

A UNESCO PROJECT TO TRAIN AND EMPLOY CULTURE OF PEACE ENTREPRENEURS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

During the 1950's and 1960's UNESCO coordinated the global project of literacy. This was done by establishing regional institutes in Mexico, Egypt and Iran for the training of literacy workers. The project was a great success and a high point in UNESCO history.

We believe the time has come for UNESCO to repeat this process by establishing regional institutes for the training of peace tourism entrepreneurs.

STUDENTS

Students would be sponsored by both governments and various sectors of the tourism industry that are prepared to employ them in the industry once they have obtained their diploma. This would include employment in local travel agencies, tour operators, relevant government ministries, community tourism projects, agro-tourism projects, hotels, airlines, youth organisations, NGO's, etc. The sponsors would pay the tuition for their students which would allow the institutes to be self-financed.

CURRICULUM AND DIPLOMA

Students at the UNESCO institutes would gain a diploma in peace tourism, by learning :

- ° Culture of Peace theory including the role of the United Nations and its actions to promote the Culture of Peace;
- ° methods of promoting inter-cultural exchange and understanding in the context of the "host- guest relationship;"
- ° traditional skills of the "receiver" end of tourism (tour-guiding, hospitality training, community tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, etc.)
- ° traditional skills of the "sender" end of the industry (designing tour packages that include personal inter-action with host communities, etc.);
- ° ethical tourism;
- ° fair trade tourism;

- volunteer and philanthropic tourism;
- targeted marketing to attract tourists who seek these types of experiences.

FACULTY

Knowledgeable experts would be engaged to serve as instructors on a rotating, visiting basis. They could include tour guide instructors, tourism entrepreneurs, hospitality trainers, ecologists and ecotourism operators, and culture of peace promoters. The students would not only learn the relevant skills, but also begin to develop the connections and networking they will need to develop entrepreneurial careers.

The skills of instructors should include principles of entrepreneurship including:

- teamwork,
- capital accumulation (accessing investment capital from investors, capital markets, foundations, development agencies, etc.),
- product development, capital management, advertising and marketing
- development and production of advertising materials such as brochures, videos and DVDs, Internet websites.

PROJECTS

Students at the institutes should learn by doing. A major task of the faculty will be the supervision of student projects that can serve as incubators of "social business"

Just to give some idea of the potential of this approach, here are some possible projects, without attempting to be exhaustive:

- development and presentation of seminars and booths for culture of peace tourism with attractive written materials, videos, etc. at the various major events and conferences of the tourism industry.
- development of kiosks in airports and at major tourist sites that sell local products and provide printed and video information on culture of peace tourism
- linkages to and exchanges with academic programmes at other institutions

- linkages to initiatives for environmental protection and development
- development of peace tourism websites that promote culture of peace tourism opportunities and attract clients from heavily-visited search engines for cheap air flights (Orbitz, Travelocity, Expedia, La Bourse des Vols, etc.)
- development of services for young people who are traveling to see the world, such as websites supported by advertising, that provide relevant information on accommodations, work opportunities, personal announcements, etc.
- Collaboration with governments and the private sector so that plans for the development of new tourist sites and accommodations, and expansion of existing ones, give emphasis to the development of local and indigenous employment and utilisation of local and indigenous skills and traditions.

FINANCING

Although start-up funds need to be obtained from government grants, foundations, private investors and development agencies, once they are established, the institutes should be self-financing.

Students should pay tuition which is provided by the sponsoring organisations who intend to hire them once they receive their diploma. In other words, students should be sent by sponsoring organisations as investment in personnel development.

Faculty should arrive with their travel, accommodation expenses and salary paid by sponsoring organisations who are committed to supporting the Institute, e.g. faculty could be sent "on loan" from corporations in the tourism industry and related industries. As well, educators and trainers might volunteer for assignments during academic holidays.

Administrative expenses should be kept to a minimum. Classrooms and accommodation facilities should be rented from a host institution rather than requiring direct investment and administration. This is a lesson learned from UNESCO's literacy institutes that became bogged down in the details of maintaining the buildings that they had purchased or constructed..

VITAL ROLE OF UNESCO AND ITS PARTNERS

To be successful the project would require the flag and the supervision of UNESCO in order to make it universal, to ensure quality control and to give

confidence to the relevant government ministries whose involvement is essential.

National Commissions for UNESCO should be engaged in the project from the beginning, and wherever possible, the involvement of relevant ministers should be integrated with the National Commissions of the countries concerned. Similarly, UNESCO field offices should be involved from the beginning, as well as relevant international non-governmental organisations with formal relations to UNESCO.

The project should be consistent with, or integrated with, relevant ongoing UNESCO activities and institutions such as the World Heritage Committee and Fund.

As well, the project should include involvement of UN Tourism (formerly UN World Tourism Organisation) and the door should be left open for civil society organisations that promote culture of peace to join as partners/collaborators, for example, the International Institute for Peace through Tourism