who want to hike and camp for at least two consecutive days.

### **3.6.5 Water-based Activities Development**

The Rupununi developed around cattle ranching, ox carts and horseback riding in the savannah. Trails became roads, unlike neighbouring forested areas where creeks and rivers are the main natural transportation routes and central to cultural identity. As a result, local people have not identified all the sustainable tourism potential of water resources. It should be remembered that international visitors closely identify a trip to the Amazon rainforest with small boat experiences on Oxbow Lakes or Rivers. During the field trips for this project there was only one opportunity to travel on a narrow forested river by canoe, but this experience turned out to be the most exciting activity of the entire itinerary. There are many more opportunities to develop streams, lakes and other water sources into sustainable

tourism attractions in the Rupununi. Different types of boats, towers and platforms can open up the potential of wetland resources.

### **3.6.6 Regional Events Development**

As had been said the Rupununi Rodeo is hosted only once per year and as such efforts should be made to use its lure to create other activities that can attract tourists throughout the year. Some possibilities for achieving this are the establishment of a local museum, the establishment of a demonstration site or the hosting of small, themed fairs with cowboy activities and agricultural and cultural products for sale. A fair might provide an amenity for the local people while also being attractive to tourists. Other events that should be packaged and promoted are Rupununi Expo and Amerindian Heritage Days. Reliable “year round” cultural activities will help promote the area, as a cultural tourism destination; and provide opportunities for participation and accrue benefits to more communities and individuals.

## **3.7 Tourism Infrastructure Development**

Infrastructure is critical to the development of tourism in the Rupununi because communities are widely disbursed. Overnight accommodation in the form of full-service lodges is a precondition for any significant growth in tourism to most communities. Infrastructure development should aim to enhance the “the visitor experience” by adding to the visitor’s comfort while telling the story of the community’s environment and culture (the narrative).

### **3.7.1 Lodges**

The communities of the Rupununi display beautiful traditional-type architecture. Traditional-type building technology when scaled up in larger buildings can create magnificent structures. As far as is practicable, simple, traditional building techniques and materials should be used and joinery neatly finished and left unvarnished with paint or fabric to highlight the local materials and artistry. The beauty of the local culture is not often recognised by local communities but is widely appreciated by visitors. Also, simple, open structures also make cleaning and maintenance easier and discourage undesirable pests. Traditional-types of structures can often be improved with altered details, proportions or new technology while still highlighting the traditional expressions.

The following considerations should be taken into account when choosing a site to locate a community lodge.

#### **3.7.1.1 Location**

*Fresh Water:* A reliable source of water is critical. The ideal system is to deliver water by gravity. If water must be pumped, solar water pumps are one of the most cost effective uses of solar power – and though relatively expensive to install should provide many years of dependable service. Wind pumps are also ideal in the savannah areas of the Rupununi where sufficient wind resources are available. A solar or wind pumping system which stores water in raised tanks that can feed the lodge by gravity, is ideal. Pumping takes place when the sun shines or the wind blows and if the storage capacity is appropriately sized, water will always be available. The lodge should be located no more than 500 meters from a permanent fresh water source, in order to keep the cost of piping (and pumping if diesel or gasoline fuelled pumps are required) reasonable. If gasoline or diesel pumps (or generators) are used, consideration should be taken to ensure that the noise of engines cannot be heard from the lodge.

*Privacy and Security:* The lodge should be located at a safe distance from the community, to ensure that the sustainable tourism activities do not interfere with the everyday activities of the community members, and vice versa. Isolating the tourist lodges physically and logistically from the homes, farms and frequently used trails and other areas of the community respects the privacy of both the tourist and the community members and will avoid potential misunderstandings and conflicts. The lodge should be located so that it can be reached by paddle boat or walking (for no more than 60 minutes) to allow some staff to reside at their homes and commute to work daily, while others may stay in staff housing at the lodge.

*Ecosystem Condition:* The ideal location for a lodge is within a healthy, intact, ecosystem and attractive landscape (intact forest or savannah) and if possible in a location where a variety of landscapes can be experienced within about 10 kilometres. If sited in a forested area, it is important to choose primary forest, since they typically are more open, airy and light. Even if the forest has been over-hunted, fauna can recover quickly, once the area is properly managed. Because visitors spend a lot of time in the lodges the probability of seeing wildlife from there should be maximised. One way this can be achieved is by minimising the site’s clearing so that intact forest is preserved to within four to

five metres of the lodges (emergent trees can be trimmed to protect visitors, staff and infrastructure from falling branches and tree falls).

*Topography:* An ideal site for a lodge is a small hill, atop a stable cliff, or near a stream that does not flood. The site should afford good air movement and good views. It is extremely important that the area where the lodge is built is well drained so that it is easy to maintain cleanliness, dry access trails and keep mosquitoes to a minimum. If the terrain is varied in elevation, the lodge should be located in a way that the windows of the guest rooms and common areas face the forest from the highest area of the lodge. In both cases, the landscape should be free of other community or tourism infrastructure; and in as natural and intact a state, as possible.

### 3.7.1.2 Design Approach

Six simple design concepts should be considered in all architectural design and site planning for a lodge. These are:

1. **Create Buildings that encourage people to experience the environment:** Every aspect of the sustainable tourism product should highlight and encourage the experience of nature. Guests make a significant effort to travel to a remote area – often from colder climates – to experience tropical nature and the infrastructure should help to deliver that experience. All structures for visitors should therefore do two things:
  - a. *Minimise the separation between inside and outside:* Tourists are visiting an area for a short time primarily to experience nature, and for opportunities to enjoy views of the landscape. Therefore wherever possible, nature should be visible from all sections of the lodge even the bathroom. Walls and windows should not follow the patterns of traditional houses as the needs of short-term guests are different from permanent residents. Walls should be kept to a minimum and used only to provide privacy where necessary. Windows and wall openings should be maximised to frame views and facilitate good natural lighting and ventilation.
  - b. *Align Buildings to provide shade, frame views, fit comfortably into topography, and maximise air flow:* In aligning structures, long, unobstructed views are the first consideration, the cardinal points should also be considered. In Guyana, it is preferable to erect most views and views in facing south so that sunrise and sunset are visible without allowing excess sunlight to enter the rooms. The second choice is northerly views (but sunrise and sunset views will be more limited). Easterly views are the third choice because the morning sun is not as hot as in the afternoons. Windows should not face west, unless other design features limit the amount of solar heating for the building.
2. **Make it Simple:** Most visitors come once they do not have to struggle to find the services they need. The layout of the lodge should be as transparent and obvious as possible. Signage can help orient visitors but simple designs are the best option.
3. **Build just what is needed:** Avoid the tendency to overbuild. This will help to reduce capital expenditure, reduce the carbon footprint by using low-carbon locally produced building materials that will lessen transportation costs and cater for low-cost renovations as business evolves and infrastructure needs change.
4. **Moderate the tropical climates to create comfort:** These five concepts should be considered to make the climatic conditions in the lodge comfortable:
  - a. *The tropical sun is hot:* Create shade by using both structure (such as overhanging roofs) and vegetation (such as trees and vines).
  - b. *Natural light is free:* Good natural lighting helps to make structures appear clean and attractive while avoiding the growth of fungus and the attendant foul smells in the environment's high humidity. The combination of good light and good ventilation also helps to ensure that a lodge will be largely free of cockroaches and other undesirable pests. Create buildings where every

area (including bathrooms and showers) are full of natural light by avoiding ceilings and maximising the use of partial walls, large windows and openings and sky lights.

- c. *Visitors from temperate climates can find tropical temperatures and humidity oppressive:* Encourage good air movement by providing for cross ventilation in all structures and avoiding materials and situations that generate heat. Provide shaded seating throughout public spaces and build them in to structures whenever practicable. When a structure provides good shade and good cross ventilation the inside temperature is often a few degrees cooler than outside. The area where air movement and natural light is most important and most often overlooked is in bathrooms because of concerns about privacy. These areas tend to be too enclosed and as a result are often dark and humid and quickly become smelly, mouldy and unpleasant. A bathroom or toilet area can be built with a big window facing the forest or a landscape, maximising privacy. Showers can also be located outdoors with a shoulder-height wall providing privacy and allow guests the unusual and luxurious experience of bathing outdoors.
- d. *Tropical rains produce large volumes of water:* Provide cover from drenching rains and design drainage systems to deal with runoff in small amounts to avoid erosion. This reduces the need for engineered solutions and constructed gutters.
- e. *Maintain good air quality:* Avoid dust and fumes by separating vehicular circulation and parking from pedestrian and circulation spaces. Planting trees around buildings also reduces dust and improves air quality.

**5. Use and highlight local materials, traditional styles and motifs:** The use of local materials, traditional style and motifs has a number of advantages including:

- a. *Reducing costs:* The use of local materials, building techniques and labour will make the lodge cheaper to build and easier to maintain. Poles, palm leaves, mud, clay, rocks, sand, leaves and other natural materials traditionally used in building should be employed as far as is practicable.
- b. *Putting money into the local economy:* Building with local materials and techniques puts money into the local economy and maximizes the benefits to the local community through all building and maintenance activities. Thatch or palm-frond roofs that must be replaced periodically provide ongoing benefits to community members who may otherwise not be involved in the tourism business. This helps to enhance the benefits generated by the enterprise. Care should be taken to ensure that thatching and other materials are harvested in a sustainable fashion.
- c. *Creating structures that “belong” to a site and provide a sense of place:* The architecture is a part of the attraction of the destination. The lodges should be a kind of living museum of the socio-cultural aspects of the community with the construction techniques, materials and systems as close to the traditional styles as possible.

**6. Use indigenous plant material and a natural aesthetic in landscaping:** The landscape around the lodges should use natural plants which will provide shade, aid ventilation and be aesthetically sound as well as an attraction for wildlife. It is important to note that the natural landscape should be left as undisturbed as possible during construction - never cut more trees or remove more natural vegetation than is absolutely necessary. Undisturbed landscape should be visible throughout the lodge, especially from the guest rooms and the common areas. If planting is required it should be done in a way that looks as natural as possible and should be with the use of indigenous plant materials. Guests are coming to experience nature; therefore, the landscape around the lodge should not look like a garden or a farm. There are exceptions to this as noted in some specific recommendations. There should also be an effort to use landscaping and planting to attract butterflies, hummingbirds and other birds and wildlife. Small ponds attract frogs and other wildlife and provide a place to grow indigenous wetland plants – but care needs to be taken to ensure that they do not become breeding places for mosquitoes.

### 3.7.1.3 Layout

It is important that the following aspects are considered in laying out a lodge.

*Private bungalows versus structures with multiple accommodations:* If budget and space permit, it is better to build private guest rooms - one per bungalow. Individual bungalows should be sited far enough apart; nine to 14 metres, depending on the thickness of the forest. The more open the area, the greater the distance should be between rooms. The bungalows should also be laid out in a manner that ensures maximum privacy so that guests cannot see or hear their neighbours. The perception of privacy is extremely important - visitors are usually uncomfortable hearing the conversations and noises of people in adjacent rooms, especially if there is a loud snorer. If two or more guest rooms are housed per building, there are special challenges that should be addressed. Local materials and building techniques can be used to isolate the bathrooms from the guest room and one guest room from another. Walls of mud and straw or cane can be built between rooms and bathrooms to reduce noise pollution; woven mats can reduce light reflection between rooms at night.

*Guest Rooms:* Guest rooms should be located as far as possible from the kitchen, bar, dining room and staff quarters. Ideally each room should have a private bathroom. Use high exposed roofs and expansive vertical space, as they result in cooler interior temperatures and provide the feeling of spaciousness and luxury. Rectangular shapes are more efficient and are therefore recommended. Circular or hexagonal rooms must be 20% larger than rectangular rooms, because of the difficulty of placing rectangular furniture (like beds) in those shapes.

*The Bar:* Locate the bar near the dining room and kitchen, but as far as possible from the guest rooms because it can sometimes become noisy and bothersome for visitors who wish to sleep. Locate public restrooms between the bar and the dining room so they can be accessed from both areas.

*Common Areas:* Common areas should be located near the bar and the dining area and have multiple uses: library/reading, relaxing/hammock area, meeting/conversation/table games area. They should be open to attractive views and situated in areas where the possibility of seeing wildlife from the lodge is greatest.

*Décor:* The lodge should be a living expression of the socio-cultural aspects of the local community. Visitors should learn about the community by staying in the lodge and the lodge should generate questions about and interest in the community. Furnishing the lodge with handmade local arts and crafts can create a win-win scenario. It can provide benefits to a wider group of local people while at the same time create an atmosphere that makes the lodge unique and therefore more valuable in the eyes of visitors. The décor can also be used to spark visitors' interest in purchasing local crafts. Consideration should be given to offering for sale easily transportable versions of the arts and crafts displayed in the lodge. The Rupununi has several cultural assets, which can greatly enhance the décor of lodges. A few of these assets are highlighted below:

- a. *Pottery:* Ceramic bathroom sinks can be created and traditional pots used as flower vases, soap dishes, fruit bowls or simply as decorative items.
- b. *Straw, wool or cotton weaving:* Bedspreads can be made with locally woven materials and in traditional patterns or designs. Woven pieces can also be made into wall hangings, pillow covers and hammocks.
- c. *Wood carving:* Carved wood serving platters, bowls, and serving spoons, are very practical and attractive. Guests are usually appreciative of sculptures of the local wildlife, which can be displayed and made available for sale.
- d. *Basketry:* Basketry is a widely practiced craft throughout the Rupununi. Baskets have a wide variety of uses, such as, storage containers, waste baskets, lamp shades and for displaying flowers, pods and seeds. Inverted baskets can be used instead of plastic wrap, to protect serving plates, from flies.
- e. *Balata craft:* Balata crafts are a specialty of Nappi. Yupukari has made innovative uses of the material throughout their lodge where it is used as bathroom tiles and shower stalls. Many more uses of balata can be found such as sink bowls, soap dishes, wall hooks, towel racks, napkin holders and serving dishes and platters. Balata chess sets could be available in guest rooms or communal areas. Sculptured items related to



activities undertaken by visitors (e.g. bullock cart rides) and the wildlife of the area should be available for purchase.

- f. *Calabashes:* Calabashes and other similar gourds make good serving containers. They can also be made into attractive lamp shades and other useful and/or decorative items as well.

### **3.7.2 Utilities and Appropriate Technologies**

It is important for an eco-lodge to embrace appropriate technology, but also critical that choices are examined carefully to ensure that the full costs (installation, maintenance and servicing) are understood and calculated before a decision to employ them is taken. Technology can become extremely expensive if maintenance requires outside technical expertise. Communities should explore the possibilities of training a staff member at the lodge, to perform maintenance. Many times the local systems are the best, since they are proven and can be easily maintained. The search for appropriate new technology should be motivated by the desire to make the lodge more environmentally benign. Some technologies which can be employed in the Rupununi are highlighted below.

*Satellite internet service:* Satellite internet service has become significantly more affordable in recent years. This, together with solar power systems to power it, should be the first technology investments a lodge makes since it can be very important in its marketing and sales efforts, as seen in Surama and Yupukari.

*Solar panels for electricity:* The investment in solar panels for a lodge can be relatively small and almost maintenance free. Solar power is also an efficient way to provide reliable power for small scale lighting, powering laptops and internet service at the community lodges in the Rupununi. A solar power installation large enough to power an entire lodge is probably currently too expensive and the recovery time for the investment may be too long, for a modest community tourism product.

*Wind or solar water pumping:* Pumping water is an excellent use of renewable energy technologies since it does not require battery storage. Water is pumped to fill raised tanks when the wind blows or sun shines and the stored water can then be delivered by gravity when required. Although the initial investments for these systems are high they can be expected to operate for years with little or no maintenance costs.

*Solar path lighting:* Individual solar powered garden path lights can provide a solution for lighting lodge paths at nights. This can increase the safety and attractiveness of the lodge.

*Gas or Biogas:* This technology is being used in many communities all around the world. It is relatively expensive to install but if the raw materials for producing biogas are available it may be worth the initial overhead costs. Biogas can be used for cooking, lighting and heating water. Conventional bottled gas is generally less expensive; therefore, if there is a provider nearby and logistics make it possible, bottled gas is the best short-term option for cooking and refrigeration in most cases.

*Solar water heating:* Although not a priority need for lodges in the Rupununi, solar water heating is another excellent use of solar power since it is a low-cost technology solution that can produce good results. Solar water heaters can be built on site using inexpensive and available materials (most commercial solar hot water heaters will be problematic with unfiltered water supplies). Designs for simple homemade solar water heaters can be found on the internet.

### **3.7.3 Waste Management**

*Solid Waste:* All organic waste should be separated for composting; this will both reduce the volume of solid waste and issues of pests and dogs. Glass, metal and plastic should be recycled and/or reused as far as practicable or otherwise be completely buried regularly in areas that do not flood. The use of plastics should be kept to an absolute minimum and plastics should never be burned. Plastic water bottles (and beverage containers in general) can quickly generate huge volumes of solid waste and their use should be carefully regulated. Visitors should be encouraged to refill water bottles from purified water provided for this purpose. Several low-cost solutions are available to provide safe water for drinking and even purchasing the largest sizes of bottled water and making available to guests can go a far way to reducing the amount of waste generated. Tour operators should be encouraged to take with them all non-biodegradable waste that the tour group generates. The waste was not generated by the community and therefore it should not have to pay the cost for proper waste management.



*Liquid Waste:* If available, one piece toilets should be used to reduce noise and leaking. Septic systems should be carefully sized and should include leach fields, rather than soak ways. Septic systems should not be sited in areas without good drainage or where flooding is experienced. Toilet drain pipes should be separated from those from showers and sinks to reduce the flow into the septic system. Shower and sink waste water should pass through a settling tank before being sent to a soak away.

### **3.8 Community Governance for Sustainable Tourism Activities**

Probably the most challenging aspect of developing and operating a community-based enterprise is finding a way to integrate the enterprise into the community governance structure while maintaining the necessary independence of the enterprise. For communities to successfully operate commercial enterprises, they must establish clear structures which allow for the enterprise to function effectively as a business with the relevant skills and expertise needed for success. Essential to this is the establishment of a decision-making structure that provides sufficient separation between the business decisions which should be made on the basis of sound business principals, and other (sometimes incompatible) community and individual concerns, and politics. The challenge is in doing this while at the same time ensuring full community ownership of the enterprise and equitable sharing of the benefits derived. An interface must be in place to provide for the sharing of information and the resolution of conflicts between the sometimes competing interests of the enterprise and members of the community. Also, if a successful enterprise is established, additional challenges are created. The more successful an enterprise is, the more it requires clear and transparent structures and processes for decision-making and the distribution of benefits to the community and its members.

Communities engaging in tourism, or any other community enterprise for that matter should ensure that they establish clear structures and ensure community involvement in the operation of the enterprise and the sharing of its benefits. This is especially important when the community intends to partner with external entities for the establishment and functioning of the enterprise

#### **3.8.1 Sustainable Tourism Master Plan**

Every community actively engaged in tourism development, should produce a **Sustainable Tourism Master Plan** and update it every three to five years, as the community and the tourism market develop. The development of this plan can help to orientate the entire community and ensure that their activities are aligned and carried out in a way that builds around a common vision and agenda, and that the various efforts will complement rather than compete with one another. The process of making the Master Plan in each community should be one that encourages broad participation and can be a creative envisioning process. It can also serve a training function, facilitating the development of a vision shared by all members and ensure a better understanding throughout the community of the potential risks and benefits. The Plan should include a **Business Plan** that estimates the cost of capital investments and makes projections of the number of guests; and the expected returns of the enterprise.

#### **3.8.2 Zoning Communal Lands for Sustainable Tourism and Conservation**

It is of foremost importance that a zonation scheme for community/village lands be established, as a part of the planning for communities involved in sustainable tourism. Clearly defined and agreed zones can greatly reduce conflicts between competing land uses. It is extremely valuable for the community to undertake a process to establish a zonation plan for the community lands, including informational sessions, which explain the values of zoning communal lands. The zonation plan should identify areas in which certain activities might take place, for example hunting, agriculture and village (housing) zones, in addition to the Tourism and Wildlife Reserve Zones. Sustainable tourism activities, in particular, are likely to experience ongoing conflicts with traditional uses like hunting, logging, and farming, in the absence of a clear and agreed zonation scheme.

It is ideal for the zoning to be completed as a part of a wider community development planning exercise. However, where communities are already involved in a tourism venture the zonation should be completed even in absence of the broader planning. The zoning process should be one that includes the entire community in a participatory manner as much as is possible. This will allow for broader acceptance of the decided zones, greater success in the implementation of the zoning and management of the tourism enterprises; and other aspects of community life. Listed below are some definitions, which would explain what is generally referred to:

*Community/Village Land:* The community/village land is the entire area legally recognized by the State as belonging to the community. It is the area of land titled to the community as catered for in the Amerindian Act

(2006) or other pieces of legislation, as the case might be. It is in the community's best interest to have all the legal aspects of land rights resolved and fully understood if they intend to pursue a tourism venture in order to avoid conflicts with external interests in the land.

*Wildlife Reserve Zone:* Any community developing a sustainable tourism product should set aside a portion of its communal land for wildlife conservation. This is most likely one or two areas, but could be more depending on the wildlife resources and existing land use patterns. The ideal situation is one Reserve that is as large as possible and adjacent to another Protected Area (like a National Park) if the community is lucky enough to have a Protected Area nearby. This creates a continuity of levels of protection that guarantees the long-term health of the wildlife populations that are a basic resource of sustainable tourism. It is ideal for the Wildlife Reserve Zone to be officially recognised under National Laws such as the Amerindian Act (2006) for enforcement of the rules for the management of the area(s). These Reserves should include areas where wildlife frequent, but as much as possible, exclude areas where hunting and other similar activities take place. Only uses compatible with the protection of wildlife should be allowed within the Wildlife Reserve.

*Tourism Zone:* The Tourism Zone is the zone in which all sustainable tourism activities should occur and in most cases should be located immediately adjacent to, or within the Wildlife Reserve (given that their uses are compatible). It should have easy logistical access and be as separated as possible from the houses and farm lands and other frequently used areas. The Tourism Zone should include the site for all tourism infrastructure and the main activity areas (trails, sites, etc.) necessary to operate the sustainable tourism business.

*Special Tourism Sites:* Special Tourism Sites are small areas located anywhere in the community that are created to protect a natural resource that is important to the sustainable tourism activities, but may be located in an area that is otherwise used by members of the community. This mechanism can be used to target sites, such as the protection of a harpy eagle nest, or macaw nesting areas, clay licks, waterfalls, or any special attraction that is not located within the Wildlife Reserve or Tourism Zones.

### **3.8.3 Legal Accountability and Reporting**

#### **3.8.3.1 Financial Management**

In community tourism the management of the financial resources of the business should fall to its administration which should be authorized to:

- a. Plan for and expend the business resources for investment and operations.
- b. Manage the business resources, whether they originate from contributions, loans, or gifts from NGOs, government, the community or third parties interested in promoting or participating in the business.
- c. Engage in banking and financial operations in national or foreign currency, in the country or abroad (if needed) and to provide the necessary guarantees for any contracts required for the development of the business.
- d. Formulate the business' accounts and balances.
- e. Contract for insurance that is required to obtain the indemnity by loss, deterioration or damage suffered by the business.

#### **3.8.3.2 Use of Banking System**

Community tourism enterprises should seek to establish and use established banking systems and establish chequing accounts to allow records of transactions to be easily kept and avoid potential misunderstandings and accountability problems. Management of funds through a bank also creates a good professional impression of the enterprise and gives the perception that it is well established. When communities work with external tour agencies and international operators it is imperative that they establish a bank account to receive and make payments. There is currently one bank established in the Rupununi at Lethem.

#### **3.8.3.3 Documentation and Record Keeping**

Proper and functioning accounting documentation and record keeping systems are absolutely necessary for the health and prosperity of any business. This is especially true for community enterprises as the business is a communal asset and as such should be operated in a manner that properly addresses issues of transparency and accountability. Every deposit, withdrawal, or movement of money, even the smallest transaction, must be accompanied by documentation and records that show all details of the transaction. Good financial documentation and records of the enterprise also help in assessing the performance of the business and when utilized properly can help in ensuring that wise business

decisions are made. The financial records of the enterprise should also be made available for perusal by members of the community.

#### **3.8.3.4 Business Results Reporting and Benefits Sharing**

It is essential for clear business reporting and benefit sharing schemes to be established and function within communities operating sustainable tourism businesses. The management of the enterprise should be obligated to annually formulate and provide to the community (recommended within eighty (80) calendar days, from the end of the fiscal year) the balance sheet and financial summary of the business for the year. The report should be fashioned to calculate and communicate the financial performance of the business, including a statement of profit and loss.

The annual net profit/loss can be calculated by simply subtracting the total operating expenses of the business for the year (salaries, purchases, taxes, fees, etc.) from the total operating revenue (money received through grants and gifts for capital works should be treated separately and not included in this calculation), for the same period. The annual net profit should be distributed towards funding reserves for the business operation and community benefits.

#### **3.8.3.5 Reserves**

A good business approach is to set aside approximately 30% of the annual profits (this can vary, based on the operating state of the business) for the following reserve funds:

- a. *A Reinvestment Reserve:* This is to be applied solely to the purchase, repair or development of the business' facilities, machinery, equipment and tools.
- b. *A Contingency Reserve:* This is to be used to cover any future business losses.

These Reserves should only be applied to uses other than the aforementioned, if authorised by both the management and the community. The percentage of the profit going into each reserve, can be equal, but should be agreed upon by the entire community as a part of the sustainable tourism master plan.

#### **3.8.3.6 Community Benefits**

A clear benefit sharing scheme should be articulated and agreed upon as a part of the sustainable tourism planning for the community. The scheme should set out how the remaining portion of the net profit of the business will be used to the benefit of the community and, in the event of the community partnering with others, what percentage accrues to the partner(s). The community should decide on the use of its portion of the profits as a part of the planning process. Consideration should be given to using at least some of the community portion of the profits to fund projects and payments which benefit the community as a whole. For example, investment in education or health may be considered as a priority.

### **3.8.4 Data Gathering for Tracking and Monitoring**

It is essential in the operation of the sustainable tourism enterprise to receive feedback and comments from others who participate in its success. Feedback from the visitors, tour leaders, tour operators and the community is especially valuable in ensuring the success of the business and satisfaction of all involved. A simple and efficient way of collecting feedback is through the use of questionnaires.

#### **3.8.4.1 Visitors**

It is extremely important to collect feedback from clients about all the aspects of the tourism business operations. One of the best ways to collect information as the operations are developing and help to highlight what areas need improvement is by systematically collecting feedback from all visitors. The questionnaire should be designed to capture the visitors' expectations and the level to which they have been satisfied.

#### **3.8.4.2 Tour Leaders**

Tour leader questionnaires are important. They should be designed to provide detailed information about the client's specific needs. These questionnaires should indicate what changes and improvements need to be carried out in order to maintain the satisfaction of the tour company and its clients.

#### **3.8.4.3 Tour Companies**

It is important for the community tourism enterprise to solicit feedback at least once a year from tour companies who send tourist to the community. This feedback provides information about how the industry is evolving, current trends and new ideas that are becoming important in the market. It will also inform and define future investment and product development for the community.

#### **3.8.4.4 Community Members**

Community members and staff of the sustainable tourism business are extremely important to provide feedback as well. Questionnaires for this group should be designed to tell how the people working in the project feel and give an insight into the project's overall operation. They should also provide the opportunity for the people working in the project to give ideas to improve or modify aspects that will make their work easier and the results better. The most important asset of the project is the people of the community. If they are happy, the clients will perceive it and it will be reflected in their own satisfaction.

#### **3.8.4.5 Analysis of Questionnaire Data**

All the information provided by the questionnaires will be useless if it is not methodically analyzed. Simple computer software programmes are available which can assist in this analysis. The software can also display the results of the analyses in formats which can provide insight into the business and the community dynamics and assist in decision-making to improve the business. In the event that a computer is not available for the business simple manual analysis can be performed to yield valuable results. The information gained from the analyses must be shared with the members of the community, especially those involved in management and decision making for the enterprise, as an important tool in providing focus and helping define a way forward.

### **3.9 Regional Support Systems and Structures**

Regional support to the community tourism enterprises in the Rupununi is an area that needs urgent attention. Most of the community enterprises are not sufficiently large to independently reach markets and accept clients into the region. Further, it is to the advantage of all for the region to be marketed and perceived as a single destination, with various distinct products. The following are the four areas considered as the most important to be established at a regional level:

1. *A local business representative or in-bound operator for the Rupununi:* Tourism in the Rupununi would benefit from a local representative who can channel and respond to the enquiries, informational and logistical needs of domestic and international tour operators. This representative should promote all the sustainable tourism projects authorized by the communities, provide logistics of all kind, confirmation of reservations and facilitate payment policies for all parties. This representative may/may not be completely independent from the Georgetown-based in-bound operators, but they should find ways to collaborate and work closely with them.
2. *A website for marketing and dissemination of information:* An attractive website with detailed information about each community product should be created and put online as soon as possible. There is currently not enough information on the web to encourage potential visitors to come to the Rupununi. Also, all the information that the local representative and tour operators use as working material should match fully with what is available on the web. To achieve this, the production of all the marketing information and materials for the region as a whole should be the responsibility of a single entity. This entity should coordinate all the information placed on the web.
3. *Adopting international banking and communication systems:* It is strongly recommended that all communities use bank accounts for all tourism business funds. As stated before a bank account will help to encourage clear accountability and also facilitate transfers of funds with the national and the international operators with whom they do business. With globalization, advantage must be taken of the international banking and communication infrastructure. All communities must as quickly as possible secure regular access to the internet to ensure their ability to communicate effectively. Timeliness of response is key in the tourism business and a one or two day delay in responding to an enquiry can result in lost business. Additionally, at the regional level the use of the international banking system will allow for the acceptance of modern forms of payments such as credit and debit cards.
4. *Training and capacity building:* Training should be provided at the regional level to further develop the capacity of the communities to successfully manage and operate the tourism businesses. The training can be delivered through specific courses at the institutions established in the region and in collaboration with national and international experts and resources persons. Additionally, more targeted attention should be

given to building the capacity of the individual communities for implementation of the recommendations contained in this document.

### **3.9.1 Tour Guides**

The Rupununi already has a significant number of well trained guides, many of whom are specialized in bird watching. While these guides can serve as a marketing resource for the bird watching market, all guides should be trained in a much wider variety of topics. The fact is that the general sustainable tourism market is significantly larger than the birding market. Guides should be trained in a wide range of topics about the region, including ecology, geography, geology, botany, zoology, which can captivate the imagination of the general ecotourist. The rich cultural/historic aspects of the Rupununi should also be included as a major topic of the training programmes and offered as part of the daily interpretation. Experience shows that well conceived and managed cultural interpretation and contact with local people, often replaces wildlife and nature as the highlight of the visitor's trip.

The Rupununi region needs to develop targeted training and capacity building programmes to help with the development of an effective local, institutional and national capacity for sustainable tourism. In particular, it would need to focus on providing training particularly for additional tour guides, and hospitality support staff. Other necessary support personnel, such as caretaker and managerial staff, would be trained, as part of other regional programmes. These programmes may require leadership from an institution or organisation.

Guides must also be able to focus more on monitoring, trail development and maintenance. In addition, they need to be trained and sworn in as Rural Constables and given their Precepts with the powers of arrest. They then would be better equipped to legally/officially deal with any lawlessness, vandalism and other criminal activities that may be perpetrated in the communities and provide security for the visitors/tourists. Guides should be further trained in advanced First Aid, which should include CPR, snake bites, diabetic cases etc. Other areas of training should include:

- Communication skills
- Hospitality skills
- Medical evacuation principles
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Trails interpretation and maintenance
- Forest ecology and biology, including local vocabulary
- Identification of local flora, fauna and avi-fauna, including local vocabulary
- Forest soils, hydrology and local geology, including local vocabulary
- Local geography, including local names and history
- Makushi/Wai-Wai/Wapishana culture, including basic vocabulary

Training could be done through the use of workshops that emphasise role playing, group discussions and dealing with practical problems, rather than lecture presentations. The most recent literature on all of the topics would need to be prepared and collated. Topics could then be addressed, both in workshop presentations and as written material to be examined by the Guides, at their leisure. The entire course could be done in a series of workshops or a month's long intensive course. Non-Amerindian course entrants should satisfy the requirements of either having five years experience living in indigenous communities or possessing at least, a Diploma in the Natural or Social Sciences.

Currently, the Carnegie School of Home Economics is the only provider of formal hospitality related courses. However, ad-hoc training is also provided by THAG through the Canadian Executive Service Overseas (CESO), Iwokrama and other Resorts (Rock View, Karanambu, and Surama etc.) where persons are allowed to do "work study/on the job training".

As part of its strategy to expand sustainable tourism development, Iwokrama has trained representatives of local communities in the Rupununi and across the country in tour guiding. These guides are employed at Iwokrama and several other institutions across the country. In addition, organisations such as GTIS, THAG and the GTA conduct and facilitate training for tour guides across the country.

Rainforest Expeditions SAC of Peru has offered an opportunity to train Rupununi guides during their long-running annual training programme which is conducted in February of each year. In this programme, trainees will have the



opportunity to learn the general aspects of guiding and get excellent practical experience by guiding almost on a daily basis, getting to know the needs of the general ecotourist. Guides can take two courses in Tambopata, stay on as student guides for two months and then spend six months employed as a guide. During the time that they work in Tambopata, they can earn enough money to repay the cost of logistics and the training programme and still remit money to their families. Spending time at Rainforest Expeditions can give them the confidence and motivation needed to build their community's business while they see firsthand what tourism can do for communities. At the end of the training, they will be expected to return to the Rupununi and share their new found skills and lead the training of local guides in the Rupununi. An added benefit is that during the time spent in Peru, the guides can also market the Rupununi to the people with whom they interact.

Guides must be certified and their certification should be dependent on their ability to:

- Give the Makushi/Wai-Wai/Wapishana culture, creole, English and scientific names of a series of plants and wildlife likely to be observed on the trails
- Present informal discussions of major aspects of plant and animal behaviour, and ecology, ethno-botany and physiology of the most obvious plants and animals of the forest
- Present informed discussions on the major conservation and forest management issues in their respective community/region and Guyana
- Identify local landmarks, including rivers and mountains in their respective community/region
- Discuss the geological characteristics and history of their respective community/region
- Discuss the local Makushi/Wai-Wai/Wapishana culture and history

In addition, they should also be demonstrably familiar with the use of maps, GPS and compasses, two-way radios, binoculars, boat operation and safety, field camp construction and basic survival skills. As part of their kit, the respective communities should provide the maps, GPS and compasses, binoculars and two-way radios.

These trained guides will now be better equipped to understand the importance of maintaining the environment and not allowing it to be degraded. They would become more aware of various methods of landscape and nature conservation, visitor and recreation management and the sustainable utilisation of the region/community's natural resources.

### **3.9.2 Lodge Management**

The hotel and hospitality training programmes that have been offered in the Rupununi have done well in preparing the communities to manage their lodges. Staff members at all of the lodges possess the basic skills set for their various functions, particularly with regard to the kitchen staff. With a well- managed restaurant and good, healthy food service in place, half of the work is done. There is however, need for upgrading and additional training in the finer areas of lodge management and hospitality.

### **3.9.3 Tourism Sales Chain**

Some communities have expressed difficulty in understanding the role of all of the players in the tourism business, outside of the community. It is critical therefore that this be addressed. Communities must recognise and be comfortable with the efforts which go into delivering tourist to experience the products they put on the market and tour operators should feel safe in promoting the destination. The understanding that all parties in the sales chain play a role in delivering tourists to the destination and that they all need to benefit for their roles by way of a commission, needs to be discussed with the communities venturing into the business of tourism to avoid conflicts and promote effective partnerships.

### **3.9.4 The Rupununi Community Tourism Association (RCTA)**

The RCTA was created following the Rupununi Tourism Charette in 2005, with a mission of "...the development and promotion of the unique "Rupununi experience", as a tourism product and the preservation of the region's indigenous culture and natural resources..." The objective of the Association is "To develop and promote the Rupununi Tourism Product, for the benefit of the members and local communities, and to preserve the rich culture and history of the Rupununi". The Association's operation is aimed at the achievement of the following five key goals:

1. To orient communities and persons to the economic value of the culture, history and natural features of the Rupununi;
2. To encourage communities to put aside political and racial differences for the development of a civic society and to focus on common objectives;

3. To encourage communities to take pride in their cultural heritage and to share their culture with others;
4. To promote community tourism that compliments the lifestyle of the Amerindian communities, without creating a dependency on tourism alone;
5. To preserve community lifestyles, environment and values, to make visitors experience more unique.

The RCTA has experienced some difficulties in becoming fully functional because of several reasons. The Rupununi covers such a large area and is so diverse that the RCTA should consider what institutional structure can best serve the three distinct geographic areas: North, Central and South Rupununi. This can reflect the differences of each area and allow for concentration on common needs of the communities and operators within each area and avoid conflicts due to the fact that the three areas are in very different stages of their tourism development.

Lethem could serve as the hub for the Rupununi tourism as it would facilitate easy linkages to the existing communications network and utilities. Whatever model the RCTA decides on, consideration needs to be given to choosing an entity to lead the coordination and provision of technical assistance and capacity building for the communities involved in tourism and importantly, provision of in-bound operator services for the region.

It is critical to have an institutional coordinating mechanism to influence the acquisition of technical capacity and funding, to help with the development of community tourism in the region, and also to coordinate the investment of resources by the communities. The RCTA will need to also take this into consideration. This would assist in ensuring that investments of funds by the communities, yield maximum benefits and projects are executed within the regional vision.

### **3.9.5 A Sustainable Tourism Technical Advisor**

Given the amount of support that the communities of the Rupununi have received for community sustainable tourism development efforts, and the fact that much of this funding has not been effectively spent due to the lack of technical expertise, it is clear that there is a role for a sustainable tourism Technical Advisor, particularly during the period of intensive product development. Without access to such advice and guidance, communities will continue to struggle and perhaps fail to make the best use of their limited resources, resulting in the failure of many of these community enterprises. Community members may well grow frustrated and tired of investing time, money and efforts on projects that do not work, leading to the communities aborting their sustainable tourism projects and turning instead to less sustainable economic activities.

### **3.10 Impacts**

A sustainable Rupununi tourism sector depends on maintaining the biodiversity and cultural heritage of the region and continued and sustained positive impact on the communities and the region itself. That said, the communities, tour operators and other stakeholders/tourism partners must also always be conscious of the negative impacts that tourism itself can have on the region's fragile environment, society and cultural way of life. As the number of visitors increase the concerns become greater. It is therefore vital to be explicit on what are the negative and positive impacts, mitigate the negative impacts and support the positive impacts.

This is best done through a full sectoral environmental and social environmental assessment. Major negative impacts to the environment include air, land and water pollution through noise, fossil fuel use, poor waste disposal practices; destruction of landscapes through unplanned or poorly designed products; and loss of natural habitats and ecosystem degradation through excessive visitor use. Negative cultural impacts include disappearance or loss of authenticity in art; music; handicraft design; ceremonies; architecture; dress and cuisine, through unmanaged introduction of a cash economy and lack of appreciation of and support for the community tourism assets. Negative social impacts are fostered through uncontrolled expansion of the tourism sector, and unmanaged interfacing between visitors and communities; impacts include increasing social ills such as crime, prostitution, gambling, decline of community structures, social diseases such as AIDS and other STDs, dehumanising employment and adverse effects on family and community life.

There are several positive impacts:

1. Positive environmental impacts
  - a. Conservation of natural areas and wildlife
  - b. Environmental appreciation

- c. Rehabilitation and transformation of old buildings and sites into new facilities
  - d. Introduction of planning and management community enterprise development
2. Positive Cultural Impacts
  - a. Renaissance and/or retention of art, handicraft, dance and ceremonies
  - b. Restoration of monuments
3. Positive Social Impacts
  - a. Visitors/tourists gain through relaxation and recreation, a change of environment and social contact with others.
  - b. Local gains through impetus to modernisation, women given a level of independence.
  - c. People break out of traditional restrictive roles.

To mitigate the negative impacts, steps should be taken in a range of areas including

1. Conducting research aimed at setting limits for sustainability (carrying capacity);
2. Increasing wider community involvement in decision making;
3. Introducing measures to combat pollution, congestion and degradation;
4. Ensuring that all new buildings harmonise with physical and cultural environment;
5. Encouraging measures such as a strong programme of education in communities, especially at the youth level for maintenance of the traditions and culture of the region;
6. Introducing measures to control levels of undesirable activities such as crime, prostitution and gambling;
7. Educating visitors, tourism partners and other stakeholders on setting goals and objectives and develop action plans to minimize negative impacts and enhance positive impacts of their actions; and
8. Implementing eco-certification and carbon-neutral programmes to help local businesses support environmental conservation, cultural heritage preservation and regional economic development as part of their operations.

All involved in Rupununi tourism should lobby for actions to be taken to conserve and protect the precious natural and cultural resources by the instituting of legislation and regulations including those to manage the wildlife trade, hunting, fishing and other activities that could irreparably harm the already fragile ecosystems, with its rich biodiversity.

### **3.11 Tourism Management, Codes of Conduct and Guidelines**

Tourism development in regions like the Rupununi is used for certain forms of human recreation, scenic access, scientific study and education. Such use must be very low-impact and attuned to the ambience and beauty of the natural setting, and the cultural norms and beliefs of its people. Maintenance of this low-impact use will require addressing many challenges which will result from accommodating increased human activity while at the same time maintaining the area's wilderness character. A framework must be established to address these challenges. In this context the following are some management actions, codes of conduct and guidelines which should be adopted by those involved in Rupununi tourism.

#### **3.11.1 Tour Operators**

Tour Operators should

1. Be licensed, with conditions imposed to keep operations within limits and control visitor behaviour through acceptance of and compliance with the regional and community approved code of conduct (including observance of walking and camping etiquette);
2. Register every visitor with the region and community, indicating clearly the visitor/tourist's name, country of origin, age, gender and reason/s for travel;
3. Pay any and all community and other fees when registering visitors/tourists;
4. Minimise the use of disposable, non-biodegradable products. They should also be responsible for the appropriate collection of all non-biodegradable garbage generated by the visitors/tourists. These items must be properly stored and transported out of the community and properly disposed.
5. Review the community rules with their clients in advance of their arrival. They must insist that, as soon as the visitors/tourists arrive they report to the tourism coordinator (or other appropriate community personnel as the communities may stipulate) to be registered and given an orientation.
6. Adopt the practices necessary to conserve the environment, including the use of renewable resources in a sustainable manner and the conservation of non-renewable resources.

7. Contribute to the conservation of any habitat or any site, whether natural or cultural, which could be affected by tourism.
8. Encourage relevant authorities to identify areas worthy of conservation and to determine the level of development, if any, which would ensure that those areas are conserved.
9. Ensure that community attitudes, cultural values and concerns (including local customs and beliefs) are taken into account when planning tourism related-projects.
10. Encourage those involved in tourism to comply with local, regional and national planning policies and to participate in the planning process.
11. Foster environmentally responsible practices including waste management, recycling and energy use.
12. Foster an awareness of environmental and conservation principles in both management and staff of all tourism-related projects and activities.
13. Support the incorporation of established conservation principles in tourism education, training and planning.
14. Encourage all those involved in tourism to develop an understanding and appreciation of the customs, cultural values, beliefs and traditions of any community with which they do business and how these relate to the environment.
15. Enhance the understanding and appreciation of tourists for the environment through the provision of accurate information and appropriate interpretation.

### **3.11.2 Tourists**

Tourists should:

1. Not remove any natural items (other than souvenirs) from any community;
2. Not wander from designated trails and paths; and be allowed to tour the community, without the company of a guide;
3. Not engage in hunting, trapping or fishing within the community, without prior approval, in writing, from the tourism coordinator. These should only be given primarily for scientific and or census purposes. Sport fishing may be an acceptable form of tourism as long as this is done with strict levels of sensitivity and following the established guidelines.
4. Immediately notify the guide of any accident (or other emergency), inappropriate activities or problems, which may be observed or occur.
5. Be advised to be wary of touching any plants or wildlife, without a good understanding of the consequences.
6. Be advised to carry adequate drinking water at all times, since drinking from ponds and streams may be injurious to health.
7. Not set any fires nor smoke cigarettes except in designated areas.
8. Eat anything except in designated areas, and following all health-related guidances. If the tourist has any health problem that may affect her/his ability in field conditions, the tour guide and operator must be informed prior to undertaking any activity.
9. Only use toilets and washroom facilities provided.
10. Not buy products that exploit wildlife, aid in habitat destruction, or come from endangered species.
11. Not litter, even if they see a local person littering, set an example and dispose of their garbage appropriately.
12. Avoid products with excess packaging; opt for beverages in glass bottles as they tend to be re-used.
13. Use only biodegradable soaps and shampoos while camping.
14. Respect cultural differences since local customs and traditions may be different from their own.
15. Take the time to learn what behaviour is acceptable and what isn't.
16. Always ask permission before taking photos of people and respect their wishes if they refuse. If they do take a photo, offer to send copies back to them and ensure to follow through with their promise.
17. Take the time to learn about the country they are visiting. Learning about the customs and a few words in the local language can go a long way and is appreciated by the local people. It also makes their interactions more meaningful and memorable.

### **3.11.3 Tour Guides**

Tour guides are expected to:

1. Be appropriately dressed in uniforms (if provided), at all times when dealing with and/or guiding visitors/tourists.
2. Regularly monitor all activities and impacts within the community to ensure the integrity of the community and its surroundings.
3. Show willingness to provide optimum support and quality service to all tourists and give tourists an opportunity to enjoy or visit a desired destination.

4. Never discriminate in rendering service to any tourist on any basis, e.g. colour, gender, ethnicity, nationality, physical challenge, age, etc.
5. Be impartial, unbiased and positive, and represent the community objectively.
6. Be punctual, reliable, honest, conscientious and tactful at all times.
7. Carry out the programme/itinerary of a tour to his/her best ability and be loyal to the company/organisation that he/she is representing.
8. Deal with conflict in a sensitive and responsible manner.
9. Report any incident of injury or death to the tourism coordinator (or other appropriate community personnel as the communities may stipulate), a nearby tourist authority or police station or other authority as may be necessary and/or required.
10. Be knowledgeable, strive to enhance and update personal knowledge. Misleading information must not be provided to a tourist.
11. Refrain from the use of alcohol or narcotic substances (legal or illegal) while on duty; and from administering any medication to a client, without proper medical consultation.
12. Never solicit from clients and collect gratuities by any coercive means, nor exhibit dissatisfaction, provide substandard service or refuse to provide service because of receiving little or no gratuities.
13. Be concerned at all times for the safety of the tourist.
14. Treat all people, cultures, religious beliefs and the environment with respect.
15. Not sell illicit items to visitors or recommend them to buy such items.
16. Attach top priority to the safety of visitors and remind them to be aware of their personal safety.

Penalties should be agreed upon in the event of failure by any party to comply with the applicable rules. Penalties can be through fines, expulsion, suspension, bans or other means. All the rules and guides as well as the penalties should be made readily available to all and in the case of tourists they should be briefed prior to and upon arrival.

Additionally, the following are some general recommendations:

1. All children must be carefully supervised by their parents and/or guardians since there are many challenging and dangerous situations which may be encountered.
2. Swimming, bathing and boating must only take place with the knowledge and supervision of the guide(s).
3. The use of firearms, loud music and other sources of noise pollution should be prohibited. These disrupt the serenity of the community, disturb wildlife and do not add to the experience of visitors/tourists.
4. Management of the community/RCTA should ensure that all guides are certified.
5. The maximum number of visitors/tourists guided in a group, should not exceed 14.

With small numbers of visitors/tourists, certified guides are better able to have control, communicate and do trail interpretation, during their guiding. This also adds to the safety and protection of the visitors/tourists.

### **3.12 Monitoring**

Monitoring, an essential component of any planning and management of tourism development and activities, is a systematic and periodic measurement of key indicators of biophysical and social conditions. Systematic means that an explicit plan exists to set indicators, chart how and when these should be monitored and how the information collected would be used. Periodic means that indicators are measured at predetermined stages.

Monitoring provides managers with essential information about the protection of values for which the businesses were established and therefore, indicators must be selected carefully, because of scarce financial and personnel resources. Also, because the appropriateness of indicators can change over time, their suitability should be reviewed periodically. In selecting indicators, the following points should be taken into consideration:

1. They should identify conditions of tourism development.
2. They should be descriptive rather than evaluative.
3. They should be relatively easy to measure.
4. Initially, only a few key variables should be selected for monitoring.

Monitoring efforts will inform when desired conditions are being threatened and action is needed. Action cannot be taken, however, if a proper feedback process is not identified and data is collected on an erratic basis. Once indicators have been agreed upon, numerical standards can be set to prevent degradation of current conditions.

Since monitoring activities cannot begin until suitable indicators are agreed upon, the communities and RCTA should give the identification of indicators the highest priority and before any major developments are done that will increase tourist traffic.

Safety checks should be conducted on a regular basis to ensure the safety of staff and tourists. The principle areas of concern are the trails, other infrastructure and equipment. Routine checks are not currently done within the communities, and trail maintenance is conducted on an irregular basis, if at all.

Monitoring programmes are most effective when they address impacts and threats; and deal with issues that affect both the full range of stakeholders and the communities. Some of these impacts and threats have already been highlighted.



## Section 4

# SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS BY COMMUNITY

### 4.1 Nappi

#### 4.1.1 Infrastructure

Maipaima has very good basic infrastructure with an open benab for reception and dining besides the guest bungalows. All are built on stilts with a raised connecting walkway. The main problem is that there is little or no privacy between the rooms in the bungalow which are too small and too enclosed.

In order to maximise the market potential, Maipaima Lodge should have a minimum of eight double bedrooms and the facilities to accommodate at least 16 guests. Besides adding two rooms and upgrading the existing facilities, Nappi should not invest further in infrastructure, until an established market demand justifies such expansion.

Since Nappi is famous for its balata artisans, the potential to develop innovative uses of balata in the infrastructure – potentially for sinks, shower stalls, tiles and décor should be examined.

The dining/reception benab is beautiful but requires a bit of maintenance and improved furnishing and décor.

**Easy modifications of existing bungalows:** The front walls should be repositioned approximately two metres forward (to the existing post) to enlarge the rooms under the existing roof (the extended outside wall should have only a railing to about one metre and left open above that. The wooden plank dividing walls between the rooms should be removed (reuse the wood in the new bungalows) and be replaced with materials that will improve sound and light proofing (balata sheeting or wattle and dab). Extend the dividing walls half-way to the ceiling with balata, canes, woven mats or other material. In the long term as the demand increases Nappi should build two additional two-unit bungalows in the area, along the creek's edge.

**Furnishing and Décor:** Shelves should be built on the walls behind the beds with a bedside table approximately 30 to 38 centimetres deep and other shelves about 20 to 25 centimetres deep. A desk and chair should be provided in each room, in addition to the bed. If space allows, provide a suitcase rack, a towel rack and hooks near the sink, a towel rack in the bathroom, a clothes/towel drying rack/line and hooks for clothes in the room, a plain mirror framed with local material (bark, woven thatch, carved wood) near the sink, hammocks or comfortable chairs to accommodate two persons and a waste basket made of local material (no plastic liner). The bathroom and shower curtains should be replaced with locally made woven cotton curtains or seeds strung on strings. The room décor should be named and themed with balata crafts.

**Bathroom:** Remove top boards on the back wall behind the toilet and shower to improve air movement and lighting. Extend the split wood slats over the expanded opening. The brick dividing wall between the showers and toilets should be extended to about two metres. Drain pipes from the sink shower and toilet should all have a drop of 3 centimetres per 30 centimetres and resurface the shower floors with exposed aggregate – river pebbles imbedded in concrete.

**Room Décor:** Treat all walls with clear matte/low gloss varnish or linseed oil and use crafts produced in the village to decorate the rooms.

**Benab:** Treat all wood with clear matte/low gloss varnish or linseed oil and decorate with interesting natural materials from the forest; and handmade items from the community. Natural history items might include bird nests, seed pods, flowers, fruits and a bunch of bananas can be hung to provide snacks. Extend the display area for local crafts and use attractive local woods (e.g. purpleheart) with protective surface (matte polyurethane or shellac) rather than table cloths on tabletops.

#### 4.1.2 Location

The location of Maipaima Lodge is wonderful and with zoning, it can be surrounded by a variety of well managed forest. The nearness to a stream is an advantage in many ways, but a strip of streamside vegetation should be allowed to return, in order to protect the site from erosion and maintain the wildlife corridor. The lodge's location, immediately adjacent to the proposed KMPA boundary, is an ideal situation. The Park would provide protection for

the lodge's investments by ensuring that the natural resources in its vicinity will be protected in the long-term. The KMPA can potentially make the lodge more unique and marketable.

#### 4.1.3 Landscaping

Plant an attractive demonstration farm of the most diverse possible range of local crops, such as mango, lemon, orange, grapefruit, cashew, passion fruit; as well as eddo, cassava, yams, peanuts, sugar cane, ginger and other spices, that could be used as a demonstration of local agricultural practices which can provide activities for guests. Many guests will enjoy seeing how these products, which they may know only from their grocery store shelf, grow. Provide infrastructure for the garden and should include paths, one or two shaded seating areas and benches around a campfire pit, to encourage people to use the garden. Permanent shrubby indigenous material (like heliconias) should be planted along the stream edge, to protect the bank from soil erosion. Collect orchids and bromeliads from fallen/cut trees and affix them to tree trunks or building posts.

#### 4.1.4 Vehicles

Make a clearly defined parking area in the forest outside of the bungalow clearing, so that the parked vehicles are not visible from the lodge.

#### 4.1.5 Interpretation

Nappi should produce a census of tourism resources (both natural and cultural), as described in the general recommendations laid out in this document. The village has enough natural and cultural resources to develop a three-to-four-day itinerary with high quality interpretation. All the possible activities should be experienced by an interpretation specialist, who can describe the activities and know how they can be developed in detail. A significant investment must go into making the interpretative activities the highlight of the lodge.

With good interpretation and well-developed itineraries, Maipaima Lodge will be ready to be aggressively marketed. Marketing is indispensable now for the lodge's success. The community members are ready to perform and to provide an unforgettable experience. Interpretive resources already identified include:

**Bat Caves:** The cave is an ideal tourism resource - not too near or too far from the lodge. It gives the opportunity to develop a half-day of interpreted activities using the forest and wildlife in it. If well developed it could become a full day's activity, with box lunch en route.

**Flora and Fauna:** Its location at the base of the biodiversity-rich Kanuku Mountains, immediately adjacent to the proposed Protected Area boundary, and the fact that Nappi is known to have some of the most fertile soils in Guyana, result in an abundance of floral and faunal resources. Bird life is particularly rich owing to the diverse habitats around the lodge; and Foster Parrots choose Nappi as the site for its intervention because of the high density and variety of parrots in the area. National Geographic's *Flight of the Harpy* was filmed in the Nappi area and Harpy Eagles are still regularly seen in the area. It would be worthwhile to attempt to locate an active Harpy nest. There are also two Cock-of-the-Rock leks near Nappi and a Capuchin bird lek near the lodge. However, it should be determined when birds can be reliably observed at the leks. White Bellbirds are also regularly seen at Jordan Falls.

A bird checklist should be developed for the area; a butterfly checklist can also be developed, along with conducting basic observational research to identify reliable nature viewing opportunities.

**Balata Craft:** Given that Nappi is known for its balata crafters and has only one balata making programme for visitors it would make sense to develop a much more extensive interpretation around balata. Going to the forest to extract balata and visiting a camp where balata is processed to learn how it is dried, coloured, and moulded, could be a half day's activity and should be tied in with craft sales, as described below.

**Water Falls (Nappi, Aquarium and Jordan):** Jordan Falls is a spectacular site that requires a three-hour hike and for most visitors, an overnight stay. Simple hammock accommodation is now provided near the falls, but since many people are not comfortable sleeping in hammocks, good quality camp cots should be provided. In the future, once tourist numbers have created a demand, a more elaborate camp site could be developed. It would be critical to ensure that experienced professional design and engineering advice is obtained, before any such development takes place. To visit the other falls, require road transportation. The ideal situation would be to

visit the falls without travelling out from the lodge and back by road. If this were not possible, then these falls visits should be made on the day of arrival or departure from Nappi.

**Agrotourism and Wellness:** Nappi has some of the richest soils in all of Guyana with citrus and yams as some of the major crops. It therefore, could be worthwhile to develop a half day's activity around the citrus farms and other cultivations, with the consent of the owners of the farms. Visitors will enjoy seeing how crops are cultivated and learn more about them, including tasting fruits directly from the trees. Fruits could be collected and brought back to the lodge, where visitors could learn how to make preserves and other dishes. The local abundance of heliconias and other flowers provides opportunities for floral arrangements activities, as well as, a resource for decorating the lodge. The bounty of the land could also form the basis for a wellness-based programme. Health and wellness tourism is now an international trend and Nappi has a unique opportunity to attract travellers who seek to enhance their well being when travelling.

**Bullock cart rides:** Given that some transportation providers in Lethem currently charge a premium of about US\$50 to drive the 10 kilometres from Nappi village into the lodge the community could capture this value and make this transfer an appealing interpreted activity, through the use of bullock carts. The use of bullock carts for the rides would require that the carts be outfitted with improved seating with backrests and cushions; and interpretive development.

**Other potential activities:** Making of bows and arrows for archery; basket, furniture or craft; night spotting of wild life and the termite city, were all mentioned as possible new activities

#### **4.1.6 Related Product Development**

There is a real opportunity in Nappi to develop a range of items for sale to visitors and thereby increase benefits to the broader community. Potential products include all types of crafts, orange marmalade and other locally produced citrus products, fresh bread and baked goods, and balata crafts, related to the interpretive activities (e.g. balata bullock carts, fish from Aquarium Falls, bats or orange trees).

#### **4.1.7 Other Actions**

As recommended for all communities, it is essential that Nappi develops a sustainable tourism master plan with a business plan. The plans should include actions for marketing and training strategies.

### **4.2 Rewa**

#### **4.2.1 Infrastructure**

Rewa has a superb dining and lounge benab but the guest rooms need improvements. Although some improvements have already been made they remain too enclosed, with high walls and small windows. It would also be preferable to make each room self-contained.

**Easy modifications to existing bungalows:** Each bungalow should be more open to views, light and ventilation. Windows should be added to each room, making a total of four windows - three continuous with shutters in one of the outside walls and one in the front wall, onto the deck. The topmost wallboards above the windows should be removed and reused for the extension of the center wall. Heighten the dividing wall between the rooms, by about two metres, reusing the boards from the existing bathrooms. Also, install a second door, leading from each room, to the new garden bathrooms, reusing the existing shower or toilet doors.

**Furnishings:** Use, as far as practicable local materials for every construction that needs to be done. Add three or four levels of shelving on the shared wall, approximately 20 centimetres deep, behind the beds and construct a bedside table approximately 38 centimetres deep. Place a desk under the three windows; provide a hanging towel rack near sink, a clothes/towel drying rack and a wastebasket made of local material. Remove all screening from the buildings and resurface the concrete floors, with concrete mixed with screened colourful soil (i.e. laterite), to create a natural looking, easy to clean finish. Include simple furniture on the room deck and in new bathroom and add a stool or hammock-side table made from a tree stump. Divide the deck in front of the guest rooms to create the feeling of more privacy, using liana cane. Make each room self-contained and construct the bathroom walls with a mixture of local materials inclusive of wattle and mud bricks, with a waterproof capping. Change the slope of the roof to extend the roofline and create a 1.5 metres overhang for the toilet and sink and include a

large counter against the rooms outside wall. Reuse the existing bathroom roofing. For the flooring, large flat stones set in loose gravel should be used with a minimum amount of concrete to contain around the perimeter. Bathtubs could be constructed out of smooth, colour-tinted concrete and stone which must drain even if the area is flooded. The floor level of bathrooms should be raised if necessary, to get sufficient height to reuse existing septic tanks.

**Benab:** There is plenty of space within the existing dining/lounge building to hang a number of hammocks for resting during the day. Decorate the space with interesting natural materials from the forest, handmade items from the community and natural history items like bird nests, seed pods, flowers and fruits. A bunch of bananas might be hung to provide snacks. It is absolutely necessary that a display area for local crafts must be made available.

#### **4.2.2 Landscaping**

No more forest around the lodge should be cut and the existing tress should be protected, especially those along the river bank. Cultivate around each bungalow using local plant material from the forest, especially those with interesting flowers or foliage which would attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Some of these could include heliconias, passiflora vines, orchids and epiphytes from tree falls.

#### **4.2.3 New Bungalow Construction**

It is also recommended that Rewa builds four additional guest rooms, making a total of eight rooms that would accommodate sixteen guests. This will facilitate inbound operators to book the most economic group sizes. The four, single-unit rectangular bungalows should be set into nooks, cut into the forest edge around the main clearing, spaced 11 to 15 meters, apart. The main structure should be constructed four metres wide and seven metres long with 4 X 3 meters on the public side and a 5 X 7 meters bathroom on one side.

**Building materials:** The construction of the three-metre high wall facing the main clearing and the long room wall should be done using sun-dried bricks set in mud mortar with different colours of mud and should have a pattern of open vents for decorative purposes. The two other walls should be constructed out of wattle sticks and the roof out of wood-framed palm thatch, with a 45% pitch, extended on bathroom side. The floor must be constructed out of wooden decking on rot-resistant wooden piers and all of the doors should be wood framed. The bathroom blind should be made out of seeds and the bathroom should have no walls, but rolled up curtains at the forest end. The bathroom floors should be done out of stone set in river gravel and the walls, a combination of mud brick with fired brick cap, wattle sticks.

#### **4.2.4 Location**

The Ewards Eco-Lodge is situated in a fantastic location, at the confluence of the Rewa and Rupununi rivers. The lodge's setting is ideal since it is relatively far from the village thus providing both villagers and visitors with their own space and privacy, but yet near enough to be conveniently serviced; and develop interpretation activities in the village.

#### **4.2.5 Interpretation**

Rewa has fantastic natural resources and a highly attractive surrounding which can be used to develop excellent interpretive experiences. Generally, Rewa should develop more interpretive activities in order to offer a detailed four-to-five-day itinerary. Awaramie Mountain is particularly noteworthy, for spectacular views of the area and Grass Pond is stunningly beautiful.

Rewa has great potential to focus on the wildlife experience since it provides easy access to healthy populations of monkeys, pristine lakes and riverine habitats and a wide range of other wildlife. Tourism Management Plans, Wildlife Reserves and Tourism Zones must be established/developed and implemented to ensure that the natural resources are sustained. In addition, there should be some tourism management training done to prevent the negative impacts on the beaches, where tourists are taken. These beaches are the nesting place for the giant river turtles and the skimmers.

**Birding, fishing and wildlife viewing:** Rewa has excellent resources for birding, fishing and wildlife viewing. Grass Pond has the highest known density of Arapaima (the world's largest fresh water fish) in Guyana and viewing them is quite predictable. Fishes found in the Rewa River that are highly sought for sport fishing include biara, peacock bass (lukanani) and black piranha/pirai. There is also a great potential for this activity to be development. There are indications that the monkey populations around the lodge are healthy. Since monkeys

can be easily seen and are a highlight for visitors, guides should be prepared to provide information about them. The Rewa River is home to a great number of species of wild life including black caiman, giant river otters, giant river turtles and anacondas. If these resources can be protected, wildlife viewing can undoubtedly be the highlight of a visit to Rewa. Information should be compiled on the locations and seasons during which, the various species can be easily and reliably viewed.

**Fishing:** Sport fishing at Rewa is excellent. Besides the Rupununi and Rewa rivers, Rewa has 11 oxbow lakes that are suitable for fishing. Rewa has been conserving its fisheries for the last five years therefore fish can be found in abundance, unlike other areas where commercial fishing has decimated fish populations. Grass Pond has the highest known density of Arapaima in Guyana. Other fishes found in the rivers and lakes that are highly sought for sport fishing include piaraiara, arawana, peacock bass and black and red-bellied piranha.

**The river trip to the lodge:** The river trip to the lodge should be the highlight of the trip to Rewa and interpretation should be developed to capitalise on this opportunity. This development would also require making the boat and consequently the ride, more comfortable by providing seatbacks, cushions, and a roof to protect visitors/tourists from the sun and rain.

**Lakes and ponds:** Grass Pond, which is reached by boat from the lodge and a 20 minute hike (or by boat in high water), is undoubtedly the most beautiful lake in the region. With some canoes or a catamaran and interpretation, the pond can easily provide a full day of activities. There are also other ponds, lakes and wetlands in the area, which can also provide resources for interpretive activities. Some highlights of the water-based activities in Rewa could include:

- Arapaima can be easily observed due to their air gulping habit. Research and conservation projects focused on this fish usually take place in the area and can be the highlight of the experience. Interpretational activities should be developed around the arapaima project, thus providing, at least, a half day of activities for visitors/tourists. A low, approximately nine-metre-tower and a floating platform or catamaran would greatly enhance this experience.
- The Giant Fresh Water Lily (*Victoria Amazonica*) is the National Flower of Guyana and is world famous. Seeing it in the wild can be a highlight for visitors/tourists during visits to the lakes in Rewa.
- Spotting of giant river otters, water birds and catch and release sport fishing are also activities, which can gainfully occupy the time of the visitors/tourists.

**River tours into jaguar country:** Trips up the Rewa River into jaguar country should be offered with two options: one for visitors/tourists staying three-to-four days at the lodge, who may want a full day tour, and for overnight or multiple night options for visitors/tourists seeking longer adventure trips and camping.

**Mountain hikes providing panoramic rainforest views (Makarapan and Awarmie mountains):** Potentials exist for a 6-km river trip followed by a one and a half hours hike to Arwamie Mountain and Arwamie Lake. The mountain provides spectacular views over the forests and opportunities for viewing macaws and monkeys; the lake provides opportunities for viewing otters and sports fishing. As with the river tours into jaguar country, two versions of this interpretation activity should be developed to provide a range of experiences, depending on the interests and fitness of visitors/tourists.

**Sand banks:** In low water, exposed sand banks provide nesting sites for black skimmers, yellow-billed terns and other birds, caiman, giant river turtles and lizards. This opportunity can be utilised for viewing activities. However, this must be done in an extremely careful manner since the banks are critical for the species that reproduce there. Tourists should probably not be allowed to walk on the banks or only in defined and limited areas which are considered to be safe. Scientific and local knowledge of the various species should be consulted to help in developing guidelines for the use of the sand banks. If it is carefully done within limits, the sand banks can help protect the species which nest there as important tourism resources and become one of the highlights for visitors/tourists.

**Village tours and cultural presentations:** Rewa is an attractive village and ideal for developing village tours. In developing village tours however, care must be taken to ensure the involvement and consent of the village in planning; and the respect of the privacy and wishes of the villagers must be taken into consideration. Any cultural presentations should be done in a very tasteful manner. A critical concern is ensuring that they are



developed in a way that makes the authentic cultural aspects of the presentations the attraction; and not to commoditise the people themselves.

#### **4.2.6 Other actions**

Like all other communities, Rewa should urgently prepare a sustainable tourism master plan and pay special attention to the preparation of a zoning scheme which would establish wildlife reserves and tourism zones that would begin to protect the most critical tourism resources. Protection of the river corridors is also crucially important for Rewa, including the preservation of the vegetation along riverbanks; and concomitantly, the aquatic wildlife. Marketing is also a key factor for Rewa since it could quickly be ready to host many more visitors, than it is currently receiving.

### **4.3 Yupukari**

#### **4.3.1 Infrastructure**

The use of local materials in both traditional and more creative ways in Caiman House is exemplary. This communicates both a respect for local traditions and an example of new and innovative uses. All the facilities are comfortable and functional and have everything in place to receive guests. Some of these are good illumination, good ventilation and good bathrooms. However, there are a few safety issues which should be addressed such as the stairs within the buildings should be of a standard height and equally spaced, the unusually shallow or uneven steps should be replaced or repaired, the holes in central yard that were apparently dug for planting pits should be filled, walkways should be built in the yard where guests can anticipate a good walking surface and the loose gravel around bathroom sinks should be replaced with exposed aggregate gravel set in concrete, to address issues of the growth of bacteria, fungi and mould.

#### **4.3.2 Location**

Caiman House's location in the heart of the village provides ready access to all the social and community activities. The location of the community library at Caiman House provides the opportunity for enriching the social aspect of the interpretation activities. At the same time, this site apparently has a beautiful lake nearby that could be developed for tourism. The close proximity to the river is also a huge asset for bird, otter and caiman spotting and for river boating which is normally considered the highlight of an Amazonian trip.

#### **4.3.3 Interpretation**

Caiman House has two unique assets: one, it is developed around a scientific research project on the black caiman, a charismatic species and two: it is developed in the community, with community empowerment as a primary goal. These conditions provide opportunities to develop specialty volunteerism and research tourism market, which have a number of benefits. Although volunteerism and research visitors pay lower rates for room and board, they are less demanding, they stay for longer periods (often 20 to 30 days) and the guests contribute their time to furthering Caiman House's scientific research and/or community empowerment mission. Caiman House is also an ideal location for the hosting of small training programmes and conferences. Caiman House should develop a number of itineraries that can be priced and offered as a complete package. Activities which could be developed include:

**River-based activities:** Caiman Project research activities are ongoing and give character to the location. The project should offer researchers-led caiman interpretation for all visitors, both formally and informally. The trip on the river is extremely rich and can guarantee the sighting of black caimans, lots of water birds and a very good chance to see giant river otters. These species are considered some of the most representative of the Amazon and the high probability of seeing them here is an important asset of Caiman House and Yupukari. The tour by boat from this location is currently the most professional available in the Rupununi. Lifejackets and all safety and other equipment are in good condition and it is an ideal situation that the lodge does not have to provide their own boat transportation, but can access it from independent entrepreneurs, to provide access to any location along the river.

**Village tours:** The lodge's site in the village provides easy access to activities that involve the community. Activities with the school, with a women's group or other community groups can be easily organised. Meaningful experience of the health and education programmes that Caiman House provides to the community can be a highlight of the trip for visitors, especially those seeking volunteer experiences.



***Creatures of the night:*** Caiman House offers a night-time wildlife viewing activity, which is usually done both by boats and trails. Night savannah tours have recently been added and these activities can be further developed and promoted.

***Scientific research:*** Organizations such as the Earthwatch Institute might provide a good partner for Caiman House and bring a regular and recurrent flow of guests. The economics of this approach should be carefully examined to ensure that they can provide a profitable business opportunity for Caiman House. Such an arrangement could possibly be offered only in the off-season, when more profitable tourist markets are not available. The facilities might also be offered to universities seeking a location for undergraduate or graduate students' fieldtrips and field studies.

***Craft:*** There are a number of excellent artisans and crafters in Yupukari and its satellite villages, who are cotton, ité, mocru and tibiriri weavers; and furniture makers. Interactive craft programmes, where visitors participate in basket making or other activities – from harvesting and processing of materials to making an item to take home – could become very popular, if pitched correctly. The development of a craft shop should be encouraged at Caiman House (or in the community), as a way to provide the opportunity for more people to benefit from tourism, by producing and selling craft items.

***Community outreach:*** The educational and social activities promoted by Caiman House are perfect for promoting volunteer-tourism. With its close proximity to the community, Caiman House should invest time to design social and cultural interpretation and activities, which facilitate interaction with and provides direct benefits to the community. Development in this area should be properly and completely discussed and agreed upon with the community, before being offered to the market.

***General eco-tourists:*** If all the activities above are well developed most of the attractions can be used for the general ecotourist. Caiman House should develop a detailed list of activities in order to prepare a four-to-five-day itinerary that provides unique experiences focused on the contact with people in the community, wildlife viewing and research interpretation on the river.

***Trails:*** Trails and interpretive activities, including a village trail should be developed to enhance the experience of tourists.

#### **4.3.4 Food Preparation and Sanitation**

Dogs and cats should not be allowed in the kitchen area. The terrazzo kitchen sink and storage area should be cleaned or replaced. There is need to improve the general kitchen area cleanliness.

#### **4.4 Surama**

Food service is one of the most important aspects of the lodging business. The Rupununi has wonderful cuisine which must be reflected in the food served in the lodges' restaurant. At Surama, the food was excellent and it was clear that the staff have been highly trained to provide good quality food services.

Surama is the Rupununi community which regularly hosts the most international visitors and the one with the most experience in sustainable tourism. While there is always the need in sustainable tourism to provide more training, the community is already working in an exemplary way and that can lead the other communities in a horizontal training process.

##### **4.4.1 Infrastructure**

The main building at the Surama Eco-lodge is good and does not need any changes. The four additional rooms currently under construction would solve some problems present in the cabins built earlier. However, there are still some opportunities for improvement in the construction process. The eight rooms that would now exist when the current construction project is completed is a good basis to continue to grow their tourism business.

***Easy modifications of existing bungalows:*** Each bungalow should be more open to views, light and ventilation. Add double width shuttered windows which must be at the same level as the existing windows next to the

bathroom door facing away from the dining room. Remove the top three wall boards to bring more light and air into the room.

**Furnishings:** Add furnishings using local materials and hand-crafted items, as far as practicable and remove existing closets with doors. Build in three or four levels of shelving on the wall behind the beds, with a bedside table approximately 38cm deep and others about 20cm deep. Build in a desk and suitcase rack under the windows and provide a chair at the desk. Also provide a hanging towel rack near sink, a clothes and towel drying rack/line in the window between beds, plain mirror framed with local material (bark, woven thatch and carved wood), two hammocks or comfortable chairs and a waste basket.

**Bathroom:** Install a slatted wooden grill on the shower floor (using rot resistant and non-slippery wood) and open the top half of the back bathroom wall using materials that provide a level of privacy/screening; and improved air movement and light.

**Room Décor:** Sand off paint from all walls and treat with clear varnish or furniture oil. Produce handicrafts in the village which could be used to decorate the rooms and for sale to visitors.

**Benab:** Sand woodwork on all walls and treat with clear varnish or furniture oil. Decorate with interesting natural materials from the forest, handmade items from the community and natural history items, such as bird nests, seed pods, flowers or fruits. A bunch of bananas can be hung to provide snacks.

**Longer-term modifications:** Disassemble and move the current bungalows away from the benab and from one another to create more views of the forest etc., and ensuring better privacy. The bathrooms could be rebuilt on ground level, as simple walled garden bathrooms which open to the sky (toilet and sink can be fitted under roof overhang).

#### **4.4.2 Location**

The lodge is ideally located in an open area on a grassy hillock, some distance from the village and very close to the forest. The area currently set aside for protection by the village should be extended to include an area around the lodge, since wildlife populations in the area are increasing. However, rules must be agreed upon before hunting or some other use jeopardises the sustainable tourism activities.

#### **4.4.3 Landscaping**

There is need to cultivate plants around bungalows that are local and from the forest and savannah. These plants such as heliconias and passiflora vines and orchids or bromeliads from fallen trees would attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

#### **4.4.4 Vehicles**

Create a parking area out of view of the visitors and separate pedestrian and vehicular traffic. All vehicles etc. should be kept in the parking area and not between the buildings.

#### **4.4.5 Interpretation**

The tourism product available at Surama can be further enhanced by developing interpretative activities around the following:

**River trips and canoeing on the Burro-Burro River:** Canoeing on the Burro-Burro can be the highlight of a visit to Surama. The river is a fantastic resource and is quite unlike the other rivers in the Rupununi. It has an abundant of resident giant otters which are obviously a great tourism resource. More research and product development should be done around the Burro-Burro River in order to facilitate longer trips with a mixture of boating and trail experiences.

**Fishing:** Piranha fishing is a popular activity for visitors to other parts of the Amazon region. Pools with an abundance of black piranhas are found near Caranha Landing, on the Burro Burro. This should give Surama the opportunity to develop an exciting 'catch a piranha' experience, for visitors.

**Wildlife viewing:** Surama has great potential for bird watchers because of the several bird species found there and the harpy eagle's nest and a Cock-of-the-Rock lek, among the other resources. There is also enormous potential for the general eco-tourist and nature enthusiasts and to enhance this, a more extensive trail network should be designed and constructed to provide good viewing of large trees, overlooks, forest canopies, other wildlife and other natural resources, inclusive of birds. This has great potential, especially because it is typically what the general ecotourist expect. There are healthy and growing wildlife populations in the area, but there is a need for better interpretative trails, which would increase the probability of seeing wildlife. Trails should be kept narrow and shaded within the forest, rather than on its edge.

**Hike up Surama Mountain:** The hike up Surama Mountain provides great potential for wildlife viewing, especially because it combines river boating and trail hiking.

**Cultural presentations and exchanges:** The village is close enough to the lodge to provide the opportunity for cultural interpretation/activities. This is especially a great potential, since the community has a functioning and vibrant culture group. Cultural presentations and exchanges should be designed and offered as half day activities. Interactive village tours, including community development projects could be highlights of the trip, but care must be taken to respect the privacy of the villagers. The richness of the cultural aspects of the Rupununi and of Surama in particular, is so special, that it can be one of the most important attractions of the region.

**Nocturnal wildlife spotting:** There is very likely to be good nocturnal wildlife spotting opportunities, given Surama's efforts to protect their wildlife. Surama is already considering interpretation based on this potential, indicating that they are well advanced in recognizing different natural resources and potential sustainable tourism attractions.

**Overnight at the Burro-Burro River Camp, in hammocks:** Another example of Surama's experience with ecotourists and understanding how resources can be developed into sustainable tourism attractions is their consideration of establishing facilities for overnighing at the Burro Burro River Camp. The idea is a good one, but if overnighing in hammocks is offered, they should be a tool for the access natural resources that would not be accessible otherwise. The general tourist is not often comfortable spending a night in a hammock; generally they may only relax or take a nap in a one.

**Historical experiences:** Surama has a fascinating history, providing lots of opportunities for historical interpretation. The village is located in a northern extension of the Rupununi Savannah, which was a part of the historic cattle trail from the Rupununi to Georgetown. United Kingdom naturalist Charles Waterton travelled this trail in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and wrote about the area in his book *Waterton's Wanderings in South America*.

## **4.5 Wowetta**

### **4.5.1 Infrastructure**

Infrastructure is not a problem for Wowetta since several other lodges are within close proximity to the village and can provide an accommodation base for the development of Wowetta's sustainable tourism activities. Hence, this community should not invest in lodge infrastructure, and so can concentrate on the other important aspects of tourism product development.

### **4.5.2 Location**

Wowetta's location is also ideal, with the Annai Airstrip and the Lethem - Georgetown road near the village. Easy access to the both savannahs and forest facilitates would allow the community to pay greater attention on product development around interpretive activities.

### **4.5.3 Interpretation**

Wowetta possess several unique resources, which if fully developed will make great sustainable tourism products. The major resources of the village are:

**Cock-of-the-Rock:** The largest known Cock-of-the-Rock lek in the Rupununi can be found in Wowetta's area and is a fantastic resource. The Guianian Cock-of-the-Rock is a spectacular bird and due to its unique behaviour,

an ideal bird to develop interpretation around, for the general ecotourist. The walking distance is perfect for a half day's activity for fit guests, or it can be developed into an exciting full day's activity, if a rich interpretive program is developed along the trail. There are a number of possibilities for the development of a range of the tourism activities along the forested trail, such as interpretations of the flora and fauna of the area and providing historical and contemporary information on the Makushi people and their traditional use of the forest. Tourists can visit the lek without negative impacts on the birds, if the visits are well managed, since cock-of-the-rock can coexist with people, once they do not pose a threat to them.

**Wildlife viewing:** Spider and brown capuchin monkeys were seen along the trail to the cock-of-the-rock lek. The trail was in good condition and presents numerous opportunities to develop other collateral activities (a place to sit and take lunch, a large tree, cave or other natural feature to interpret), which could be a full day's activity.

**Ethnobotanical:** Some village members possess excellent ethnobotanical knowledge with their consent and involvement, programmes should be created around natural resources, such as crabwood oil, information on Wowetta's manufacturing operation and traditional and contemporary uses of the oil, etc. A half day's activity could involve going into the forest to see crabwood trees and collect seeds; and 'hands-on' participation in the process of producing the oil, soap and other products from the collected seeds.

#### **4.5.4 Other Recommendations**

The range of habitats available in Wowetta, forest, savannah and wetlands, provide a great opportunity to develop interpretation activities. In order to develop the tourism product further it is recommended that the natural resources of the area be thoroughly inventoried and mapped.

The area surrounding the Cock-of-the-Rock lek must be legally protected as soon as possible and some research should be initiated on the Cock-of-the-Rock in order to establish more about their biology and behaviour. This information could be used to aid the sustainable management of this unique natural resource.

All lakes, streams or small rivers must also be visited to explore the possibility that they might be used as half day's activities to complement the cock-of-the-rock interpretation. Wowetta's sustainable tourism product could be best developed and marketed through networking with other sustainable tourism establishments in the Rupununi.

### **4.6 Annai**

Annai's most important eco-tourist attraction is undoubtedly culture, including unique traditional architecture, craft and cultural displays, in addition to the traditional culinary dishes. Annai can become the most important community to demonstrate the culture of the Rupununi to visitors. It has had plenty of opportunities to develop and define its product, without having to make a large investment in infrastructure.

#### **4.6.1 Infrastructure**

Annai has the benefit of its location being near transportation hubs and existing tourist accommodations, hence, there is no rational reason to develop a lodge in Annai. Annai can develop their interpretation activities and itineraries targeting guests at the lodges, in the vicinity of the village. The uniqueness of Annai also presents the opportunity for the village to host visitors, bed and breakfast style, in rooms residents can build adjacent to their homes, specifically for this purpose, provided the appropriate markets can be accessed.

#### **4.6.2 Location**

The community has the benefit of an airstrip and the Georgetown/Lethem road being nearby. Given this situation, Annai should invest more in tourism activities development, rather than building infrastructure. The community could offer two-to-three days of activities as packaged tourism products.

#### **4.6.3 Interpretation**

**Picturesque village tour:** The beauty of the regular layout of the village and the large number of houses utilising traditional architecture spread out along a ridge line, which gives a picturesque view of the surrounding savannahs and mountains in the distance, is extraordinary. A large thatched benab, reputedly the largest in

Guyana, is another manifestation of the traditional architecture that can become one of the main attractions in the Annai community. New forms and styles of buildings are also evident in the community and while this may continue, the community should consider establishing a core area for traditional construction in the village, to maintain the character of the traditional ways of building; and hence the tourism product. This has been successfully done in other parts of South America. Annai can be the perfect location for a Regional Cultural Centre, where various cultural presentations could be made. This could lead tourists across the region demanding that Annai is included in their Rupununi Itinerary. In addition to presentations, activities based on local culture, like horse-back riding and bullock cart rides could also be offered.

***Craft making and demonstrations:*** The potential for craft demonstrations and sales, goes along with cultural presentations. These are most successfully displayed and sold in an area that tourist are visiting because they enjoy cultural attractions, traditional architecture and cultural presentations. Other activities might include basket making and spinning and weaving cotton.

***Culture:*** Annai's benab and associated amenities (i.e., market stalls, sports ground), provide a key resource for cultural programs and activities. A programme for a cultural evening which includes activities, such as, dancing, singing, fire lighting, bow-and-arrow shooting; and traditional sports and games, could take place in the benab and offered to visitors.

## **4.7 Aranaputa**

### **4.7.1 Infrastructure**

Infrastructure is not a problem for Aranaputa, since the community has the benefit of its location being near to transportation hubs (the Airstrip and the Georgetown/Lethem Road) and existing tourist accommodations (Rock View Lodge). Therefore, there was no call to build/develop lodges but it would be beneficial to invest in tourism product/activities development since a cabin has already been built on Clarence Mountain. The community should try to improve on the cabin/lodge at Clarence Mountain, thus providing better accommodation facilities etc., which tourists can appreciate more. The use of local materials in the construction of lodges etc. should now be taken more seriously, and construction should be very simple.

### **4.7.2 Location**

Aranaputa's location is also ideal with the Annai Airstrip and the Lethem - Georgetown road near the village. Easy access to the both savannahs and forest facilitates would allow the community to pay greater attention on product development around interpretive activities.

### **4.7.3 Interpretation**

Aranaputa possess several unique resources which if fully developed will make great sustainable tourism products. The major resources of the village are:

***Clarence Mountain Nature Trail (490m – 6 hour round trip):*** Hiking up the Clarence Mountain trail and spending the night at the Nature Trail Guest Cabin at 300m, gives guests an incredible opportunity to see wildlife such as tapirs, jaguars, monkeys and macaws.

***Ethnobotanical:*** Some village members possess excellent ethnobotanical knowledge with their consent and involvement programmes should be created around natural resources, such as peanut butter production and information on the Women's Cooperative Peanut Butter Factory and manufacturing operation. A half day's activity could involve going into the farms to see how peanuts are cultivated and, perhaps harvested, and a 'hands-on' participation in the process of producing peanut butter.

***Cultural presentations and exchanges:*** This is especially a great potential, since the community has a functioning and vibrant culture group. Cultural presentations and exchanges should be designed and offered as half-day activities. Interactive village tours including community development projects could be highlights of the trip but care must be taken to respect the privacy of the villagers. The richness of the cultural aspects of the Rupununi and of Aranaputa, in particular, is so special that it can be one of the important attractions of the region.

#### **4.7.4 Other recommendations**

The range of habitats available in Aranaputa's forest, savannah and wetlands provide a great opportunity to develop interpretation activities. In order to develop the tourism product further, it is recommended that the natural resources of the area be thoroughly inventoried and mapped. The community should try, as far as practicable; to develop more interpretive trails and their cultural activities and product development and training (product interpretation) for sustainability must be given priority in the region.

### **4.8 Fair View**

#### **4.8.1 Infrastructure**

There was no call to build/develop lodges since the community has the benefit of its location being near to transportation hubs (the Airstrip and the Georgetown/Lethem Road) and existing tourist accommodations (Iwokrama International Centre). It would make more sense to invest in tourism product/activities development.

#### **4.8.2 Location**

Fair View's location is also ideal with its Airstrip and the Lethem/Georgetown road near the village. Easy access to the both savannahs and forest facilitates would allow the community to pay greater attention to product development around interpretive activities.

#### **4.8.3 Interpretation**

Fair View also possesses several unique resources, which if fully developed will make great sustainable tourism products. The major resources of the village are:

**Wildlife viewing:** Fair View has great potential for birders because of the number of bird species found there. An abundance of macaws, particularly the blue and yellow ones are ever-present, feeding on the fruits of the ite, kokerite, acquero and awarara palms and other resources. There is also enormous potential for the general ecotourist and nature enthusiasts and to enhance this, a more extensive trail network should be designed and constructed to provide good viewing of large trees, overlooks, forest canopies, other wildlife and other natural resources, inclusive of birds. This has great potential, especially because it is typically what the general ecotourist expect. There are healthy and growing wildlife populations in the area but there is a need for more good interpretative trails which would increase the probability of seeing wildlife. Trails should be kept narrow and shaded within the forest rather than on its edge. They should also try to establish the "range" of the jaguars that are seen so often and develop "Jaguar Hides".

**Village tours:** Fair View is an attractive village and ideal for developing village tours. In developing village tours however, care must be taken to ensure the involvement and consent of the village in planning and the respect of the privacy and wishes of the villagers must be taken into consideration. As part of the village tours, visits could be made to the ancient rock carvings (petroglyphs) found in the Essequibo River most of which have legends attached to them. The Butterfly Project can also be of significant interest to the tourists.

### **4.9 Kumu**

In order for Kumu's product to become prepared for the international market, three aspects must be addressed. In the first instance, the completion of the construction of the lodge must be done with competent advice on tourism infrastructure design and planning. Secondly, Kumu must develop tourism interpretation and activities and finally, it is imperative that they develop the capacity and structures within the community, to competently and equitably improve and manage the tourism business.

#### **4.9.1 Infrastructure**

While the location of Kumu's lodge is good, the shape and size of the accommodations will make even the placement of two twin beds difficult. The door frames are too low, windows too small and the veranda is too tiny to serve any useful purposes. It is strongly suggested therefore, that expert advice be sought, before any further tourism infrastructure is planned or built. Any additional rooms built would need to be redesigned and enlarged from the existing rooms. The existing rooms should be improved with added bathrooms and outdoor showers.



The existing porches could be removed to enlarge the rooms and include bigger windows and higher door jams. A separate lounge and hammock area should be made since the rooms are too small. The bridges in the areas to be used by tourists, especially at the falls need to be reconstructed for safety and some infrastructure to cater for picnicking and control and safety of visitors should be established.

#### **4.9.2 Interpretation**

Besides Kumu Falls, the community also has resources that can provide opportunities for wild life viewing of Cock-of-the-Rock, bat caves, monkeys, jabaru storks' nests, macaws and armadillos. In addition there are sites, such as, Shamba Creek, mountain hikes (including Schomburgk's Peak). However, because of the proximity to Lethem and heavy vehicular traffic, the possibility of seeing fauna in Kumu is relatively low.

A combination of nature and cultural interpretation for a general market of day visitors from Lethem seems to be a course for the community to follow, especially in the near term.

#### **4.9.3 Tourism Management**

It is critical to address the community structures and capacity in respect to tourism management. Strict measures must be put in place to address issues such as, the collection and control of entrance fees, the use of local guides, transparent record keeping, and transparency in decision making; and benefits distribution, in order to create a community enterprise where the larger community has the opportunity to participate in and sees the benefits of tourism. This is especially important in the near term to address issues of the management of Kumu Falls and its visitors.

#### **4.10 Rupunau**

This community has not yet made any investments in the establishment of a tourism enterprise in the community. However, there is a great deal of interest and enthusiasm expressed by one young man from the community, Paul St. Hill, who was recently trained as a tour guide. St Hill has identified potential tourism resources, including a large number of caves that are apparently frequented by jaguars, a lake with turtles, river sand banks, where giant river turtles nest, Rupunau Mountain, the Red Siskin and petroglyphs and local crafts, including baskets and woodworks.

Given the limited resources for intervention, it is recommended that the expectations of the village not be raised in terms of the potential for tourism development in the near term, as other communities have more immediate possibilities, similar to the potentials of Rupunau. There is however, the possibility for focus on the formalisation of relationships with the Dadanawa Ranch around the Red Siskin. The village should also focus its attention on compiling a complete mapped inventory of potential tourism resources.

The trained tour guides in the region should spend time working at the more advanced tourism facilities such as Iwokrama to develop further an appreciation for the efforts needed for the development of tourism in their community.

## Section 5

# MARKETING RUPUNUNI TOURISM

Marketing is the management function which organises and directs all those business activities involved in assessing customer needs and converting customer purchasing power into effective demand for a specific product or service; and in moving that product or service to the final consumer or use in order to achieve the profit target or other objective set by the company or other organisation.

This section outlines the recommended marketing strategy for the Rupununi region. The present tourism situation is outlined and then recommendations for complementary actions that are needed to support the successful implementation of the plan are provided. The marketing strategy follows, including marketing mix, implementation activities and timelines. Finally, recommendations are laid out for implementing the strategy through partnerships, alliances and other linkages with organizations already involved in tourism development in Guyana and others at the local, regional and international levels.

### 5.1 Marketing Strategy Assumptions

#### 5.1.1 Objectives and Goals

The overall objective of the marketing strategy is to promote small-scale, family & community-owned sustainable tourism development, to help enhance and diversify the economy of the Rupununi, uphold local communities, protect biodiversity, and preserve local culture. The specific goals are:

- **Tourism Numbers:** Increase tourism numbers overall, but carefully manage growth to improve visitor flows throughout the Rupununi and throughout the year.
- **Length of Stay:** Increase average length of stay of visitors by expanding and improving the range and quality of experiences available to visitors and providing visitor information services.
- **Tourism Revenues:** Increase tourism revenues overall by improving visitor flows and extending tourism seasons; and by increasing average length of stay and daily spending of visitors.
- **Employment:** Increase direct and indirect employment in the tourism industry.
- **E-marketing:** Establish a solid and engaging presence on the internet and take effective e-marketing actions to respond to overall tourism trends and to take advantage of new sustainable tourism channels. Establish a system for facilitating online inquiries and bookings which will help to encourage more direct booking by consumers.
- **Product:** Diversify tourism products to offer a wider range of authentic, unique, hands-on experiences that can only be experienced in the Rupununi and improve quality of existing products.
- **Seasonality:** Extend the tourism season by creating green season products and pricing.
- **Special Interest Markets:** Realise growth of special markets including birding, fishing, ecotourism, adventure and "voluntourism".
- **Cooperation:** Better cooperation among Rupununi tourism partners in product development and marketing initiatives
- **Implementation:** Implement the tourism strategy through joint efforts with tourism and other strategic partners.

#### 5.1.2 Special Interest Markets

Focussing on key niche or special interest markets provides the best growth opportunities for the Rupununi. Niche markets that have the most potential for the Rupununi are outlined below. Most of these are priority markets for GTA and GSTI, aligning the Rupununi strategy with broader tourism strategies.

**Ecotourism and Wildlife Watching:** This includes travellers who visit unspoiled places to experience and enjoy nature and watch wildlife in their natural habitats. This market is an excellent product-market match for the Rupununi, with selling points including: the unique experience of visiting one of the last four intact major rainforest wildernesses in the World; opportunities to see parrots and other Neotropical birds; highly sought wildlife species such as black caiman, giant river otter, giant anteater, giant armadillo, giant river turtle, jaguar and anaconda; and the unique giant Amazon water lily and other flora. This market is much larger and less demanding than the bird watching market, but it is also very competitive. Product development is needed to

improve existing products and develop exciting new ones that meet the calibre found in other countries and ensure visitor satisfaction, especially for wildlife viewing programs.

**Adventure:** The boundaries between ecotourism and adventure tourism are becoming fuzzier over time. Traditionally, adventure tourism has featured activities that require significant physical effort and some degree of physical risk such as kayaking, trekking, bungee jumping, mountain biking, rafting; zip-lining and rock climbing. But today, the definition has expanded to embrace indigenous eco-cultural tourism pursuits that provide an inherently meaningful human experience, related directly to the outdoor setting in which they take place. For Guyana, the ‘soft’ adventure market -- which tends to comprise boomers and seniors, who are into such activities as hiking, birding and mountain biking, but are also seeking a cultural and educational experience -- holds the most promise.

**Eco-Indigenous:** Interest and participation in activities involving indigenous lands, traditions, culture and arts is growing. Meeting and interacting with the indigenous peoples of the Rupununi and learning about their special historic and contemporary connection to the land and waters and their knowledge about the natural world, is highly appealing to the eco-indigenous tourist.

**Bird Watching:** Travellers who place an emphasis on seeing, hearing and learning about birds on their trip. The Rupununi has over six hundred (600) species of birds and is a paradise for bird watchers. Through the Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative, excellent strides have been made in developing this niche market and the momentum should be extended through Rupununi tourism marketing efforts.

In addition to the above priority markets, initial research indicates that the following special interest niche markets are excellent product-market matches for the Rupununi. However, additional research and product testing are required to fully assess the potential of these niches.

**Fishing:** Wilderness camping/fishing trips have long been offered by several Rupununi tourism businesses which, in recent years, have been attracting more visitors. Reconnaissance activities recently carried out by Robert Arrington, host of the US-based cable television shows *Reel Adventures* and *Respect Outdoors*, indicate that Guyana has the potential to establish a strong lodge-based catch-and-release industry. Mr. Arrington and the communities of Surama and Rewa are interested in exploring partnerships and many other communities could become involved. The top species of interest to sport fishers include biara, arapaima, peacock bass/lukanani and black and red-bellied pirana.

**Equestrian Vacations:** allow travellers to practice their horseback riding skills, while enjoying the great outdoors, and to interact with different cultures and peoples. The trips are usually made up of small groups who visit ‘off the beaten track’ places. With its ranching and riding traditions and horse-friendly terrain, the Rupununi region has the assets this market requires.

**Volunteer Conservation:** This is also called humanitarian tourism or participatory tourism; and is the idea of ‘vacationing with a purpose’. Considered a sub-set of the larger volunteering market, volunteer tourism is predicted to be a leading niche tourism market, within a matter of years. A recent survey of volunteer travel operators reported that sixty one percent (61%) of them predict that their 2009 sales will exceed those of 2008<sup>17</sup>. As discussed above, the Rupununi has the foundation in place to create a range of appealing scientific research and education programmes to attract this market. However, the down side is that many of the volunteer tourism companies market to the student gap year and retiree segments and are seeking low cost programs.

**Overland Expeditions:** Using expedition vehicles and often camping, overland expeditions typically travel in circular routes. They have long been popular for exploring other parts of South America; Boa Vista is on the circuit. With the opening of the Takatu River Bridge, the Rupununi is afforded access to this market. The expeditions are popular with younger travellers who love the outdoors, are reasonably fit and active and are more willing to rough it.

Of the eight niche markets mentioned above, the tourism existing accommodation, services and experiences available in the Rupununi appear to be sufficient to meet the basic needs and preferences. However, the fishing market, particularly the U.S. market, seems to demand a higher level of comfort and amenities.

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<sup>17</sup> “State of the Volunteer Tourism Industry 2009”, Lasso Communications, 2009.

<http://lassocommunications.com/pdf/State%20of%20the%20Volunteer%20Travel%20Industry%202009.pdf>.

### 5.1.3 Product Development

Historically, destinations were marketed as a series of “products” or commodities (e.g., hotel rooms, picturesque views, sightseeing, shopping) but today’s special interest traveller focuses on the overall travel “experience”, on why they should choose a destination and not just where they should go. The Rupununi already has a good base of excellent birding, nature and culture tourism experiences, but to attract the special interest traveller segments listed above, work must be done to polish existing experiences and create dynamic new ones that deliver a unique sense of place and make travellers feel the true essence of Guyana.

The goal would be to develop thematic experiences that target the special interest markets, give travellers a sense of surprise and discovery, teach them something new, and make them active participants. The experiences must be carefully shaped to create a cultural experience with a touch of adventure that can only take place in the Rupununi, while meeting the desires and preferences of each specific special interest market segment. Always focussing on sustainable tourism, the experiences should weave together opportunities to discover the true Rupununi, learn about the region and meet and interact with local people.

Guyana’s varied and excellent cuisine should be featured in all of the thematic experiences. Itineraries should feature opportunities for visitors to sample traditional and contemporary local produce, foods and beverages and make food a memorable part of Rupununi tours. Multi-day packages should also be developed and marketed for annual events, including the Rupununi Expo, Lethem Rodeo, Amerindian Heritage Days and Pakaraima Mountain Safari.

An important facet of product development is for lodge operators to move towards marketing their lodges as destinations. Currently, almost 27% of visitors stay at lodges only one night and 27% two nights. The development of attractive multi-day packages should increase average visitor stays to three or four nights. This would result in more benefits for lodge owners. Also, by lowering transportation requirements and costs, lower priced packages could be offered to the markets, which would help address Guyana’s price competitiveness issues.

Developing themed special interest experiences that meet these criteria will no doubt attract strong attention from the marketplace and boost Rupununi visitor numbers. The agri- and community tourism linkages created by these experiences encourage growth in agriculture, fishing and arts and crafts production. Further, visitors will travel off the beaten path and pay premiums prices for unique one-of-a-kind experiences, improving visitor flows throughout the region and increasing tourism revenues overall.

### 5.1.4 Target Origin Markets

The UK ranks second among Europe's leading outbound travel markets with 65 million outbound trips in 2008.<sup>18</sup> Awareness of Guyana has increased greatly in the UK, following the BBC’s *Lost Land of the Jaguar* three-part TV series and many newspaper and magazine articles in the last two to three years. Marketing efforts should continue to be focussed on this most important origin market for most Rupununi tourism businesses.

However, much more attention should be placed on other tourism markets, particularly given that the UK economy is being hardest hit by the global economic downturn and since the pound has drifted severely downward in buying power. In addition, increases in Air Passenger Duties (APD) by the UK Government, planned for November this year and November, 2010, are expected to have a detrimental impact on demand for long-haul holiday destinations. By 2010, the APD for flights to the Caribbean will increase from £40 to £75 and for South America flights from £40 to £85.<sup>19</sup>

More efforts should be placed on marketing to the German and U.S. markets, which are the World’s first and third ranked outbound travel markets. Germany had 76 million outbound trips in 2008,<sup>20</sup> while the U.S. generated 64 million outbound trips in 2007.<sup>21</sup> These high levels of outbound trips, together with the high propensity of German and American travellers, who seek out ecotourism and adventure tourism destinations, would certainly make a perfect product-market match for the Rupununi.

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<sup>18</sup> ITB World Travel Trends Report, March 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Budget 2009: how changes to Air Passenger Duty will affect passengers, Telegraph, April 24, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> ITB World Travel Trends Report, March 2009.

<sup>21</sup> 2007, United States Resident Travel Abroad; U.S. Department of Commerce; Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, 2008.

### 5.1.5 Target Audiences

Within the key origin markets, the two main audiences for the marketing strategy are consumers, who are the end-buyers, and ‘influencers’, who help to package tourism products and/or promote and create awareness among consumers of Guyana and the tourism products the country has to offer. Influencers include inbound tour operators, in-market tour operators and media.

**Independent Travellers:** The independent traveller located in another country may purchase their travel arrangements through an intermediary, a travel agent or tour operator, or they may book direct with lodges and tour operators in Guyana. To reach these travellers and create within them the desire to travel to Guyana, actions must be taken to raise awareness of the Rupununi and Guyana as a whole; and the unique experiences available. The actions outlined in the strategy aim to ensure that this occurs at every ‘touch point’ that the traveller may encounter, in their vacation planning and selection process, and include:

- Articles and images in travel, sustainability-focussed and other magazines and e-magazines.
- Information, editorials and images in travel guides and on television.
- E-marketing, including a Rupununi tourism website, e-newsletter, and supplier links, articles, images and videos in online travel guides and directories.
- Appealing packages and evocative Rupununi images in tour operator brochures and websites.

**Tour Operators/Travel Trade:** Two categories of tour operators are invaluable marketing and sales channels for Rupununi tourism experiences, especially for long haul international travellers:

- Guyana in-bound tour operators who, the survey results show, are currently the most important sales channel for Rupununi tourism experiences.
- In-market tour operators who are located within target origin markets and fit within Guyana’s targeted special interest travel niches.

A tour operator-oriented marketing strategy assists the Rupununi tourism sector to develop more quickly and results in more effective and efficient use of marketing resources. It does so by providing the following qualities:

**Product on the Shelf’ suited to Market:** Tour operators understand their clients and often focus on developing products for special niches such as bird watching, ecotourism or indigenous tourism. They often provide transportation from the point of origin to Guyana and arrange all facets of the trip. Their services ensure that vacation packages that meet the duration, accommodation and activity selection preferences of the intended markets are available. In addition, international tour operators operate within the time zone, language and currency of the traveller. All of these points make it easier for travellers to book a worry-free vacation, especially if it is to a destination they have not visited before.

**Quality Assurance:** Most international tour operators will only sell market ready products, ensuring that travellers are purchasing ‘pre-qualified’ products that meet the quality assurance level needed to ensure customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth. In addition, many tour operators play an active role in helping to raise quality standards of the tourism products they sell, helping to ensure that a strong, credible Rupununi tourism sector develops.

**Awareness Building and Marketing:** Tour operators use a range of marketing initiatives to sell their packages, including creating print materials, websites and e-marketing, attending marketplaces and purchasing advertising. They will also translate materials into foreign languages, make presentations to consumers and undertake cooperative marketing initiatives. These activities are complementary to the actions undertaken by Rupununi tourism partners, stretching the tourism marketing dollars of the Rupununi partners and ensuring that the region and Guyana are strongly promoted in key international origin markets.

**Consumer Protection Laws:** In most international markets, travellers are protected by these laws when booking their vacation through an in-market tour operator. If anything goes wrong with their vacation, the traveller will often receive financial compensation. This protection provides incentive for consumers to book their vacations through a trusted tour operator in their country.

**New Customers:** International tour operators typically have built trust relationships with their clients. The introduction by trusted tour operators increases the odds that travellers will purchase a trip to a new and unknown destinations such as the Rupununi.

**Groups:** Many of these tour operators bring groups of visitors, who foster the development of better and more cost competitive tour packages. Further, groups create higher demand for guides and help in improving occupancy rates for accommodation providers.

**New Product Development:** Tour operators typically develop packages based on consumer market trends and interests. Tour operators are an excellent sounding board for product development and expansion by helping to determine saleable products, acceptable pricing points, new product interests and emerging market needs. They are also especially invaluable partners for introducing new products into the marketplace.

**Niche Market Products:** Many tour operators focus on a special interest and have built trust relationships within niche travel markets that are not readily or easily accessible without the right connections. Tour operators also play an important role in developing products to meet the needs of the niches they target, helping to ensure that exciting new Rupununi tourism products are developed.

**Experiential Products:** Packages featuring learning, interpretation, hands-on and behind the scenes experiences, are hot tourism trends. International tour operators will bring experience from other countries in developing such products and bringing together multiple experiences within a single itinerary, helping the Rupununi businesses to develop exciting experiential tourism products.

A good way for the Rupununi to connect with international tour operators is through collaborative partnerships with the Guyana Tourism Authority – United States Agency for International Development (GTA-USAID), Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative, which places strong emphasis on travel trade development; and with inbound tour operators, such as Wilderness Explorers, Torong Tours and Evergreen Adventures. These companies usually package Guyana programmes and market to in-market tour operators, as well as, groups and independent travellers. They provide a vital link to the special interest markets. GTA and THAG can help to make connections with regional (Caribbean) operators.

#### **5.1.6 Media**

A media relations plan is an essential activity in any tourism marketing plan. Typically, travellers are more influenced by ‘third-party’ articles and editorial coverage, which are considered more credible than advertising. One good article in the right travel publication or one Television (TV) show on the right channel can attract the attention of millions of travellers, as is clearly illustrated by the example of the BBC’s three-part series *Lost Land of the Jaguar*. Consequently, journalists, photojournalists and other media producers are important tourism marketing partners for the Rupununi.

Ideally, the Guyana Tourism Authority would engage a public relations agency in each of the key origin markets (i.e., UK and U.S./Canada) to assist with developing and implementing a media relations strategy, while Rupununi tourist partners would provide story ideas, images and other materials and work with GTA and the PR agency to undertake media actions aimed at creating awareness of and demand for Guyana tourism products. Given that GTA does not have any plan to engage a PR agency at this time, the media marketing strategy for the Rupununi identifies actions that can be undertaken by Rupununi tourism partners on their own and through collaborative actions with other tourism partners.

#### **5.1.7 Partners and Other Influencers**

The marketing plan also considers Rupununi tourism partners such as the Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative, Conservation International Guyana and World Wild Life Fund for Nature (WWF), as well as other influencers such as international birding, nature and other organizations. They can help in raising interest and influencing their constituent groups (e.g., members, supporters), to consider a trip to Guyana and the Rupununi. Examples of these organisations include British Bird Watching Fair, American Birding Association, Adventure Travel Trade Association, Ecoclub.com and the Educational Travel Community and Rainforest Alliance.

The plan also includes community awareness elements aimed at the Rupununi communities in general.



### 5.1.8 Branding

Building a strong Rupununi destination brand that speaks to the hearts and minds of travellers and builds an emotional connection is an investment that will bring many positive returns. An international brand specialist with extensive experience in branding of green destinations should be engaged to lead the process, which will include community, travel trade and partner consultation; and other research and analysis. The brand essence would encompass the vision, mission and values which convey why the Rupununi is engaged in tourism and what the Rupununi style of tourism is all about. The brand elements would spell out or 'speak' about the essence of the brand, its personality, look and voice. The key elements and their roles in creating the brand would include:

- **Logo:** The cornerstone of the brand identity. It reflects the Rupununi's unique character.
- **Tagline:** The tagline and other related phrasing express the Rupununi's attributes and deliver a memorable message about what the Rupununi is about, in order to differentiate the region and create a sense of a distinctive place in the minds of visitors and potential customers.
- **Graphics:** Comprise a colour palette that is inspired by the colors of the Rupununi, and typo graphics that set a captivating communication tone.
- **Photography:** Reflects and brings to life the spirit of the Rupununi and brand.

A key outcome of the branding strategy will be to identify the 'Unique Selling Propositions' (USP's), or the distinctive characteristics that make the Rupununi special. Effective USPs support the brand by highlighting Guyana's strengths and opportunities, differentiating the Rupununi from global competitors and speaking to the international target audiences' needs and wants. As a starting point, the following are suggested as USPs for the Rupununi:

- Verdant untouched rainforests and expansive seasonal wetlands.
- Ecotourism and active adventure in living nature.
- Fresh, delicious foods and exotic flavours.
- Warm personal connections with Guyanese people.
- Personal journeys amidst natural and cultural wonders.

### 5.2 Marketing Mix and Timeline

The timeline for the marketing strategy is five years split into two phases: years 1-2, which is short term and years 3-5 the medium-long term. It is assumed that the strategy will be implemented by RCTA; in close collaboration with the marketing initiatives and activities of key partners and that the Rupununi suppliers will participate in the implementation process. Given that the RCTA does not have a budget available to implement the strategy, the proposed marketing mix generally reflects recommended activities, rather than what might actually be possible to implement.

The strategy has a strong focus on special interest tourism marketing and developing strong relationships with the niche travel trade. As discussed above, a tour operator-oriented strategy will help the Rupununi tourism sector develop more quickly and make more effective and efficient use of marketing resources.

The strategy also places considerable emphasis on using the internet to market Rupununi tourism. Websites and e-marketing have become critical for all tourism destinations and there are many ways to effectively and inexpensively market Guyana online. Among these tactics are online travel guides or directories which have become one of the most important resources for tourists.

Printed travel guide books are another key resource for tourists; making them important for marketing the Rupununi. The writers who author the guide books receive compensation through royalties from book sales. Typically, the only cost to the destination is the provision of in-kind contributions by tourism businesses of accommodation, meals and tours, while the authors are doing research. Therefore, this is an effective and inexpensive form of marketing. The Bradt destination guide for Guyana, released in February 2008, has already had an important impact, raising awareness of Guyana and generating inquiries and bookings for tourism businesses. As interest in eco-tourism and sustainable tourism has grown, many specialised guide books have emerged. Some are published annually, such as Lonely Planet's *Code Blue* and others are updated every few years. The strategy recommends that Rupununi tourism partners contact the authors and publishers of such books to ensure that Rupununi tourism information is included in new editions. In addition, efforts to include Rupununi tourism in 'top 10' and 'best of' lists are recommended as another excellent way to promote the region.

Attracting TV and cable channels, documentary production houses as well as film makers, photographers and photo journalists to Guyana to make inspiring, informative, travel, conservation and sustainability-focused programmes, videos, documentaries and other factual programmes, is another tactic for promoting Guyana. Although film and documentary makers are often looking for sponsorship, they are also good at finding sponsors for the right projects and Guyana has many exciting stories to tell.

Sustainable tourism awards are included in the strategy as another tactic that requires time but no cash investment and provides excellent returns, illustrated when Surama was named the 2009 Responsible Tourism Showcase Honouree by the US based Responsible Travel Community. The press release about the award has been picked up by numerous media outlets in Guyana, the US and around the world. Other benefits to Surama include a cash award and creating pride and motivation to improve the tourism business, even more within the entire Surama community.

The above tactics are considered among the most important because they generally require time but little cash investment, making it possible for the RCTA to implement them with little budget. Other marketing tactics include media relations, print materials, data collection and a website. Product development and packaging recommendations also are included. The tactics are summarised by categories, key activities and timeline in the chart below:

Table 9: Marketing mix and timeline

Category	Item/Activity	Short Term: Yrs 1-2	Long Term: Yrs 3-5
Marketing resources/ collateral	Resource materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photo collection</li> <li>• Video collection</li> <li>• Supplier brochure collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand photo, video and brochure collections</li> </ul>
	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact databases – media, tour operators, consumers, partners, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand and improve contact databases</li> </ul>
	Multimedia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photo and video library</li> <li>• Gallery and CD of downloadable images for marketing partners</li> <li>• Video clips suitable for internet</li> <li>• Guyana travel video/DVD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand photo and video library</li> <li>• Update gallery and CD of downloadable images</li> <li>• Update and refresh travel video/ DVD</li> </ul>
	Collateral/ printed materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rupununi tourism experiences guide</li> <li>• Rupununi tourism brochure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rupununi experiences guide, update and reprint</li> <li>• Rupununi tourism brochure, update and reprint</li> </ul>
Advertising and promotions	Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rupununi tourism experiences website</li> <li>• Rupununi pages for GTA and THAG sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Rupununi tourism site and Rupununi pages</li> <li>• Pursue awards for website (e.g. content, design)</li> </ul>
	E-marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rupununi E-newsletter</li> <li>• Search engine marketing strategy</li> <li>• E-content resources – destination and tourism business information, photos, video clips, etc.</li> <li>• Third-party websites strategy – travel guide, directory, social</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-newsletter</li> <li>• Search engine marketing campaign</li> <li>• Expand and update e-content databases</li> <li>• Updated third-party websites strategy</li> <li>• Social marketing strategy</li> </ul>

Category	Item/Activity	Short Term: Yrs 1-2	Long Term: Yrs 3-5
		networking sites, etc. • Social marketing strategy	
	Signage	• Install signs promoting Rupununi tourism at gateway airports and Takutu River bridge	• Maintain and improve signage at airports
	Travel guides and best of lists	• Inclusion in destination travel guides • Inclusion in 'best of' travel guides and lists	• Inclusion in destination travel guides • Inclusion in 'best of' travel guides and lists
	Awards	• Applications to tourism, environmental and sustainable development competitions	• Applications to competitions
	Visitor/ resident information	• RCTA information at local and Georgetown partners • RCTA booth/table at local events • Weekly tourism feature on Radio Paiwomak	• RCTA information centres at Lethem and Annai • RCTA booth/table at local events • Weekly tourism feature on Radio Paiwomak
	Word of mouth	• Generate positive word of mouth by facilitating customer referrals and reviews	• Generate positive word of mouth by facilitating customer referrals and reviews
Industry/ Partner/PR	Rupununi industry communication and education	• Tourism awareness programmess for communities • RCTA AGM and awards • RCTA E-newsletter • Industry development initiatives for Rupununi suppliers	• Tourism awareness programmess for communities • RCTA AGM and awards • RCTA E-newsletter • Online resource centre • Walk-in resource centres • Industry development initiatives
	Tourism industry and partner communication and education	• International and inbound tour operator communications plan • Partner communications plan • Info sessions for partners on Blueprint Strategy and Marketing Plan • Product awareness presentations to GTA, THAG and inbound tour operators • Rupununi tourism e-newsletter	• International and inbound tour operator communications plan • Partner communications plan • Product awareness presentations to GTA, THAG and inbound tour operators • Rupununi tourism e-newsletter
	Travel marketplaces & tradeshow	• RCTA promotion at domestic, regional and	• RCTA promotion at domestic, regional and

Category	Item/Activity	Short Term: Yrs 1-2	Long Term: Yrs 3-5
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>international shows</li> <li>Ideally, RCTA delegate to key marketplaces and shows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>international shows</li> <li>Ideally, RCTA delegate to key marketplaces and shows</li> </ul>
	Fam trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fam trips for international operators</li> <li>Fam trips for inbound tour operators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fam trips for international operators</li> <li>Fam trips for inbound tour operators</li> </ul>
Media Relations	Media relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Story ideas</li> <li>Editorials and articles</li> <li>TV shows, documentaries, etc.</li> <li>Media fam tours</li> <li>Press release preparation and distribution</li> <li>Media kit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Story ideas</li> <li>Editorials and articles</li> <li>TV shows, documentaries, etc.</li> <li>Media fam tours</li> <li>Press release preparation and distribution</li> <li>Media kit</li> </ul>
Product Development	Product development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced and new tourism products; products for special interest markets</li> <li>Short stay packages</li> <li>Market ready standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing product development</li> <li>Ongoing standards and service improvement</li> </ul>
Branding	Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rupununi brand strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build awareness and recognition of Rupununi brand</li> </ul>

### 5.3 Marketing Implementation Sections

This section provides suggested implementation actions for marketing the Rupununi region to independent travellers, travel trade/tour operators and the media. Implementation also aims at informing and involving collaborative partners that support the development of tourism in the Rupununi and includes elements to build awareness of tourism within the Rupununi community. The recommended marketing, sales, development and networking activities targeting each of these audiences is outlined in Table 10. The focus is on the short term but medium-long term actions are included.

As with the marketing mix and timeline, the proposed implementation plan reflects recommended tactics that were selected according to their importance and cost effectiveness. In selecting and prioritizing the tactics, the following were key considerations:

- Ability of RCTA to implement without paid staff – implementation through joint, unpaid efforts of Rupununi tourism businesses and, for North Rupununi, efforts of North Rupununi District Development Board coordinator.
- Possibility of implementing through joint efforts with Rupununi marketing partners (e.g., GTA, THAG, GSTI and inbound tour operators).
- Potential for obtaining funding to implement each of the tactics.

Table 10: Marketing implementation actions for Rupununi tourism.

Action	Independent Travellers	Tour Operators	Media	Collaborative Partners	Tourism businesses & communities	Short Term Priority Rating	Med/Long Term Priority Ranking
<b>1 Collateral/Marketing Materials</b>							
<b>1.1 Resource Collection</b>							
<b>Supplier resource collection</b> – Contact market-ready Rupununi businesses to obtain copies of their brochures, product and experience descriptions, itineraries, images for print, video clips and contact info, including website links. Important to obtain high resolution versions of images for printed marketing materials.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Annually
<b>Partner resource collection</b> – Contact other Rupununi partners (e.g., CI-GUYANA, WWF, Project Fauna, Reel Adventures, Birding Adventures, BBC) to obtain copies of images and video clips suitable for marketing Rupununi tourism. Important to obtain high resolution versions of images for printed marketing materials	X	X	X	X	X	High	Annually
<b>1.2 Multimedia</b>							
<b>Photo shoot</b> – Photo shoot of Rupununi tourism products and experiences. Images should feature accommodations, wildlife, birds, scenery, attractions, people, culture, performing and visual arts, handicrafts and food. Develop instructions on the use and restrictions of these photographs to include with online, CD and other distribution.		X	X	X		High	
<b>Photo and video library</b> – After resources collected from suppliers, select and catalogue high quality photos and video suitable for use in Rupununi marketing initiatives. Collect photos and videos on on-going basis and update library annually.		X	X	X		High	On-going
<b>Image selection process</b> – After resources collected from suppliers, select best images for Rupununi marketing. Develop instructions on the use and restrictions of using these photographs, to include when distributed online, on CD and other.		X	X	X		High	On-going
<b>Images gallery and CD</b> – Produce online gallery and CD copies of high resolution images selected from photo library for use by Rupununi tourism businesses and partners in their promotional and marketing efforts.		X	X	X		High	On-going

Action	Independent Travellers	Tour Operators	Media	Collaborative Partners	Tourism businesses & communities	Short Term Priority Rating	Med/Long Term Priority Ranking
<b>CD / VIDEO / DVD</b> – Utilizing image and video bank, develop short (5 min) CD/Video/DVD promoting various aspects of the Rupununi which can be used as a selling tool by inbound tour operators, special interest tour operators, GTA, THAG and other partners. Also can be used as a streaming video on the Rupununi, GTA, GSTI, THAG and other websites.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Ideally, Create new versions
<b>1.3 Print Materials</b>							
<b>Rupununi tourism experiences guide</b> – Produce publication that showcase each of the market-ready tourism businesses with images, product and service descriptions, and the member's website URL, email and phone contacts. Sample regional touring itineraries also will be included, along with a map that shows the touring itinerary routes and where each business can be found. The guide will contain eco-tourism, cultural, birding and wildlife watching-specific information including best places to see key species and trail maps at lodges. It would help to encourage development of the fully independent traveler (FIT) market and be distributed selectively to tour operators, media, consumers, GTA, THAG and other partners. The guide would also be updated and reproduced every three-to-five years, and complemented by an online version.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Ideally, update and reprint every 3 years
<b>Rupununi tourism brochure</b> – Produce 'lure' brochure featuring beautiful images and highlighting the inspiring places and experiences of the Rupununi as a destination. This brochure would be distributed widely to tour operators, media, consumers, GTA, THAG and other partners. It would be distributed to tour operators, Rupununi tourism and other businesses, Georgetown hotels and other businesses, and handed out at tradeshow. Ideally, it would also be updated and reprinted annually or bi-annually.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Ideally, update and reprint every 2 years



Action	Independent Travellers	Tour Operators	Media	Collaborative Partners	Tourism businesses & communities	Short Term Priority Rating	Med/Long Term Priority Ranking
<b>2 Advertising and promotions</b>							
<b>2.1 Websites</b>							
<b>Rupununi tourism website</b> – Design and develop an attractive, easy to use website that showcases the Rupununi and the market-ready tourism businesses with beautiful images, nature, birding and cultural tourism product information, and a map. Includes information on accommodation, experiences, sample itineraries, images and videos. Includes sections allocated to information specific to tour operators and media. Printed marketing materials, e-marketing, advertising, sales and media relations activities refer tour operators and consumers to this website. Update on ongoing basis.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Update ongoing basis
<b>Rupununi website pages</b> – Work with GTA, GSTI and THAG to create a Rupununi section on their each of their websites with links to Rupununi tourism websites.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Update ongoing basis
<b>2.2 E-marketing</b>							
<b>Rupununi e-newsletter</b> – Prepare and distribute newsletter to tour operators, independent travellers, media and other partners which features the people, places, wildlife, birds, and experiences of the Rupununi along with the latest news about the Rupununi seasonal happenings and events. Post on Rupununi website. Start with bi-annual editions of newsletter and move to quarterly.	X	X	X	X	X	Medium	Ongoing
<b>Search Engine Marketing</b> – When Rupununi tourism website developed, engage Search Engine Marketing Specialist to optimize website for Search engine visibility, content, key words and link strategy. Develop strategy for linking Rupununi tourism sites with relevant travel directories, guides, special interest sites. Communicate findings to tourism businesses for use in their own websites. Over longer term, undertake more search engine marketing (SEM) activities including pay per click and web analytics to drive inquiries to Rupununi tourism website and create bookings for Rupununi tourism businesses.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Ongoing
<b>E-content resources</b> – Develop e-content resources for use on 3 <sup>rd</sup> party websites – including suitable travel and sustainable directory, guide, social networking, forums, photo- and video-sharing, and other websites. Content to include Rupununi destination and supplier profiles, experience descriptions, photos.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Ongoing

Action	Independent Travellers	Tour Operators	Media	Collaborative Partners	Tourism businesses & communities	Short Term Priority Rating	Med/Long Term Priority Ranking
<b>3<sup>RD</sup> party websites strategy</b> – Working with database of 3 <sup>rd</sup> party websites developed as part of Rupununi marketing plan develop strategy for posting Rupununi information on suitable travel and sustainable directory, guide, social networking, forums and other sites, such as Wikipedia and WikiTravel.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Ongoing
<b>Social marketing strategy</b> – Set up profiles on leading sites FaceBook and MyFace and create product pages and photo albums for Rupununi experiences. Post Guyana travel happenings and stories to ‘walls’ on a regular basis. Post videos on sites such as www.youtube.com. Installs widgets such as RSSNewsfeed and AddThis to website to encourage sharing.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Ongoing
<b>2.3 Signage</b>							
<b>Signage</b> – Work with GTA and government to obtain permission to erect signs at Ogle, Lethem and Anai airports and Takatu River bridge. Design and construct signage that reflects Rupununi branding, and promotes unique Rupununi tourism experiences.	X	X	X	X	X	Medium	Maintain Ongoing
<b>2.4 Travel Guides, Best of Lists, etc.</b>							
<b>Travel guides</b> – Communicate with publishers of travel guides focussed on South America, eco-tourism, green travel, adventure travel, etc. – such as South America Handbook, Lonely Planet, Rough Guide, Fodor’s, Green Places to Stay and Ethical Travel Guide—to ensure inclusion of appropriate Rupununi information.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Ongoing
<b>Best of lists and publications</b> – Prepare submissions to have Guyana included in ‘best of’, ‘top picks’, and other similar lists -- such as Lonely Planet’s annual Blue List, Conde Nast Traveller’s Top 20 Trips, National Geographic’s Top 50 Ecolodges, Guardian’s Best Wildlife Resorts. (Note: Guyana was chosen for Outside magazine’s annual Best Trip awards, and also selected as best trip in South America. Circulate press releases and feature awards won on marketing materials.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Ongoing

Action	Independent Travellers	Tour Operators	Media	Collaborative Partners	Tourism businesses & communities	Short Term Priority Rating	Med/Long Term Priority Ranking
<b>2.5 Awards</b>							
<b>International awards</b> – Encourage and support worthy Rupununi tourism businesses to prepare and submit applications to tourism, environmental and sustainable development competitions in order to obtain resources (e.g., cash awards, prizes, technical assistance) and marketing profile. Develop press releases and stories about businesses that win awards and distribute to media, including through GTIS, THAG and other media channels.	X	X	X	X	X	High	Ongoing
<b>2.6 Visitor/resident Information</b>							
<b>Rupununi visitor infocentre</b> – Distribute tourism information to Rupununi visitors and residents (e.g., Rupununi tourism brochure, individual tourism business brochures) through arrangements with local area and Georgetown businesses.	X				X	High	Ongoing
<b>RCTA booth at local events</b> – Distribute tourism information to Rupununi visitors and residents through booths at local events including Rupununi Rodeo, Rupununi Day, and Heritage Days.	X				X	High	Ongoing
<b>Radio paiwomak rupununi tourism programme</b> – Create weekly radio programme providing tourism-related information including sustainable community tourism, profiles of Rupununi tourism businesses and people, tourism news, etc. to raise awareness and support for tourism among Rupununi residents	X	X	X	X	X	Medium	Ongoing
<b>2.7 Word of mouth</b>							
<b>Encourage positive word of mouth</b> – Encourage positive word of mouth by facilitating customer referrals and reviews. Provide new potential customers with contact information for past customers to obtain referrals. Allow customers to post comments on the Rupununi tourism website. Encourage customers to post reviews on sites such as <a href="http://www.tripadvisor.com">www.tripadvisor.com</a> and <a href="http://www.reviewcentre.com">www.reviewcentre.com</a> . Post videos and photos on sites such as <a href="http://www.youtube.com">www.youtube.com</a> and <a href="http://www.flicker.com">www.flicker.com</a> . Participate in appropriate travel forums and groups.	X				X	High	Ongoing

Action	Independent Travellers	Tour Operators	Media	Collaborative Partners	Tourism businesses & communities	Short Term Priority Rating	Med/Long Term Priority Ranking
<b>3 Industry, Trade, Partner, PR</b>							
<b>3.1 Rupununi industry communication and education</b>							
<b>Community tourism awareness</b> – Conduct tourism awareness programmes to inform community members about the benefits and drawbacks of tourism, product development opportunities, visitor expectations, and any available technical assistance for tourism development					X	High	Ongoing
<b>RCTA AGM and awards</b> – Hold annual AGM and Awards Dinner, combined with a marketing education and planning session for market ready tourism businesses. The session would provide information on market trends, input of tour operators and media as collected from GTIS and other fam trips, bring them up to date on RCTA activities, partnership initiatives, etc. Most importantly, it would inform them about the marketing activities planned for the year, what they need to do to prepare for the season and how to work with tour operators, media, marketing and other partners, etc					X	Low	Annually
<b>RCTA e-newsletter</b> – Prepare and distribute newsletters to Rupununi tourism businesses which communicate information on market trends, marketing activities and the expectations of the international marketplace for market ready companies.					X	Medium	Ongoing
<b>On-line resource library</b> – Develop an on-line resource centre on the Rupununi website where Rupununi tourism businesses can obtain information on business, product and international market development; information sourced from CTO, GTA, GTIS, THAG, inbound tour operators and other partners.					X		Low
<b>Walk-in resource centres</b> – Once RCTA is able to set up visitor info centres in Lethem and Anai, include resource centres for tourism businesses within them. The resource centres would be designed to complement the on-line resource library, including Internet access, scanners, tourism books and manuals, training CDs, videos and other instructional materials, and small meeting areas, provided to businesses for free or a nominal fee.					X		Low
<b>Industry development initiatives</b> – Seek funding opportunities to undertake industry development					X	High	Ongoing

Action	Independent Travellers	Tour Operators	Media	Collaborative Partners	Tourism businesses & communities	Short Term Priority Rating	Med/Long Term Priority Ranking
initiatives on an on-going basis, including funding to implement marketing initiatives and for product development, marketing and networking workshops.							
<b>3.2 Tourism industry and partner communication and education</b>							
<b>Tour operator communications programme</b> – Regularly communicate with inbound tour operators in order to build awareness, education and encourage them to introduce more Rupununi tourism products into their packages.		X				High	Ongoing
<b>Partners/supporters communication</b> – Communicate regularly with other partners and supporters such as government departments, business associations, CI-Guyana, WWF and other NGOs that may be able to support implementation of the marketing plan.				X		High	Ongoing
<b>Partner info sessions</b> – Hold meetings and presentations to brief GTA, THAG, in-bound tour operators and funding partners’ awareness and knowledge of Rupununi tourism. Brief the organizations on the Rupununi blueprint strategy and marketing plan and seek opportunities to obtain their assistance with implementation.		X		X		High	
<b>Product awareness workshops</b> – On an annual basis, provide presentations to GTA, THAG, in-bound tour operators and other Guyana marketing partners to enhance their knowledge of market ready Rupununi tourism products and experiences. Provide them with knowledge and information needed to assist them to market Rupununi tourism businesses.		X		X		High	Annually
<b>Rupununi e-newsletter</b> – As per section 3.1 above, prepare and distribute newsletter to tour operators, independent travellers, media and other partners.	X	X	X	X	X	Medium	Ongoing
<b>3.3 Travel marketplaces and shows</b>							
<b>Rupununi representation</b> – Ensure that Rupununi tourism products are promoted to consumers, tour operators, media and other partners at marketplaces and shows attended by Guyana. Key shows include British Birdfair, ABA Annual Convention, Latin America Travel Mart, Adventure Travel World Summit, WTM in London, and ITB in Berlin. Ideally, an RCTA representative attends the marketplaces and shows. At the least, Rupununi marketing materials are distributed and the region is promoted by other marketing partners.	X	X	X			High	Ongoing

Action	Independent Travellers	Tour Operators	Media	Collaborative Partners	Tourism businesses & communities	Short Term Priority Rating	Med/Long Term Priority Ranking
<b>3.4 Familiarization Tours</b>							
<b>Fam tours</b> – Encourage suppliers to participate in familiarization tours organized by GTIS, THAG and inbound tour operators that showcase Rupununi market ready tourism businesses for international tour operators and media. Encourage inbound tour operators to take mini fam tours in order to become familiar with Rupununi tourism products. Ideally, Rupununi businesses should provide accommodation, meal and guide arrangements for fam tours on complementary basis and transportation on cost recovery basis.		X	X			High	Ongoing
<b>4 Media Relations</b>							
<b>Story ideas</b> – Work with Rupununi businesses and marketing partners to prepare story ideas about Rupununi experiences, people and places to assist media with pitching and writing exciting articles and other items. Theme story ideas to special interest markets. Work with GTIS, THAG, in-bound tour operators and other partners to promote Rupununi story ideas to media in target markets (i.e., UK, North America, Europe, Caribbean, and Brazil). Include podcasted programmes, which are growing in popularity among audiences who have a common interest, such as birders.			X			High	Ongoing
<b>Editorials and articles</b> – Work with marketing partners to develop editorials and articles for submission to travel and sustainability e-zines, social networking sites and websites using reader generated content. Encourage Rupununi tourism businesses, local writers, VSOs and others to prepare submit articles to such sites. Theme articles to special interest markets and accompany with photos and videos. Also include visual articles and blogs, etc. In addition, work with THAG to ensure articles about Rupununi appear in annual editions of Explore magazine. Also, prepare and submit articles to Guyana newspapers and ones to newspapers in Roraima region of Brazil.			X			High	Ongoing



Action	Independent Travellers	Tour Operators	Media	Collaborative Partners	Tourism businesses & communities	Short Term Priority Rating	Med/Long Term Priority Ranking
<b>TV Shows, Videos, Documentaries</b> - Work with marketing partners to submit and promote story ideas to leading TV and cable channels, documentary and video production companies, etc. These would include Discovery Channel, BBC and The Travel Channel. Also partner with individual film makers, photo journalists, videographers, etc., who may be able to provide gateway to TV channels and production companies.			X			High	Ongoing
<b>Press release preparation and distribution</b> – Work with marketing partners to prepare and distribute press releases about the Rupununi featuring topics of interest to special interest markets, and distribute to international press through development of media databases, via websites that post news items and through e-news distribution sites. Also, develop and distribute releases about Rupununi events such as Lethem Rodeo and Heritage Days, Rupununi tourism happenings to domestic media.			X			Medium	Ongoing
<b>Media kits</b> – Develop virtual resource kit to distribute media at every opportunity, and with goal of making it easy for media to pitch and prepare articles about Guyana. Kits to include virtual versions of Rupununi tourism brochure, press releases, story ideas, sample itineraries, and list of interesting people to interview. Provide media with images by CD or through online distribution.			X			Medium	Ongoing
<b>5 Product Development</b>							
<b>Rupununi tourism product development</b> – Encourage and support market ready Rupununi tourism businesses to develop experiences that are more interpretive, interactive and, educational and themed to special interest groups. Packages to include both touring packages, multi-day stays at one lodge, two destination options.			X		X	High	Ongoing
<b>Short stay packages</b> – Encourage suppliers to create short duration accommodation and experience packages (3 to 4 days) , including weekend packages, which could be promoted to embassy staff, VSO workers, business people working in Guyana, Guyanese residents and visitors from nearby destinations (e.g., Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, Barbados, Brazil).					X	High	Ongoing

Action	Independent Travellers	Tour Operators	Media	Collaborative Partners	Tourism businesses & communities	Short Term Priority Rating	Med/Long Term Priority Ranking
<b>Eco-certification</b> – Encourage environmentally and socially responsible practices by Rupununi tourism businesses. In the short term, focus on encouraging suppliers to set goals and implement good practices from Conservation International’s <i>A Practical Guide to Good Practice for Tropical Forest-Based Tours</i> good practices guide and checklist and the <i>Guyana Birding Tours Self-Assessment Checklist: A Practical Guide for Good Environmental and Social Practice</i> . In long term, work with national tourism industry towards implementation of an ecocertification program for tourism businesses.					X	High	Ongoing
<b>6 Branding</b>							
<b>Branding strategy</b> – develop unique brand and identity which conveys unique, enriching Rupununi tourism experience and values it offers travellers. Complete visual and verbal design of the brand by designing visual elements needed to convey brand: logo, branding message/tagline, and graphic elements (e.g., design, font styles for tag line, imagery), preparation of graphic files in formats suitable for online and printed uses (e.g., eps, jpeg, etc.), design guidelines for usage of logo and tag line, and design of corporate communication materials (i.e., letterhead, envelopes, business cards).	X	X	X	X	X	High	

## 5.4 Creating Links for Implementation

### 5.4.1 Implementation Plan Assumptions

Since the Rupununi Community Tourism Association does not currently have staff or an annual tourism budget at this time, the organization must collaborate with these organizations, its members and other partners to fund and implement the marketing strategy. Consequently, the assumptions underlying the implementation of the marketing strategy are that:

- RCTA board members, coordinators, volunteers and individual tourism businesses will be actively involved in implementing the marketing actions. Volunteers and tourism businesses can assist with many of the e-marketing actions outlined in the strategy, for example, posting links to or submitting information about Rupununi tourism to online travel guides and directories, which is relatively easy to do but time intensive.
- Alliances would be maintained and strengthened with those partners that are already marketing Guyana and the Rupununi including the GTA, USAID/GSTI, THAG and those in-bound tour operators engaged international marketing initiatives, including Wilderness Explorers and Evergreen Adventures.
- Close relationships are maintained with key partners such as CI-Guyana, WWF and IDB which can provide technical, funding and other assistance.
- Grants and other resources should be sought from partners, foundations and other sources to support marketing initiatives.

Table 12 below provides the order of magnitude budget estimates for implementing the short term (Years 1 and 2) marketing plan actions, and outlines suggested strategies to secure the needed funds through partnerships, alliances and other linkages with organizations already involved in tourism development in Guyana and others at the local, regional and international level.

A project-based approach to implementation of the marketing actions is assumed for some actions, and the project cost estimates are reflected in the budget. The branding strategy, photo shoot, destination video, Rupununi tourism experiences guide and companion website are some of the actions that fit into this category. For the remaining actions, the assumption is that RCTA would be an active organization with the human resource and operational capabilities needed to carry out the actions. In these cases, provisional estimates are given but the real costs would depend on a variety of factors, including the location and operational set-up of the RCTA, and could vary greatly from the estimates. For example, if RCTA were to be able to secure donated office space and equipment and a Peace Corp worker to staff the office, many of the costs could decrease significantly.

Table 11: Magnitude budget estimates for implementation of short term Rupununi tourism marketing actions.

Category	Yr 1	Yr 2	Budget Comments	Implementation Strategies
Supplier resource collection	\$500	\$250	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA costs/expenses for acquiring resources from businesses and annual updating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
Partner resource collection	\$500	\$250	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA costs/expenses for acquiring resources from businesses and annual updating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
Photo shoot, Photo and video library, Images gallery and CD	\$20,000	\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1 - includes photographer, travel, gallery set-up</li> <li>Yr 2 - RCTA costs/expenses for updating, CD/DVD reproduction costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1 – Implemented through Iwokrama-IDB ‘Networking Rupununi Tourism Destinations’ project</li> <li>Yr 2 - Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
CD/VIDEO/DVD	15,000	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1 – includes photographer and production estimates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA and partners to seek project funding</li> </ul>
Rupununi tourism experiences guide	\$90,000	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes research, writing, GPS, mapping, travel, design, printing for multi-year supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1 – Implemented through Iwokrama-IDB ‘Networking Rupununi Tourism Destinations’ project</li> </ul>
Rupununi tourism brochure	\$3,500	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes writing, design, printing for multi-year supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA and partners to seek project funding</li> </ul>
Rupununi tourism experiences website	\$15,000	\$1,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1 - includes CMS system, look and feel, content, production, add-on modules (e.g. gallery, blog, member directory)</li> <li>Yr 2 - RCTA costs/expenses for hosting, updating, maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1 – Implemented through Iwokrama-Canada Fund ‘Rupununi Tourism Experiences Website’ project</li> <li>Yr 2 - Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
Rupununi tourism website pages	\$2,000	\$250	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1 – Includes writing, layout</li> <li>Yr 2 - RCTA costs/expenses for updating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1 – Implemented through Iwokrama-IDB ‘Networking Rupununi Tourism Destinations’ project</li> <li>Yr 2 - Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
Rupununi e-newsletter	\$500	\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA costs/expenses for preparing and sending two newsletters annually</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented by RCTA</li> <li>Request assistance from GSTI to write newsletters</li> </ul>

Category	Yr 1	Yr 2	Budget Comments	Implementation Strategies
SEM	\$5,000	\$3,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yr 1 - SEM strategy including website design, content keywords, links</li> <li>• Yr 2 – web analytics, ongoing SEM (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yr 1 – Implemented through Iwokrama-Canada Fund ‘Rupununi Tourism Experiences Website’ project</li> <li>• Yr 2 - RCTA and partners to seek project funding (optional)</li> </ul>
E-content resources	\$5,000	\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yr 1 – includes writing, layout</li> <li>• Yr 2 - RCTA costs/expenses for updating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yr 1 – Implemented through Iwokrama-IDB ‘Networking Rupununi Tourism Destinations’ project</li> <li>• Yr 2 - Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> party websites strategy	\$7,500	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yr 1 – includes research, strategy &amp; implementation</li> <li>• Yr 2 - RCTA costs/expenses for updating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yr 1 – Implemented through Iwokrama-IDB ‘Networking Rupununi Tourism Destinations’ project</li> <li>• Yr 2 - Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
Social media strategy	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for ongoing implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
Signage	\$5,000	\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yr 1 – includes design, construction, installation</li> <li>• Yr 2 – maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach GTA for sponsorship</li> </ul>
Travel guides	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for communication, follow up, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented by RCTA</li> <li>• Request assistance and support from GSTI</li> </ul>
Best of Lists	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for communication, follow up, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented by RCTA</li> <li>• Request assistance and support from GSTI</li> </ul>
Awards	\$500	\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for supporting</li> <li>• Proposals would be developed by businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented by RCTA</li> <li>• Request assistance and support from GSTI</li> </ul>
Rupununi visitor info centre	\$20,000	\$15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yr 1 – equipment, staffing and operation of leased space</li> <li>• Yr 2 – staffing and operation of leased space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA and partners to seek partners and funding</li> <li>• Proposal has been placed with Regional Administration for Region 9 for grant of land in Lethem</li> <li>• RCTA looking into obtaining office facilities and equipment use from Rupununi Chamber of Commerce and Industry</li> <li>• Determine possibility of using Peace Corp program for staffing</li> </ul>
RCTA booth	\$2,000	\$2,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for decorating booth and staffing 3 events/year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
Radio Paiwomak show	\$500	\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for supporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
Word of mouth	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for ongoing implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>

Category	Yr 1	Yr 2	Budget Comments	Implementation Strategies
Community tourism awareness	\$15,000	\$15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes development of materials, delivery, travel, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA and partners to seek project funding</li> </ul>
RCTA AGM and awards	\$1,500	\$1,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes meals, entertainment, awards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold in conjunction with other workshops or events to avoid travel, venue, etc. costs</li> <li>Recover event costs by securing sponsorships and charging for attendance</li> </ul>
RCTA e-newsletter	\$500	\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA costs/expenses for preparing and sending two newsletters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented by RCTA</li> <li>Request assistance from GSTI to write newsletters</li> </ul>
On-line resource library	--	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not anticipated to begin in short term</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable in short term</li> </ul>
Walk-in resource centres	--	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not anticipated to begin in short term</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable in short term</li> </ul>
Industry development	--	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undetermined – one-off project initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA and partners to seek project funding</li> <li>Request assistance from , GSTI, other partners to identify funding sources and prepare submissions</li> </ul>
Tour operator communications	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA costs/expenses for communication, follow up, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented by RCTA in cooperation with marketing partners</li> </ul>
Partner communications	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA costs/expenses for communication, follow up, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented by RCTA</li> </ul>
Partner info sessions	\$15,000	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assumes info sessions in Georgetown, Lethem, Anai</li> <li>Includes venue rental and participant travel costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request sponsorship from and other partners</li> </ul>
Product awareness workshops	--	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assumes annual awareness session in Georgetown</li> <li>Includes travel, venue, snacks and other costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented by RCTA</li> <li>Reduce costs by combining session with other travel by RCTA reps and obtaining support from partners such as GTA and THAG for meeting venue and other costs</li> </ul>
Rupununi representation at tradeshows	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA costs/expenses for supporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented by RCTA in cooperation with key partners GTA, THAG, GTIS, in-bound tour operators</li> </ul>
Story ideas	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA costs/expenses for supporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented by RCTA</li> <li>Request assistance from GSTI to prepare story ideas</li> </ul>
Editorials and articles	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCTA costs/expenses for supporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented by RCTA in cooperation with marketing partners</li> <li>Request assistance from GSTI to prepare articles and editorials</li> </ul>

Category	Yr 1	Yr 2	Budget Comments	Implementation Strategies
TV shows, videos, documentaries	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for supporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented by RCTA in cooperation with marketing partners</li> <li>• Request assistance from GSTI to prepare concepts and proposals for submission</li> </ul>
Press releases	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for supporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented by RCTA in cooperation with marketing partners</li> <li>• Request assistance from GSTI to prepare press releases</li> </ul>
Media kits	--	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not anticipated to begin in short term</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not applicable in short term</li> </ul>
Tourism product development	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for supporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New products would be developed by businesses with RCTA's support</li> <li>• But also seek funding to support product development initiatives such as inventories, recces and mapping</li> </ul>
Short stay packages	\$1,000	\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA costs/expenses for supporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New products would be developed by businesses with RCTA's support</li> </ul>
Ecocertification	--	\$100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customized certification program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA and partners to seek project funding</li> <li>• Request assistance from , GSTI, other partners to identify funding sources and prepare submissions</li> </ul>
Branding strategy	\$30,000		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One time project cost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCTA and partners to seek project funding</li> </ul>



## **Section 6**

# **CONCLUSION**

Tourism has the potential to generate both positive and negative effects on areas and the inhabitants. Negative impacts of tourism – particularly on the social and cultural integrity of communities – usually occur when the values and behaviours of the local communities are threatened. This threat can include changes to the family structure, community relationships, collective traditional life styles and moral values.

Closely related is how tourism can affect host communities' use of natural resources. Those resources can include water, clean air, agricultural lands and recreational areas, as well as important ecosystems, such as forests, grasslands, wetlands and coastal areas. Moreover, tourism can be positive, thereby fostering local pride, revitalising traditions, decreasing urban flight, improving human welfare and strengthening institutional development and good governance. Related to its very reliance on natural attractions as a resource, tourism can also help to foster stewardship among local communities. It is imperative, therefore, that the sustainability criteria of sustainable tourism, particularly within communities, be emphasised, promoted and practised, if all of the resultant accrued benefits can be maximised and the needs of tourists, the tourism industry and host communities realised, without compromising the ability of the future generations to realise their own needs.

Community-based sustainable tourism, though relatively new in the Guyana context, has been rapidly expanding and some villages in the Rupununi region and, particularly in the North Savannahs, have already embarked on the development of sustainable tourism activities within their respective communities.

Community-based sustainable tourism, if managed properly, can bring significant benefits to communities. Substantial revenues can be generated through foreign exchange earnings, village taxes – landing fees, visitors' fees and tour guiding fees. Employment would be created, infrastructure would be improved upon and provided; and social services enhanced. Ultimately, a more sustainable form of livelihood for the community would be provided.

Community-based sustainable tourism will promote socially sustainable tourism and will always be operated exclusively by the local and indigenous people. There would be shared leadership, emphasising community well-being over individual profit, and balance of power within the community; and finally, it will foster traditional culture, conservation and preservation, and stewardship of the land.

The 10 communities visited in the region, even though their respective levels of development vary, can all be tourist destinations, which can attract the attention of scientists, foresters, birders and others in search of a new experience and in spending longer periods of time. However, in order to continue with their development efforts, there must be the total involvement of the community members in the decision making process, thus developing a sense of ownership, commitment and dedication. The communities' chances are very great, given the fact that they need to use all of the opportunities posited to their advantage. Other donor agencies, the Region Nine RDC, the RCTA, the GTA, THAG and all of the other stakeholders should be encouraged to "buy in" to this project, since the doors of collaboration and joint-venture relationships are always open.

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## **ANNEXES**