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The Virgin Mary's Mt. Ramelau Sunrise © Racom Maubisse

## Mount Ramelau Eco-Trail Sustainable Management Plan



Awake Timor-Leste © Racom Maubisse

# **MT. RAMELAU**

**(Tatamailau)**

## **Sustainable Management Plan**

This document was produced for review by the  
United States Agency for International Development (**USAID**).

It was prepared by Chemonics International Inc. for the Tourism For All Project  
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### **PHOTOGRAPHS**

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### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Much of the content herein is not original, nor claimed to be so. The author hereby acknowledges the 'Google' and other contribution of the numerous unreferenced documents, studies and publications on which many of the enclosed points are based. Footnotes have been provided where details are known.

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## ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ASTRABEKA	Association of Tourism, Ramelau, Blehetu & Kablaké
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
CBT	Community Based Tourism
DNTUR	National Directorate for Tourism (part of MTCI)
GCT	Garbage Collection Trek
GOTL	Government of Timor-Leste
HCV	High Conservation Values
IBA	Important Bird / Biodiversity Area
IMCTD	Inter-Ministerial Commission for Tourism Development
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, GOTL
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MP	Master Plan
MPI	Master Plan Independent
MTCI	Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry, GOTL
NBSAP	Timor-Leste National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NT	Near Threatened
NSPA	National System of Protected Areas
PA	Protected Area
PMT	Planning and Management Team
SDG's	Sustainable Development Goals
SDP	Sustainable Development Plan
SMP	Sustainable Management Plan
TOR	Terms Of Reference
TUF	Tourism User Fees
TWG	Tourism Working Group
UNCBD	UN Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNEP-WCMC	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNTAET	UN Transitional Administration in East Timor
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
WDPA	World Database on Protected Areas

**Note:** Organizations and agencies referenced in this plan are titled as per the time of writing (April 2022).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Comprehensive Tourism Policy development in an implementation-activity vacuum, leads to nothing; it creates zero economic benefits at any societal level. Such policy development began during the UNTAET period, pre-independence, {“Development of Tourism Policy and Strategic Planning in East Timor” (Carter et al - 2001)}<sup>1</sup>. Although consistently rated highly important for the economic development of Timor-Leste, 21 years of little progress in regards to tourism infrastructure and human capital, has maintained the status quo; in a pure tourism sense, very few international tourists.

The 2017 National Tourism Policy<sup>2</sup> is the latest in a long stream of pro-tourism plans, proposals & Decree Laws. Why is Timor-Leste delaying? The opportunity for real progress is imminent.

\*

**USAID**’s ‘Tourism For All’ Project is working with the Government of Timor-Leste (GOTL) to diversify its economy, using an inclusive sustainable approach to stimulate eco-friendly community-based tourism in line with the 2017 National Tourism Policy, promoting the country’s valuable natural and cultural assets, while preserving its unique environmental, social and cultural heritage.

Three (of 46) protected areas (PA’s), sites of particular biodiversity, ecological, historical and cultural interest were selected for the development of sustainable management practices as examples for other regions across the nation. They are Ataúro Island, Cristo Rei and Tatamailau (‘Grandfather of All’), commonly referred to as Mt. Ramelau.

Although many PA issues are discussed, the focus of this Sustainable Management Plan (SMP) is the ‘Tourist Eco-Trail’ accessible from Hatu-Builico that leads to the Mt. Ramelau summit, buffer areas on both sides, and associated areas of congregation.

Centrally located in Timor-Leste, Mt. Ramelau is Timor’s highest mountain standing at 2,986 m ASL (9,798 ft.), located 40 km south of the Timor-Leste’s capital Dili. According to the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), initial international designation of the Mt. Ramelau Protected Area (PA) occurred in the year 2000, however it took 16 years to be legally recognized under Timor-Leste law. Management of the Mt. Ramelau PA has not yet operationally reached required international standards for final classification<sup>3</sup>.

Mt. Ramelau is devoted to perished souls and historically declared ‘sacred’ by the people, the peak being dedicated to, and watched over by the Blessed Virgin Mary; the main cultural feature and tourism asset being a 3m statue in her likeness at the summit, a gift from Italy (Catholic Church) in 1997.

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<sup>1</sup> Carter, R. W. & Prideaux, B. & Ximenes, V. & Chatenay, A. V. P. (2001). Development of Tourism Policy and Strategic Planning in East Timor, Occasional Paper 2001 8(1):1-101

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.timorleste.tl/wp-content/uploads/formidable/4/TL-National-Tourism-Policy.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)

Mt. Ramelau receives some 25,000+ visitors each year, the majority (predominantly Timorese) on two 'summit' pilgrimages commemorating the annunciation of the Virgin Mary (25th March & 6/7 October). 2022 will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, an important milestone for the Catholic people of Timor-Leste.

The enclosed 'Situational Analysis' discusses the following:

- Context
- Natural Assets: Landscape, Boundary, Flora & Fauna
- Cultural Assets: Virgin Mary Statue, Mt. Ramelau Chapel (*Campground*) & Sanctuary (*Trail Head*)
- Communities of the Hatu-Builico Sub-District
- Governance of the Mt. Ramelau Protected Area
- Development and Tourism on the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail

To identify 'Key Sustainability Challenges', consultations with many Stakeholders were conducted:

- **National Level:**
  - Catholic Church (Dili Diocese)
  - Ministry of Tourism, Commerce & Industry (MTCI)
  - Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries (MAF)
- **Field Level - Hatu Builico:**
  - Ainaro / Hatu Builico Authorities
  - The National Police
  - Community Leaders (Chefe's Suco's)
  - Local Church Leaders, Women's Groups, the Youth
  - Local Business People
  - **ASTRABEKA** - Association of Tourism, Ramelau, Blehetu & Kablaké

Identified 'Key Sustainability Challenges' were:

<b><u>'Macro' (PA) Perspective</u></b>	<b><u>'Micro' (Eco-Trail) Perspective</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Altitude / Boundary Demarcation Issues</li><li>• Inter Government Agency Co-Ordination</li><li>• Lack of PA Management &amp; Rules Enforcement<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Adherence to 'Lisan / Tara Bandu'</li></ul></li><li>• Roles &amp; Responsibilities</li><li>• Habitat Loss and/or Destruction</li><li>• Community Tourism Training</li><li>• <b>PROJECT CONTINUITY</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chapel Re-Development / Plateau Gate</li><li>• Poor Basic Infrastructure / Public Facilities</li><li>• Track Maintenance / Safety Issues<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rotten Tree Cutting</li></ul></li><li>• Poor Waste Management / Graffiti Control</li><li>• Sanctuary Development</li><li>• Tourist User Fees? - Value for Money</li><li>• <b>OPERATIONAL FUNDING</b></li></ul>

To address these challenges, four key management objectives have been identified for implementation over the coming years. As per Article 37 of the Decree Law 5/2016<sup>4</sup> on the National System of Protected Areas, a PA is to be managed by a formal Planning and Management Team (PMT) comprised of representatives from: Government, the Community (incl. Industry Representatives, the Youth, Women, and the Elderly), the Church, Local Authorities, National Police and the state's decentralized services responsible for tourism, cultural heritage and environment. Seeding for the formalised PMT is in the form of the independent association ASTRABEKA (Association of Tourism, Ramelau, Blehetu & Kablake).

These objectives will guide the relevant organizations associated with the Mt. Ramelau PA, in developing a thorough accredited PA Management Plan (as recognized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature [IUCN]). The objectives are as follows:

- Obj. 1:* Review and determine the external & internal boundaries of the PA. Demarcation must be official, formally recognized by all parties, and details fully socialized with affected residents.
- Obj. 2:* Undertake further surveys related to existing socio-cultural, and terrestrial assets and existing land-use patterns in and around the PA, concentrating on the Sanctuary, the Eco-Trail to the summit, and the associated congregation areas.
- Obj. 3:* Identify and agree on the core values of the applicable area, and the threats and opportunities facing the key assets.
- Obj. 4:* Determine the desired mutually agreed '**COMBINED**' GOTL operating parameters and management targets for the applicable areas, specifically the Sanctuary-Peak Eco-Trail.

Steps required to achieve these objectives / sub-objectives are outlined in this document. Possible solutions to address the 'sustainability' challenges are also discussed; tentative targets and implementation timelines included. It is expected that many planned initiatives in the Hatu Builico / Mt. Ramelau region will be delegated to ASTRABEKA.

This SMP deals with only a fraction of the total Mt. Ramelau PA area; the primary 'Tourist Eco-Trail' from the Sanctuary (Camping Area/Car-Park) to the peak. As such it is intended to provide a framework for sustainable eco-trail operations, thus influencing a more comprehensive SMP at a later date (the 'Master Plan'). It will also be used as a guide for the development of alternative routes from Letefoho, Atsabe and Ainaro etc. And as a 'good practice' model it can be replicated throughout Timor-Leste, in particular the other three main peaks; Mundo Perdido, Matebean Mane & Manucoco on Ataúro Island.

**Note:** Many pilgrim trails through Timor-Leste's interior link up with the major Mt. Ramelau tracks, posing logistical issues for any fee-collection system.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.mj.gov.tl/jornal/public/docs/2016/serie\\_I/SERIE\\_I\\_NO\\_II.pdf](http://www.mj.gov.tl/jornal/public/docs/2016/serie_I/SERIE_I_NO_II.pdf)

By taking a realistic practical approach to the above challenges and simplifying this SMP, a clearer ‘way forward’ is established. As an overall project the Mt. Ramelau PA is complex, and difficult to bring together without solid governmental / stakeholder cooperation and continuity through political change, however by dissecting it into its many ‘sub-projects’, simplicity can be achieved:

- **Master Plan** (MP); Generally, Mt. Ramelau PA wide initiatives that require Master SMP majority stakeholder agreement, acceptance, and sign-off. Within this SMP, these are classified as ‘Macro’.
- **Master Plan Independent** (MPI); Immediately implementable initiatives that ought to be achieved / completed, regardless of Master SMP details; generally classified as ‘Micro’.
- **Other**: Initiatives that are suggested as improvements, aimed at maximizing the visitor experience and increasing tourism to the region.

Sustainable community-based tourism must focus on the customer; the Visitors to Mt. Ramelau, the People’s Mountain.

*“With its natural environment, biodiversity and essential ecosystems secure, Tatamailau, the People’s Mountain, our protector, our spiritual pride, to be enjoyed by all and contribute to the sustainable livelihoods of neighboring communities. Our social and cultural heritage preserved”*

## **Socio-Cultural-Historical Perspective**

Without doubt Timor-Leste has had a colorful past. Centuries of largely ineffectual, non-eventful Portuguese colonization, declared an independent nation in 1975 by the FRETILIN Political Party for 9 days then invaded, occupied and ruled by Indonesia under authoritarian aggressive (deadly) dictatorship for 24 yrs. With infrastructure largely destroyed and a population decimated, East Timor was then administered by the UN for 3 yrs until final recognition of Timor-Leste’s independence by the UN May 20<sup>th</sup> 2002. Very few countries have had to fight for independence multiple times.

During East Timor’s Indonesian occupation the independence thrust continued, the East Timorese’s knowledge of the mountainous interior being a major asset. The mountains and forests hid, sheltered and fed the resistance fighters; Tatamailau was one such mountain, the protective ‘Grandfather’.

Mt. Ramelau unified the East Timorese people with pride; it gave them hope. Easily Timor-Leste’s most important socio-cultural-historic icon, the Resistance / Independence Movement anthem was, and remains today, ‘Foho Ramelau’, sung nationwide in annual tribute on May 20<sup>th</sup>, ‘Independence<sup>2</sup> Day’.

The Mt. Ramelau summit also figures highly in the East Timor ancestral myths. The deep cultural and religious significance that Tatamailau holds for the Timorese was further heightened when Catholicism became the dominant faith in Timor-Leste. A revered sacred mountain, Mt. Ramelau must be honored and respected as with any place of worship, not treated with the current disregard that will continue without proper management and financial support.

Not only do the Timor-Leste people own Mt. Ramelau, they also owe it a great deal. It deserves the financial support of the Timor-Leste Government, and of the free people of Timor-Leste.

## INTRODUCTION

Tatamailau means 'Grandfather of All', in the Mambai dialect, one of the many dialects of East Timor and the native language of the Ainaro region. Centrally situated in Timor-Leste's (East Timor's) mountainous interior, approximately 40 km south of the capital Dili, as the highest peak on the island of Timor at 2,986m (9,798 ft.) it dominates the border area between two districts; Ainaro and Ermera. It's not only the nation's highest peak, but also a site of deep religious and cultural significance.

The 2015 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan - Vers.2 (NBSAP / v.2)<sup>5</sup> of the Government of Timor-Leste (GOTL) recognized Mt. Ramelau as an important area for terrestrial biodiversity, and prioritized the site for strategic development (under the GOTL Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2011-2030)<sup>6</sup>; controlled and protected 'Eco-Tourism'.

The Mt. Ramelau PA consists of land above 2,000m ASL and adjacent forests, somewhat open to interpretation and deforestation; size is estimated at 20,000 ha. Internationally designated in 2000, the operational management of the Mt. Ramelau PA has not yet reached required international standards.

As of the early 1980's, Mt. Ramelau was extensively covered with old growth sub-alpine (montane) forest. Since then, uncontrolled deforestation for grazing and cropping has left little of the original forest, now limited to the higher, less accessible reaches. The lower slopes are mainly residential, cropped, or grass covered (grazing), with the upper slopes characterized by eucalypt regrowth.

BirdLife International identified the area as an 'Important Bird Area' (IBA) for its support of several endemic and restricted-range bird species. With decades of habitat destruction, populations of not only birdlife but also wild animals (indigenous & introduced) have declined.

Although this SMP is primarily concerned with the main Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail and its nearby environs, the wider community stakeholders must also be considered, especially those directly affected by the PA restrictions. Likewise, human capital, the likely labor pool, the people indirectly affected by tourism growth in the area i.e. the people of the Hatu Bulilico Sub-District (estimated population 14,000), are important. Operational sustainability relies on their support of all SMP initiatives.



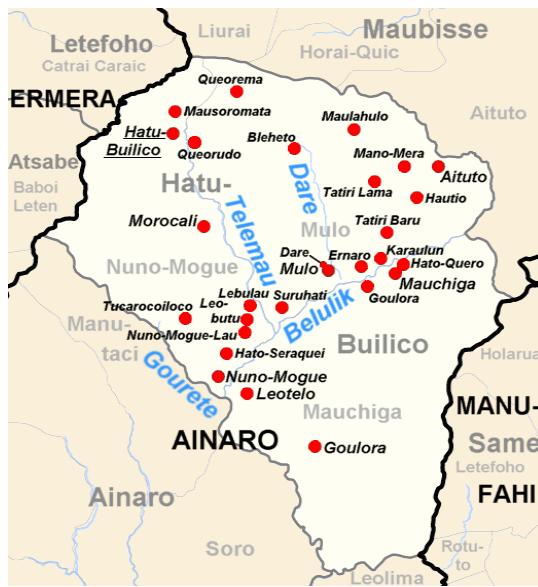
Fig. 1:  
Map - Location of Mt. Ramelau (*Foho Tatamailau*)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.informeia.org/en/action-plan/timor-leste-nbsap-v2-2015>

<sup>6</sup> <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Timor-Leste-Strategic-Plan-2011-20301.pdf>

Consisting of between 21 (*census data*) & 28 (*Fig.2 Map below*) hamlets (aldeia) situated in 3 villages (soco), the dominant subsistence livelihoods in the area are agriculture (coffee, vegetables, fruit), livestock and to a lesser degree, forestry (precious timber) exports, all of which depend on a robust ecosystem; particularly the provision of water for land development, healthy soils and associated systems for agriculture / permaculture.

Tourism is not economically prominent in Hatu-Builico, with only a few hundred foreign visitors annually; international tourism development should be considered promising, but embryonic



**NOTE:** Correlation between census data and any available map was not possible.

Fig. 2: Map - Hatu-Builico Sub District, showing 3 Villages (Soco) and 21-28? Hamlets (Aldeia) © Creative Commons

The spiritual 'draw', the extraordinary personal experience, and the stunning panorama from the Mt. Ramelau summit, have led to a growing number of predominantly domestic tourists in recent years, making tourism 'business' an increasingly important economic factor to the local livelihoods. This brings both future opportunities and challenges to the Hatu-Builico community, and exerts added pressures on available natural resources.

In 2018, these concerns led to MAF identifying Mt. Ramelau as a priority site for strategic support in collaboration with the **USAID**'s 'Tourism For All' Project.

### ABOUT USAID'S TOURISM FOR ALL PROJECT

The vision behind **USAID**'s investment in the tourism sector through **USAID**'s 'Tourism For All' Project is to promote Timor-Leste's competitiveness as an international tourism destination while preserving its unique environmental and cultural heritage.

This work is in support of the Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 (which identifies five different tourism niches; eco and marine, historical and cultural, adventure and sports, religious and pilgrimage, and conference and convention); and the Timor-Leste National Tourism Policy entitled Growing Tourism to 2030 – Enhancing a National Identity, which posits five 'P' targets:

**PRIORITY, PROSPERITY, PROTECTION, PARTNERSHIP & PEOPLE.**

The implementation of this plan is intended to contribute towards Timor-Leste's national commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) as articulated through the national Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2011-2030 (GOTL, 2011; UNDP, 2017); as well as contribute to the nations' commitment to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, NBSAP, 2015).

This plan is primarily in accordance with Decree Law 05/2016 (Establishing the National System of Protected Areas), Decree Law 17/2008 (Organizational Structure of the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry)<sup>7</sup>, and supported by Decree Laws 26/2012 (Environmental Base Law)<sup>8</sup>, as well as the Law on Biodiversity (viewed in draft only)<sup>9</sup>.

Ultimately however, this SMP is not about competing Government Ministerial Control and/or Power. The **MOST IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDER GROUPS** for whom this SMP holds the greatest significance are:

- i. The **Communities & Residents within & surrounding the Mt. Ramelau PA** affected by the lifestyle and livelihood restrictions as a result of the PA creation; for SMP sustainability, their support of this plan requires 'community-acceptable' compensatory benefits.
- ii. The **Visitors / Tourists**. The Visitor Experience must be 'positive' in all respects, throughout their Mt. Ramelau 'journey'; for Tourism to flourish, 'Word of Mouth' is the No. 1 selling tool particularly in the current social media age.

**Note:** This SMP has been developed for practical application at the site level, enabling the vertical alignment of solutions-based approaches between local communities and central government leadership, the above two stakeholder groups at the forefront of the proposed solutions.

This SMP is also intended as a 'go to' resource for community and local government leaders to effectively prioritize development activities, identify funding and partnership needs, and work in collaboration with other agencies and organizations to implement planned initiatives.

Overall, this SMP aims to:

- Support the protection of biodiversity and the natural environment of Mt. Ramelau;
- Ensure the preservation of essential ecosystem services for people (food security and livelihoods) and nature;
- Support the development of sustainable livelihoods for a prosperous future;
- Support the preservation of cultural heritage;
- Build the wider private sector through tourism development (derived businesses); and
- Create economic linkages with the greater Timor-Leste tourism economy.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://mj.gov.tl/jornal/lawsTL/RDTL-Law/RDTL-Decree-Laws/Decree-Law-2008-17.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.mj.gov.tl/jornal/public/docs/2012/serie\\_1/serie1\\_no24.pdf](http://www.mj.gov.tl/jornal/public/docs/2012/serie_1/serie1_no24.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.laohamutuk.org/Agri/EnvLaw/div/LeiBiodiversidadeMar12En.pdf>

# SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

## Context

Traditionally much revered, the ‘Grandfather of All’ Mt. Ramelau has been / is many things i.e. food & water source, community income generator, shelter, protection during conflict, site of traditional ceremonies, and a historic sacred religious icon. It is the ‘People’s Mountain’, far beyond living memory.

### **The East Timorese people didn’t, and mostly still don’t see ‘Tourism’ for Mt. Ramelau.**

In the early 1980’s Mt. Ramelau’s forest supported a wide range of animal and birdlife; a pristine environment identified by BirdLife International<sup>10</sup> as an Important Birdlife & Biodiversity Area (IBA), supporting several endemic and restricted-range bird species; a “Key Site for Conservation”.

However, for Mt. Ramelau, Man’s considerable environmental modification since has resulted in declining wildlife populations, primarily due to hunting (protein source), habitat loss (‘slash & burn’ to create grazing and cropping land), and forest destruction for fire-wood harvesting and the building of private residences; the demands of an ever-growing population. Very little natural forest remains.

The overall situation has worsened due to the effects of climate change<sup>11</sup>. Weather patterns have changed environmental & life-style dynamics; longer hotter dry periods and shorter sharper heavier rainfalls. Frequent landslips during heavy rainfall, a common feature of the steep topography such as the Mt. Ramelau PA, can often be attributed to Man’s destruction of nature’s natural defense; the root systems of large trees (the old forest). The consequent effect on soil quality is evident in crop yield and crop quality, the resultant malnourished stunted crops being due to soil-nutrient (top-soil) erosion; the goodness being washed out to sea.

In 1997, as an affirmation of the country’s faith and a sign of resistance to the Indonesian occupation, the Catholic Church erected a Virgin Mary statue at the peak and created / developed (details are sketchy) an open-air Chapel nearby; intensifying the cultural and religious respect of Tatamailau. **The Catholic Church’s intention was not ‘Tourism’ per se in 1997.**

**Note:** Although details are not available, this SMP assumes that prior to the erection of the Virgin Mary statue atop Mt. Ramelau, and the creating (expansion / modification of an existing Uma Lulik<sup>12</sup> used in sacred Lisan ceremonies?) of the traditional style Chapel Area near the peak, that the annual numbers climbing to the summit were far less than the present-day 25,000+ annually. The growth in numbers, clearly ‘faith-based’, hence the tourism potential currently being pursued, must be attributed to the Catholic Church’s development of the higher reaches of Mt. Ramelau. A conservative estimate would be that 99%+ of all climbers are visiting for religious reasons.

<sup>10</sup> Trainor, Dr Colin & Santana, Fernando & Rudyanto, & Xavier, Almeida & Olivera, Gil. (2007). Important Bird Areas in Timor-Leste: Key Sites for Conservation

<sup>11</sup> Molyneux, Nicholas & Cruz, Gil & Williams, Rob & Andersen, Rebecca & Turner, Neil. (2012). Climate Change and Population Growth in Timor Leste: Implications for Food Security

<sup>12</sup> Traditional Sacred House (sometimes referred to as Uma Lisan)

Timor-Leste's PA programme began in the year 2000. Considering the above, Mt. Ramelau (above 2000m and surrounding forests) was an obvious choice. **At this stage MAF's focus was not 'Tourism'.**

Little is known regarding the specifics; the core natural and cultural assets of Mt. Ramelau that led to the initial designation remain vague. Very few surveys have been conducted and little is known about the biodiversity of the area.

Official Mt. Ramelau PA demarcation (external boundary?) is due to be completed June 2022. **USAID's** Tourism For All Project has provided a grant for this purpose, the importance of which cannot be overstated. By far, the bigger demarcation issue will be the internal community ownership boundaries; those determining access to precious natural resources within the PA.

Although a major factor, to think that 200,000+ PA's (globally) result from political decisions regarding environmental concerns, biodiversity protection, cultural and traditional heritage preservation, and concern for endangered species, is misleading. Timor-Leste, as a democratic 'aid-dependent' country also needs to conform to the established norms of the International Community.

Many of those international standards involve environment & biodiversity concerns, cultural & traditional heritage preservation, and anti-deforestation & anti-global-warming initiatives. Plus, environmental management objectives, particularly for the fulfillment of national commitments under the Rio Conventions, UNCBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD and being a signatory to international treaties such as the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the 2015 Paris Agreement.

In doing so, Timor-Leste places itself in a 'more-internationally-favourable' position, than it otherwise might be; higher levels of international support per capita, more projects approved for international grants, higher levels of donor \$millions from development partners more favourable borrowing terms from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

**International acceptance of appropriate PA management supports Timor-Leste economically, opening financial doors and creating macro-economic opportunities.**

Although lacking in accordance with required PA management standards for final international classification, MAF's management of, and management plans for Timor-Leste's 46 PA's provides substantial indirectly-derived economic benefits.

**As an essential part of the Timor-Leste economy, in addition to direct project-based international grants, it's estimated that many \$millions of additional international aid income over the last 20 years has resulted.**

In effect, PA management by MAF and tourism development within the PA system by MTCI, is pre-funded into State Treasury.

Irrespective of Government political persuasion, the main role of a democratically elected government is to use all available resources to improve the lives of the people. Presumably accepted and approved by all political parties, the GOTL Strategic Development Plan [SDP] 2011-2030) exists, and remains the living guide for Timor-Leste's growth; it contains a Tourism/Eco-Tourism section.

MAF is bound by Decree Law 05/2016 (National System of Protected Areas) and its many references to tourism development, emphasizing inter-Ministry co-operation at many levels; leading to the current emphasis. MTCI (Tourism) is primarily the other Ministry concerned, as per Decree Law 17/2008 (Organizational Structure of the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry). It is decreed by law that these two Ministries must work together developing tourism.

'Sustainability' is the key within this Eco-Trail SMP; simply ... environment & natural habitats protected, well-maintained & fit for purpose, safe, and fully funded. Currently the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail to the peak is ostensibly unsustainable.

The four distinctly separate major stakeholders interested in Eco-trail operational control have markedly different principal motivations:

- MAF . . . . . Biodiversity, Environment & Traditional Culture Protection
- MTCI . . . . . Commercial Exploitation (the Tourism \$\$)
- Catholic Church . . Place of Worship
- Local Community . . Love, Historical Respect & Admiration

Independently, Eco-trail operational sustainability is not possible. However, by working together in accordance with the respective laws and necessary diplomas, understanding and respecting each party's roles & responsibilities, a sustainable solution is achievable.

## **Natural Assets**

### **Landscape**

For a tropical island, Timor-Leste is unusually dry. Characterized by deep valleys and looming cliffs, the central mountain range (the Ramelau) forms the main divide where most rivers or streams originate; very few are considered perennial i.e. flowing year round. The rivers are relatively steep and short, with small catchment areas, all experiencing annual flow extremes; torrential during the rainy season with levels dropping significantly during the dry months, often drying up completely.

The landscape relief, rock types (fragmented & loose), and rainfall patterns create serious soil erosion throughout Timor-Leste. Man's destruction (deforestation) of Nature's erosion protection (tree roots) has reinforced the crucial importance of proper PA management. Deforestation for cropping and grazing has left little of the original forest, mainly near mountain crests i.e. Mt. Ramelau.

The topography of the area is generally sub-alpine with altitudes between 2000m to nearly 3000m.

## Boundary

The area of the Mt. Ramelau PA is loosely defined as above 2,000m altitude with adjoining forests and is approximately 20,000 hectares in size, however the definitive boundary was provisional at the time of issuing the Decree Law, along with other PAs in the country; the current status remains 'provisional'. The Eco Trail, the focus of this SMP is 100% inside the Mt. Ramelau Protected Area.

The Department of Land and Property was approached for a Mt. Ramelau PA map showing the external boundary; none was available as full and accurate demarcation data has not yet been provided.

## Flora

Since the early 1980's when Mt. Ramelau was extensively covered with old growth montane forest, Man's destruction of the natural habitat that supported a wide range of wildlife and birdlife has been severe. Whether for settling purposes, cropping, livestock grazing or hardwood exports, only a few patches of the original forest remain, typically in the less accessible higher reaches.

The Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail is now dominated by eucalyptus regrowth, *Eucalyptus Alba* and *Eucalyptus Urophylla*. Commonly known as Timor White Gum & Timor Mountain Gum, until 1977 considered the same species, native to Timor. A dominant tree in open woodlands, white gum/mountain gum is found on ridges and elevated areas, often where soil quality is poor.

Notwithstanding its 'native' status, MAF has identified eucalyptus as being of natural importance. Many believe that eucalyptus trees (or 'ai bubur') are an identity of Timor-Leste and should not be lost. However, these trees are commonly harvested for firewood and cooking fuel by communities throughout Timor-Leste. Mt. Ramelau's lower slopes are commonly grassed for grazing livestock.

## Fauna

Limited studies have been undertaken on Mt. Ramelau, therefore little is known of the indigenous fauna. After centuries of human habitation and subsistence living (traditional-style hunting for protein), Timor-Leste's animal numbers are reduced. There are rusa deer in the highlands and wild pigs & goats are occasionally seen. Monkeys are occasionally seen on the lower slopes.

Considering the current vegetation cover, it is anticipated the area is also host to a range of other species, including reptiles and small mammals. However, the only available information on fauna is from a study conducted in 2007 by BirdLife International that identified 16 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) throughout Timor-Leste.

As an IBA, the Mt. Ramelau region is therefore recognized as a priority site for the conservation of birds and other wildlife. Ten **restricted-range** (RR) species have been recorded to date, including the endangered Timor Imperial pigeon:

English Name	Scientific Name	IUCN Red List Status
• Timor Imperial-Pigeon	<i>Ducula cineracea</i>	<b>Endangered</b> - RR
• Black-Banded Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula timorensis</i>	Near Threatened - RR
• Slaty Cuckoo-Dove	<i>Turacoena modesta</i>	Near Threatened - RR
• Olive-Shouldered Parrot	<i>Aprosmictus jonquillaceus</i>	Near Threatened - RR
• Olive-Headed Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus euteles</i>	RR
• Plain Friarbird	<i>Philemon inornatus</i>	RR
• Yellow-Eared Honeyeater	<i>Lichmera flavicans</i>	RR
• Plain Gerygone	<i>Gerygone inornata</i>	RR
• Timor Leaf-Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus presbytes</i>	RR
• Timor Blue-Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis hyacinthinus</i>	RR



Fig. 3: Timor Imperial-Pigeon © James Eaton



Fig. 4: Black-Banded Flycatcher © Jafet Potenza Lopes

## Cultural Assets

As with most districts in Timor-Leste, Ainaro and Ermera also have many ceremonies, festivals and places of cultural importance that the people revere. Many families have a sacred house (uma lisan).

Nearby peaks (some declared sacred) are also held special by the local communities. And water sources, be they wells or natural springs are often sites of harvest rituals, ceremonial festivities and prayers. Prayers for rain are often held on Mountain peaks.

For example, approximately a quarter of the distance up the Eco-Trail (left side) there is a small open area of unknown use. Based on the horns hanging from trees etc., it's possibly a hunting base, or used in some animal sacrifice ceremony? Hunting prayers? This site is not considered within this SMP.

This SMP concentrates on the main Eco-Trail from the Sanctuary (Trail Head) to the Mt. Ramelau summit. Three important cultural assets are of primary concern:

- Mt. Ramelau Statue : The Virgin Mary (at the summit)
- Mt. Ramelau Chapel : 'Sub-Peak Campground' (on the plateau below the summit)
- The Sanctuary : Trail Head

## Mt. Ramelau Statue - The Virgin Mary

The Virgin Mary statue is Timor-Leste's best known cultural asset, a religious icon, a tourist attraction, the focus (99% +) of the people that climb to the peak; the main draw for visitors to Hatu-Builico.

In recognizing the aspirations of the East Timorese in the mid 1970's, a nation desperately striving for self-determination & independence, significantly the Catholic Church adopted Tetun as its liturgical language. The Catholic Church became a focus for cultural and national identity, the refuge for East Timorese heritage, in a country awash with hostility.

As of 1974, after centuries of Portuguese colonial rule, approximately 25% of the population were baptized Catholics; the catalyst was the adoption of Tetun. Today, estimates put 98%+ of the Timor-Leste population as Catholic.

A 3-metre (10 ft.) white alabaster statue of the Holy Mother, a present from Italy, was erected in 1997 by a young priest serving in the Diocese of Dili; Father Noberto do Amaral; later ordained as Bishop of Maliana (2010). This gift, in appreciation of the Timorese faith, also aimed to unify the people, especially the youth, in their independence struggle.



Fig. 5: Into the Arms of Mary © Portugis Copy -  
Racom Maubisse

## Mt. Ramelau Chapel - 'Sub-Peak' Campground

Also renovated / created in 1997, the Mt. Ramelau Chapel as it is commonly known, was an Uma Lulik (traditional sacred house) at the eastern side of the campground with rows of wooden pews facing its entrance.<sup>13</sup>

An altar was set up at the entrance of the Uma Lulik for celebrating Mass (for many thousands of people), and those people performing private devotions.



Fig. 6: The Mt. Ramelau Pre-Fire Chapel  
© Racom Maubisse



Fig. 7: Mass at the Mt. Ramelau Chapel © Racom Maubisse  
Insert Source - Palms Australia © Unknown

<sup>13</sup> The 'past tense' description applies due to the Chapel structure being destroyed by fire, October 2020.

A pilgrimage highlight is overnighting at the Chapel Campground, experiencing the all-night Mass and offering personal devotions, prior to the pre-dawn procession to the summit.

The Mt. Ramelau Chapel today, is in desperate need of re-building / restoration. Destroyed by fire in October 2020, all that remains is the pulpit made from a large tree-trunk.

## The Sanctuary - Trail Head



The Shrine gateway. A partially developed, semi-landscaped, semi-gardened open area. Electricity is now available at the Sanctuary, enabling a wide variety of pre / post climb initiatives to be proposed. Many suggestions are included in this SMP.

Fig. 9: The Mt. Ramelau Sanctuary Gate  
© TFA / Ann Turner

## The Communities of Hatu-Builico

Mt. Ramelau is located centrally, approximately 40 km south of Dili. The Mt. Ramelau PA is defined as the mountainous area around the summit, above 2000m, plus associated forests, declared in 2000.

Without formal demarcation / mapping, incomplete after 20+ years, it is impossible to determine the districts involved, possibly five; Aileu, Ainaro, Ermera, Bobonaro & Cova Lima. Primarily, concerning this SMP are Ainaro (estimated 75%) and Ermera (the top 25% of the Eco-trail). PA boundary demarcation will be completed June 2022, funded by the **USAID**'s Tourism For All Project.

The primary administrative post (sub-district) is Hatu-Builico comprising of 3 x villages {Suco Mauchiga, Suco Mulo & Suco Nuno-Mogue}, and at least 21 aldeia (communities). *Map Details - P. 11, Fig. 2.*

Controversially, according to GOTL officials, the land of the Mt. Ramelau PA belongs to the state. While residents recognize the legality of state 'management / control' (yet to see many benefits), they consider the local communities to be the 'cultural' owners of the area, living on and working the land well before any form of central government existed.

Somewhat ironic, is the situation where the 'People's Mountain' that protected and fed the people during the oppressive power regimes of the past is now being gradually taken off them by the legislative process. The people of Timor-Leste fought for independence, including the communities in and around the Mt. Ramelau PA, only to now have their livelihoods restricted by their own, less oppressive, power regime, a democratic government whose **responsibility is to improve the lives of the people.**



Fig. 8: The Mt. Ramelau Chapel Today  
© TFA / Steve Underhill

Fig. 9: The Mt. Ramelau Sanctuary Gate  
© TFA / Ann Turner

## Governance of the Mt. Ramelau Protected Area - 'Eco Trail'

Albeit a small portion of the greater Mt. Ramelau PA, governance over the Eco-Trail is relatively complex, but can be simplified as follows:

### Demarcation

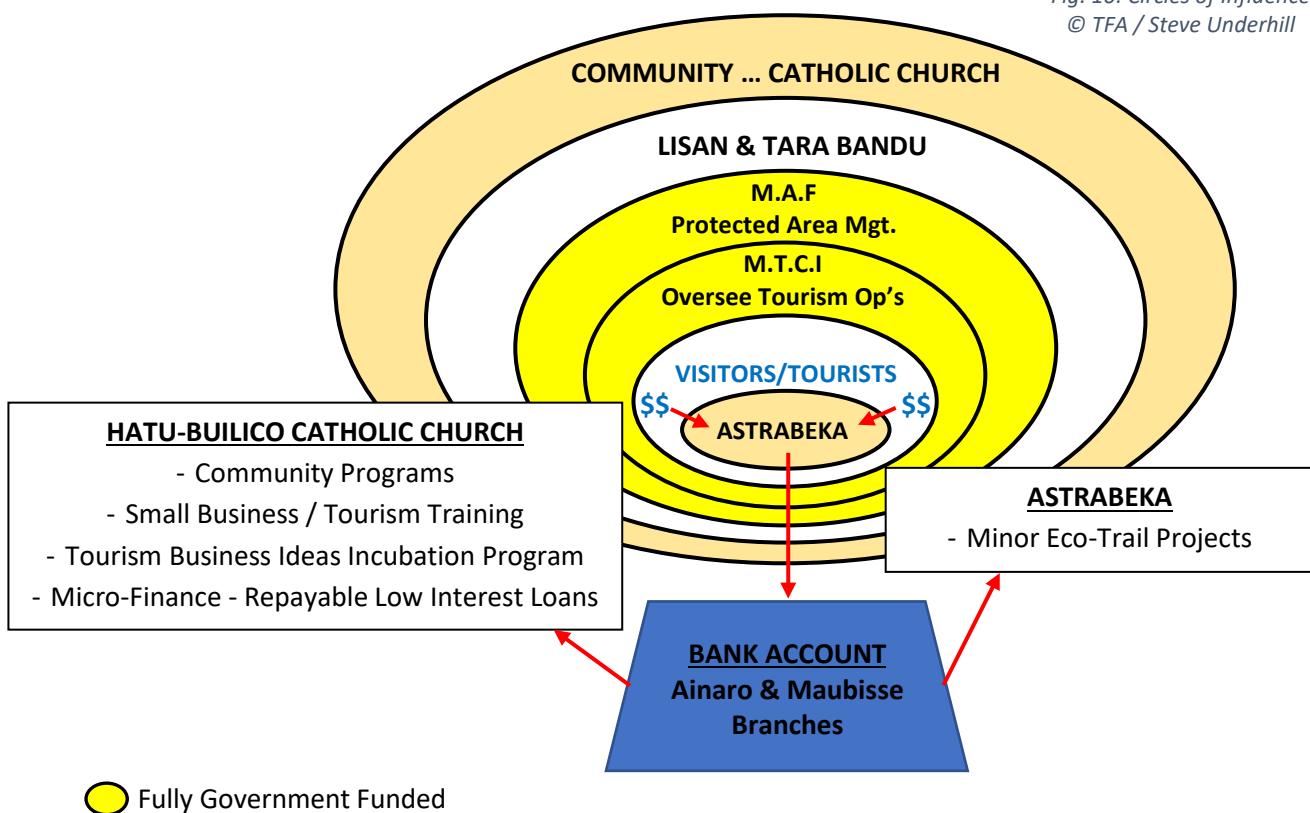
For Decree Law 05/2016 (Establishing the National System of Protected Areas) to be effective, the area to which it applies needs to be legally fully ratified. The formal demarcation of (part of) Timor-Leste's foremost cultural iconic PA (Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail) is essential, as some communities are already expanding businesses, farms and building houses within the PA boundary. External boundary demarcation is planned for completion June 2022, funded by **USAID**'s Tourism For All Project.

Full legal demarcation of the entire Mt. Ramelau Protected Area must occur and will affect an estimated 100's of homes, 1000's of people, in possibly 5 Districts. As per Decree Law 05/2016, Article 17 - Demarcation & Signaling, the necessary multi-lingual signage marking entrances to the protected area and the entry conditions thereof (the rules) can be considered the second step.

The communication (socialization) of the resulting community changes, dealing with the subsequent complaints and proposing solutions (if available) is the most important part of the demarcation process - the third step, **but it can begin immediately**.

**Note:** This diagram is primarily concerned with the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail.

Fig. 10: Circles of Influence  
© TFA / Steve Underhill



## The Community and the Catholic Church

Governance of any description begins with the people and their respect of the rules and regulations imposed upon them; their 'respect for authority'. That authority will stem from three sources:

- The Catholic Church
- Lisan and Tara Bandu
- Government: Central Government (MAF & MTCI) & Local Authorities

The 'sustainability' of the Eco-Trail solution will require the agreement of the affected people to the various conditions; a process of negotiation, including compensatory benefits.

In reference to Figure 10, due to the overwhelming following of the Catholic Church, by default the voice of the Timor-Leste people largely lies with the Church.

## Lisan / Tara Bandu

As an integral part of *Lisan*, *Tara Bandu* is a Timorese concept that defines social norms and practices within a given community; a system of local rules set by public agreement i.e. most applicable to this SMP, it might limit the number of trees allowed to be cut down in a certain area.

Each district, sub-district or even suco (collection of villages) might have its own distinct *Tara Bandu*.

## MAF - Protected Area Management

**Note:** Tourism per se is generally a private sector macro-economic function, operating within government guidelines. In regards to this SMP, MAF and MTCI have a common goal to create an Eco-Trail business environment whereby private sector investors see profitable opportunities.

There are several government entities concerned with the relevant **Management & Control**:

- The Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries (MAF) is the principle ministry responsible for the management of all PAs in Timor-Leste, including the Mt. Ramelau PA. The entire Eco-Trail can be considered a 'sub-PA'; it falls under MAF.
- Ainaro Municipal Authority and Hatu-Builico Administrative Post, are the accepted local authorities for the Eco-Trail, and are both under the Ministry of State Administration.

Operationally, MAF is bound by Decree Law 05/2016 (Establishing the National System of Protected Areas). As per Decree Law 05/2016, "The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste establishes the duty of protecting the environment, preserving natural resources and to assert and value the cultural heritage of the Timorese people, as the fundamental objectives of the State, under a holistic perspective of protection, for the benefit of the environment and for the benefit of future generations, under the principle of solidarity between generations and the principle of sustainable development of the economy".

A number of Decree Law 05/2016 clauses are relevant to this SMP:

1. Article 25 (Management Plan), Clause 1. h); “Identify, together with the government entity responsible for tourism, the tourism and ecotourism activities to be developed”. This would refer to MAF working with MTCI, working together for a common purpose; not creating separate Draft Laws, possibly based on very different agendas.
2. Article 36 (Government Entity Responsible for Protected Areas), Sub-Clause m) “Ensure the allocation of the annual budget for protected areas, from the General State Budget or other sources of funding, and monitor their implementation”. **MAF’s activities are normally funded from the General State Budget.** Refer No. 6 below.
3. Article 37 (Management Committee) ... Article 38 (Powers), Clause 1. “The Management Committee shall: h) Participate in the creation of ecological tourism facilities and infrastructures, particularly in providing water, shelter, food and waste disposal; i) Promote the development of programs that offer income alternatives to local communities”. No community programs are evident.
4. Article 39 (Head of Protected Area), Clause 2. c) “Prepare an annual operations plan and the annual budget for the protected area; j) Monitor the establishment of infrastructures to support visitors, particularly drinking fountains, feeding areas, shelters, sanitary facilities etc”.
5. Article 40 (Staff), Clause 2. h) “To maintain protected area facilities in good condition”.
6. Article 41 (Financing). “The creation and management of the NSPA<sup>14</sup> is financed: a) By the State General Budget; b) By donations or funds from agencies, international organizations or development partners, in accordance with procedures to be agreed with the member of the Government responsible for protected areas”. **No mention of funding from entry fees.**
7. Article 42 (Fees and Charges), Clause 1. “Admission or obtaining permission or license to carry out an activity in a protected area may be subject to payment of a fee, in accordance with the terms to be defined by a specific diploma”. This indicates that MAF or MTCI cannot charge a fee without having the appropriate “specific diploma” enacted.

As discussed in the ‘Context’ section (P.12), the designation and management of Timor-Leste’s 46 PA’s provides substantial indirectly-derived economic benefits to Timor-Leste; many \$millions of additional international aid income over the last 20 years has resulted. **Project funding shouldn’t be an issue; MAF & MTCI have no reason to claim any portion of any fees collected.**

MAF / MTCI must create a worthy Eco-Trail ‘Tourism Product’ for the Visitors, constrained by Decree Laws, Lisan, Tara Bandu and the need to satisfy both the greater Community and the Catholic Church.

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<sup>14</sup> National System of Protected Areas

**Q. Is an estimated annual \$20,000 in collected entry fees (Tourism User Fees -TUF's) really worth splitting up; consider the operational & accounting pain? Why over-complicate things? Why not keep \$\$ easily accessible at the local level.**

In addition to the above, various agencies are involved in the **Governance** of tourism, environment, land-use and culture in the Mt. Ramelau PA, including:

- Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry (MTCI),
- Secretariat of State for Environment (SEA) under the Office of the Minister Coordinator for Economic Affairs,
- Secretariat of State for Land and Property under Ministry of Justice, and
- Secretariat of State for Art and Culture under Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Culture.

Apart from the aforementioned governmental bodies, the Catholic Church, through the Dili Diocese and Hatu-Builico clergy, is an important stakeholder, particularly concerning the Virgin Mary statue and the Chapel. Other key stakeholders include private sector actors active in the region i.e. guesthouses and restaurants in the PAs vicinity and enroute to Hatu-Builico, primarily ex Dili.

## **MTCI - Overseeing Tourism Operations**

Operationally, MTCI is bound by Decree Law 17/2008 (Organizational Structure of the Ministry of Tourism, Trade & Industry). “The Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry, hereinafter referred to as MTCI, is the Government’s main body in charge of designing, regulating, executing, coordinating and assessing the policy as defined and approved by the Council of Ministers for the areas of Tourism, Trade & Industry”.

A number of Decree Law 17/2008 clauses are relevant to this SMP:

- I. Article 2 (Responsibilities), “In pursuit of its mission, it is incumbent upon MTCI: g) To assess and approve projects concerning tourist ... facilities and the operation thereof; p) To design, implement and evaluate the national tourism policy, incorporating in it the areas of leisure, entertainment and ecotourism; q) To draft an annual plan of promotional activities for the development of tourism, together with the respective cost estimate; s) To set up collaboration mechanisms with other government services and bodies responsible for related areas, ... ; u) To regulate the establishment of professional associations in the tourist sector ... ; v) To regulate and inspect tourist activities, especially those involving a conditioned and/or restricted access, subject to licensing or public concession, in collaboration with relevant entities and in line with the policies defined by the Government”.

2. Article 10 (National Directorate for Tourism), 1. “The National Directorate for Tourism, hereinafter referred to as DNTUR, is responsible for designing, reviewing, preparing, executing and assessing the policy on tourism, with a view to establishing and upgrading sectoral structures”; 2. **“It is incumbent upon DNTUR:**

- a) To design, execute and assess the national policy on tourism;
- b) To provide technical advice on the preparation and development of sectoral programs and legislation, including the certification of establishments and operating rules for carrying out leisure, recreation and entertainment activities;
- c) To prepare an annual plan of promotional activities, together with the respective cost estimate;
- d) To collaborate with other relevant services in the application of legislation related to the establishment and licensing of tourist facilities and the verification of their health and hygiene conditions;
- e) To review projects related to tourist facilities and the operation of tourist businesses and issue opinions and make recommendations thereon;
- f) To set up collaboration mechanisms with other governmental services and agencies responsible for related areas with a view to promoting ... development;
- g) To promote and project the image of Timor-Leste, through the institutes within its scope of competence, amongst investors and operators in the tourist sector by providing them with adequate information;
- h) To prepare and oversee all printed and electronic information aimed at promoting the country’s tourist attractions;
- i) Contribute to the definition of criteria and financial measures to support business structures in the tourist sector;
- j) To assist the Government in negotiation and decision-making processes in international fora, both bilateral and multilateral, in the areas within its purview in such a way as to align them with the interests of the economic policy of Timor-Leste;
- k) To propose criteria for granting certifications and laurels to businesses in the tourist sector, notably in the hotel management, catering and leisure sectors;
- l) To build capacities of staff members in order to increase their knowledge and qualifications, in coordination with the Ministry’s management and within the Ministry’s human resources management framework;
- m) To maintain and manage a tourist information and documentation centre and promote the publication and dissemination of topics determined and approved at a higher level;
- n) To provide technical support to the Office of the Games Inspector General and police authorities in the prevention of illegal practices in connection with social games and gambling;
- o) To support, within its budget, teaching and vocational training in tourism, preferably through programme contracts, with clear-cut goals and timeframes ...”

Again, Tourism per se is generally a private sector macro-economic function, operating within guidelines provided by government; often legislated. According to Decree Law 17/2008, it appears that MTCI is more advisory. MTCI has an annual budget to perform its mandated activities. **There appears no reason why MTCI should claim any portion of the proposed entrance fee.**

## **ASTRABEKA**

A Mt. Ramelau / Mt. Blehetu / Mt. Kablake Stakeholders' Management Committee was formed. The **USAID** Tourism For All project supported and funded the formation of ASTRABEKA in the Administrative Post (sub-district) of Hatu-Builico; formalised through the General Assembly and officially registered (Ministry of Justice) in October 2019.<sup>15</sup>

ASTRABEKA's mission is to develop sustainable community-based tourism, by improving people's knowledge, skills and ability in operating tourism sector businesses; initially, possibly seeded as the Tourism Working Group (TWG). According to **USAID**'s 'Assessment of Hatu-Builico and Mount Ramelau Tourism and Recommendations for Medium to Long Term Planning (2018)<sup>16</sup>, the TWG consisted of 15 young people (5 female) from Hatu-Builico, most of whom studied tourism at university in Dili, intending to develop tourism in Hatu-Builico to a plan they wrote as part of their studies.

Consisting of multi-faceted wider-community representation i.e. Local Authorities, Catholic Church, Business Owners, Suco Chiefs & Cultural Leaders, the Youth, the Women's Group etc., aside from being the local 'Doers', **ASTRABEKA appears? to have been delegated two major responsibilities:**

- I. **Development of Human Capital** - "Human resources capacity building in the area of Tourism >>> ". This appears to be a legally decreed MAF-funded responsibility.
  - o According to Decree Law 05/2016 on the National System of Protected Areas, Article 38 (Powers), Clause 1, i) MAF's "Management Committee shall promote the development of programs that offer income alternatives to local communities".

Where directly involved, MTCI may also hold some responsibility for the local development of human capital, in the area of tourism. According to Decree Law 17/2008 on the Organisational Structure of the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry, Article 10 (National Directorate for Tourism), Clause 2. o "It is incumbent upon DNTUR:

- o To support, within its budget, teaching and vocational training in tourism, preferably through programme contracts, with clear-cut goals and timeframes.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.timorleste.tl/associations/astrabeka>

<sup>16</sup> USAID - Tourism For All Project, Chemonics, (2018), 'Assessment of Hatu-Builico and Mount Ramelau Tourism and Recommendations for Medium to Long Term Planning'.

If **USAID**'s Tourism For All Project was not currently involved in Hatu-Builico community capacity-building, how is ASTRABEKA funding the required community training programmes, that they are supposed to be implementing? How will they be funded on a continuing basis? An annual budget allocation from both MAF and MTCI is required. This needs to be established and formalized.

2. **Promotion of Hatu-Builico Tourism** (locally, nationally & internationally) - “>>> and to lead promotion and publish tourism information”. This appears to be a legally decreed MTCI funded responsibility.

Refer to P.24, Decree Law 17/2008 on the Organisational Structure of the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry, Article 10 (National Directorate for Tourism), Clauses 2. c) & e) to h).

Similarly, the domestic tourism campaign of **USAID**'s Tourism For All Project, the '**Hau Nia Timor-Leste**' promotion (Ongoing? Funding?) and the '**Go! Timor**' Smartphone App (Ongoing? Updates? Maintenance? Funding?). When these two promotional projects are finalised and handed over (MTCI? ASTRABEKA?), what plans are in place? How will they be funded on a continuing basis? An annual budget allocation from MTCI is required. This needs to be established and formalized.

Technical assistance and ASTRABEKA Committee Member capacity building are obvious and urgent needs:

- Developing management strategies to better understand how to manage and improve the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail visitor experience.
- Crafting funding proposals.

Essentially an independent Association, ASTRABEKA are the people on the ground tasked with the various projects that need to be done; often contracted out. Whether those projects are directed from MAF, MTCI, or the Catholic Church, ASTRABEKA slots in as the Project Manager specifically funded by the respective client.

## **Development and Tourism at Mt. Ramelau / Hatu-Builico**

During UNTAET administration of East Timor, two year's work culminated in a 2001 dossier, 'Development of Tourism Policy and Strategic Planning in East Timor'<sup>17</sup>, in which a collection of previously-presented conference papers are discussed.

Paper 2, P. 69-71, 'Environmental Protection and Tourism: Issues for East Timor'<sup>18</sup> is of interest.

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<sup>17</sup> Carter, R. W. & Prideaux, B. & Ximenes, V. & Chatenay, A. V. P. (2001). Development of Tourism Policy and Strategic Planning in East Timor, Occasional Paper 2001 8(1):1-101

<sup>18</sup> Ximenes, V. and Carter, R. W. (2000) Environmental Protection and Tourism: Issues for East Timor. Paper presented at the Reconstruction: Review of the Past and Perspective for the Future Conference, Tibar, East Timor, 30 May-2 June 2000

The potential of Hatu-Builico and Mt. Ramelau are mentioned in Paper 2. Refer Annex 2 for details.

Paper 2, P. 69-71 refers to a plan to develop Tutuala (**22 years ago!**), en route to Jaco Island, and using the same plan for Hatu-Builico / Mt Ramelau.

Relevant to this SMP, tourism (primarily domestic) was already happening. In 2000 the market was referred to as “bored UNTAET staff that either travel off-shore on their days off or visits places such as Baucau, Ramelau and Tutuala”.

Again relevant to this SMP, Mt. Ramelau was also mentioned as an example of environmental concern, in regards to the communities being forced into the hills for safety, causing, “Considerable pressure on natural resources with resultant negative environmental impacts”, referring to mountain farming.

Since then, successive governments of all political persuasions have repeatedly declared how important tourism is to the Timor-Leste economy. For two decades, endless writings, plans, strategies & master plans on the matter have produced little action. The saying, “*Paralysis by Analysis*” seems applicable.

Quoting from the Paper Abstract, “*With rich natural, cultural and historic tourism resources, but without tourism infrastructure, human capacity and capital for investment, East Timor faces a dilemma in deciding how to initiate tourism that will meet objectives of sustainability and the delivery of community benefits*”.

However, that dilemma need not persist. If the concerned Government bodies, the Catholic Church, the people, and ASTRABEKA acted in accordance with their ‘sensibly-defined’ roles and responsibilities, the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail project would progress, the ultimate aim of this SMP.

- **Adequate Law:**

- Inclusive of the applicable environmental and biodiversity acts, international agreements, treaties etc., the primary legislation are the two Decree Laws previously mentioned:
  - Decree Law 05/2016 (Establishing the National System of Protected Areas)
  - Decree Law 17/2008 (Organizational Structure of the Ministry of Tourism, Trade & Industry)

- **Adequate Government Involvement:**

- **MAF** - In addition to the “creation of ecological tourism facilities and infrastructures” i.e. “providing water, shelter, food and waste disposal”, MAF is legally mandated with the Management, Maintenance (Cleaning?), Guarding (Security?), Visitor Safety and Funding (from the State Budget) of the entire Mt. Ramelau Protected Area (PA), which includes the complete Eco-Trail, from the Trail Head (*Sanctuary*) to the peak.

The mountain Eco-Trail, the statue of Virgin Mary, and the Chapel should be considered ‘pre-existing cultural assets, existing prior to PA declaration. Therefore the Timor-Leste Government assumed responsibility for all the cultural assets within the declared Mt. Ramelau PA (none were specifically excluded), and the protection of such assets.

MAF is also responsible for the development and promotion of “programs that offer income alternatives to local communities”.

- **MTCI** - Regulatory oversight of Timor-Leste's Tourism Industry; setting the required operating criteria and ensuring those standards are maintained throughout.

Regarding tourism projects; generally mandated to operationally review, analyse, advise, approve and promote. A major role of MTCI (the National Directorate for Tourism) is the marketing of Timor-Leste tourism and dissemination of Tourism information, both physically and electronically via its web-site.

- **Hatu-Builico Administrative Post** - According to **USAID**'s 'Assessment of Hatu-Builico and Mount Ramelau Tourism and Recommendations for Medium to Long Term Planning (2018)<sup>19</sup>', "The Administrative Post believes it has a very important role in managing tourism at Hatobuilico and Mt. Ramelau, citing Decree Law 03/2016 which gives municipalities a mandate to manage all economic sectors, including tourism, in their respective areas".

This SMP supports local management of the Eco-Trail, as the Hatu-Builico Administrative Post is the most likely government group to focus on the community's interest. It will also increase the likelihood of smaller projects, those that directly affect the Visitors' experience, being completed.

- **Inter-Ministerial Commission for Tourism Development (IMCTD)**

■ Set up in June 2019, the IMCTD was tasked with a number of things relevant to this SMP, as per the IMCTD foundational minutes dated June 12<sup>th</sup> 2019<sup>20</sup>:

- "The tourism sector is recognized by the Government as an important pillar of Timor-Leste's economic, social and environmental development, essential for sustainable growth and the creation of this commission intends to strengthen inter-sectorial and inter-ministerial coordination and collaboration mechanisms to enhance the competitiveness of the country as a tourist destination of excellence".
- "The commission will be responsible for promoting the preparation of the **Tourism Master Plan**, analyzing the necessary legislative initiatives and promoting interdepartmental coordination in the implementation and execution of the **Tourism Master Plan**".

- Considering this SMP, and the respective MAF / MTCI relationship, the IMCTD appears to have achieved little of its mandated inter-ministerial / inter-departmental coordination; possibly hindered by State of Emergency / Covid 19 restrictions during 2020 / 2021.
- The IMTCD is again operational. While MAF and MTCI are decreed as partners on PA / Tourism matters, it appears that each is currently creating draft law supporting their own agenda. **This is an issue that should be raised with the IMCTD as soon as possible.**

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<sup>19</sup> USAID - Tourism For All Project, Chemonics, (2018), 'Assessment of Hatu-Builico and Mount Ramelau Tourism and Recommendations for Medium to Long Term Planning'.

<sup>20</sup> GOTL - Inter Ministerial Commission for Tourism Development, Foundation Meeting Notes, June 2019. Incl. - Annex 3.

- **The Catholic Church:**

- Although Mt. Ramelau was regularly climbed pre 1997, ultimately the Catholic Church is responsible for the dramatic increase in numbers over the last 25 years. The pilgrimages, festivals and other major events resulting from having the Virgin Mary Statue, Chapel and Sanctuary facilities, along with today's casual visitors are today's, Mt. Ramelau 'Tourism'.
- Clearly Timor-Leste's No.1 'faith-based' tourist destination (people also often visit Cristo Rei for other reasons); albeit fledgling, the creation of the Hatu-Builico / Mt. Ramelau tourism industry is attributable to the Catholic Church.
- The Timor-Leste Government should acknowledge this with **immediate financial assistance**, initially to be used in re-building the Chapel. MTCI has confirmed that they already have a plan in motion to this effect.

- **The Timor-Leste People:**

- Without the support of the Timor-Leste people, due to their Catholic faith (an estimated 98%), Mt. Ramelau 'Tourism' per se wouldn't exist. Currently that support is relatively unconditional, as the local community has not been informed of their livelihood restrictions due to the PA implementation. Demarcation and socialization have not yet occurred.
- That support however will become conditional. 'Human Nature' will ask, "What's in it for me"? If the community sees Entrance Fees income disappearing into government coffers, with nothing in return for the community; the inequity will cause resentment.

- **ASTRABEKA:** (The full Association constitution has not been consulted)

- On the ground, at the 'coal-face', the Stakeholders' Management Committee ASTRABEKA are the doers, the implementers.
- In coordination with MAF, MTCI, the Hatu-Builico Authorities, the Catholic Church etc., ASTRABEKA will either get the work done directly or use an external contractor.
- ASTRABEKA will possibly function as the future Mt. Ramelau Management?

Tourism potential for the area is considerable, albeit currently more suited for 4WD vehicles. The Mt. Ramelau 'experience' for Dili-based visitors *can* be achieved in a 24 hr period, however with the development of better area-wide tourism facilities, why not promote a relaxed 2-3 day weekend away in support of the Hatu-Builico micro-economy and community-based tourism?

Although Decree Law 17/2008 on the Organizational Structure of the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry clearly stipulates that MTCI is responsible for Tourism promotion in Timor-Leste, MTCI's plan / budget in this regard is unknown. Filling the void over recent times has been the **USAID** Tourism For All Project's domestic tourism campaign '**Hau Nia Timor-Leste**', and the development / release of the Smartphone App, '**Go! Timor**'.

Together with the fabulous coast-to-coast view of Timor-Leste from the summit on a clear day, the cultural sites of the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail have high potential for supporting community-based tourism, such as formalized guided weekend tour excursions ex Hatu-Builico. This could bring much needed income to the community possibly mitigating their reliance on firewood sales.

To date, all things considered, for a variety of reasons much of the tourism potential is not understood or developed by the local community. Specific Hatu-Builico / Mt. Ramelau Tourism Training is an immediate requirement.

## KEY ECO-TRAIL SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

In order to advance the sustainable development of the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail, it is important to identify the current challenges to sustainability. This section describes the challenges identified through a combination of community consultations and key informant interviews (Annex 1).

These challenges include, but are not limited to:

<b><u>'Macro' (PA) Perspective</u></b>	<b><u>'Micro' (Eco-Trail) Perspective</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Altitude / PA Boundary Demarcation Issues</li><li>• Inter Govt. Agency Co-Ordination</li><li>• Lack of PA Management &amp; Rules Enforcement<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Adherence to 'Lisan / Tara Bandu'</li></ul></li><li>• Roles &amp; Responsibilities</li><li>• Habitat Loss and/or Destruction</li><li>• Community Tourism Training</li><li>• <b>PROJECT CONTINUITY</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chapel Re-Development / Plateau Gate</li><li>• Poor Basic Infrastructure / Public Facilities</li><li>• Track Maintenance / Safety Issues<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rotten Tree Cutting</li></ul></li><li>• Poor Waste Management / Graffiti Control</li><li>• Sanctuary Development</li><li>• Tourist User Fees? - Value for Money</li><li>• <b>OPERATIONAL FUNDING</b></li></ul>

The above 'challenges' (sub-projects) can be further separated, as previously outlined.

- **Master Plan** (MP); initiatives that require Master SMP majority stakeholder agreement, acceptance, and sign-off. Within this SMP, these are classified as 'Macro'.
- **Master Plan Independent** (MPI); initiatives that must be completed, and must occur regardless of Master SMP details, and are immediately implementable. These are classified as 'Micro'.

### Master Plan:

The following sections are '**MP**'. They either form part of the Master Plan or are dependent on the Master Plan. **They do not affect the essential Eco-Trail 'Micro' projects that need to be implemented ASAP regardless of the Master Plan:**

### Altitude / PA External / Internal Boundary Demarcation

Original PA designation (outer boundary) referred to the area around the Mt. Ramelau peak above 2000m plus adjoining forested areas. A relatively simple task, involving a straight forward mapping exercise, possibly with the use of GPS technology, funded by a current **USAID** / TFA grant.

Internal community boundaries within the PA are more complex and will involve community consultation / negotiation. Six months is ample time to achieve this, but given the poor progress since 2016 (lack of funding and staff), it is expected that internal demarcation will not be 100% finalized for some time yet. This is however **High Priority**.

All identified 'macro' Key Eco-Trail Sustainability Challenges require formal demarcation to be completed; external demarcation is planned for completion June 2022.

## Inter Government Agency Co-Ordination

The two primary Ministries involved are MAF and MTCI; both “claiming” to be working together, but each appears to be creating their own separate draft law, possibly with differing agendas, and probably doubling up on many aspects. The communities they will both affect appear not to be of concern to MAF and MTCI, unlike the concerns of the Church.

A third Ministry is involved. The Eco-Trail is mainly in the Ainaro District, but towards the top it crosses into Ermera; both the Chapel and the Virgin Mary statue are in Ermera District. Although local governmental responsibility has defaulted to the Ainaro Municipal Authority and Hatu-Builico Administrative Post due to proximity and access, the Ermera Municipal Authority and Letefoho Administrative Post need to be considered. These four government bodies fall under the Ministry of State Administration.

The Inter-Ministerial Commission for Tourism Development needs to get pro-actively involved to establish project direction; the current circular course on which the parties are currently travelling is achieving little. Meetings held to create more plans and strategies need to be replaced with ‘project funding & project doing’. The confusing current roles & responsibilities need to be clarified in accordance with Decree Laws 05/2016 & 17/2008, especially in the area of funding; what are MAF and MTCI legally obliged to fund from the State Budget?

A monthly meeting (including the Catholic Church) is appropriate as ASTRABEKA needs professional guidance, and the issue of Entrance Fees is of little importance in the Master Plan.

## Lack of PA Mgt. & Rules Enforcement: Lisan / Tara Bandu

A common theme throughout the consultations.

Many of the identified challenges link directly to the observed lack of PA management. Legislation for management of PAs exists in Timor-Leste, under the Decree Law 05/2016 on the National System of Protected Areas, however there is lack of clarity over several aspects of legislative implementation.

Article 23 states that a management plan for a PA should be drawn up and approved by GOTL. To date however, only 4 x PA's (out of 46) in Timor-Leste have completed management plans and none have yet been signed into law (the Ataúro SMP is currently on the Council of Minister's docket). The Mt. Ramelau PA is yet to have a full management plan prepared; this SMP is a partial management plan.

In the absence of a thorough PA management plan, the PA remains without a dedicated management unit or specific staffing. This lack of a clear management body for the PA has led to confusion amongst stakeholders with regards to the roles and responsibilities over management. For a site such as Mt. Ramelau (like most PA's) collaborative management through multi-stakeholder engagement and coordination is critical; with definitive duties and expectations agreed between all parties.

While MAF is the overarching agency responsible for PA management in-country, it does not necessarily feel it has clear authority to influence or exert management measures over businesses operating in the area or residential rights.

Clarification is needed on the impact the PA designation has (or will have once enacted) on the local people living within the PA boundaries. Previously, MAF expressed the desire to have PA's without inhabitants, however, under Decree Law 05/2016 on the National System of Protected Areas, habitation within PA's appears to be legally acceptable, as per article 33 on allowable activities which specifically mentions the allowance of 'subsistence farming in home gardens', which by default suggests the permittance of 'homes' where they are 'recognized as such by the community and traditional leaders' (33[c]).

Meanwhile the Hatu-Builico Administrative Post relies on MAF as the central management authority over the PA, and does not feel empowered to enact management measures until clear instruction is provided from central government.

The official, accurate, external and internal demarcation of the Mt. Ramelau PA is the essential first step. Only then can the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Tourism Development confirm the roles and responsibilities of all parties concerned.

MAF and the local authorities must then identify all communities within the PA and hold consultation meetings; the Lisan & Tara Bandu of each needs to be considered within the MAF requirements framework. Rules may differ between communities causing logistical issues with enforcement and signage on PA access routes. And only once rules are in place can they be actively enforced.

Governmental management authority decentralization remains an issue. Many of the parties involved, including MAF and MTCI don't fully understand their authority (explicit, assumed, or implied), especially when working at the local level where cultural traditional rule may take precedence in some cases; MAF & MTCI staffing and staff training will be an issue.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

According to Decree Laws 05/2016 & 17/2008, MAF & MTCI have very different and clear mandates, and both are legally mandated to work together to develop Timor-Leste Tourism, in particular Eco-Tourism. Each Ministry is funded from the State Budget, therefore has no justified need to claim any portion of the proposed entrance fees.

It is the opinion of the Catholic Church that all entrance fee income should be returned to the community. Suggestions involve tourism training, business training, small-business incubation workshops, low-interest micro-finance, ad hoc business ideas for festivals and pilgrimage periods etc.

ASTRABEKA is set up to assist & implement projects, most currently originating from MAF & MTCI. This does not preclude the Church, or the community via the Church, putting forward ideas and requesting assistance.

A clear path of escalation / delegation as necessary needs to be set up, and maintained.

## **Habitat Loss and Destruction**

All stakeholders consulted had a high-level consensus that habitat loss and destruction is a paramount challenge for the Mt. Ramelau PA.

### ***Terrestrial***

During the Indonesian period, many trees were cut down to prevent Timorese guerrillas fighting against the Indonesian government from hiding in the forests. However, eucalyptus trees ('ai bubur') were restricted for cutting, since the Indonesian government at the time considered those trees as their resources. Today, most tree cutting is as a result of:

- Slash and burn agricultural practices (to clear the land for grazing and the planting of crops),
- Felling for the collection of firewood (for personal use and for sale).

Tree felling for firewood appears to be a dominant cause of deforestation in the area, with the fast-growing eucalyptus trees (soft wood) targeted as a preferred variety. Firewood collection is an important local livelihood, and much of the harvest is sold.

However, with little ecological surveying or understanding of habitat status within the Mt. Ramelau PA, it is currently not clear whether such practices are sustainable; though concern is high amongst stakeholders that current levels of extraction are unlikely to be sustainable long-term, as population expands.

This upland deforestation has also led to unstable soils which are being washed out to sea, leaving the land baron of the natural nutrients necessary for high-grade food production ... 'mal-nourished', stunted crops.

Damage to the terrestrial environment is also being caused by a lack of waste management (human & otherwise) and unclearly regulated development activities.

### ***Socio-Cultural***

Communities in the Mt. Ramelau PA expressed considerable concern for the lack of management and degradation of cultural assets in the area. This includes the erosion of socio-cultural values and traditions caused by a lack of awareness amongst visitors, and the local youth, where there is a perceived lack of respect as evidenced through damage to the sites, wide-scale graffiti and littering.

## Community Tourism Training

Decree Law 05/2016, Article 37 (Management Committee) & Article 38 (Powers) Clause 1.i) states that the MAF Management Committee is also responsible for the development and promotion of “programs that offer income alternatives to local communities”. The inference is that this activity would also be funded from the State Budget.

According to **USAID**’s ‘Assessment of Hatu-Builico and Mount Ramelau Tourism and Recommendations for Medium to Long Term Planning (2018), a Tourism Working Group (TWG) was active in 2018. The TWG was a group of 15 young people (5 female) from Hatu-Builico Village, who worked voluntarily to improve tourism within the community, for community benefit; most TWG members studied Tourism Management at university in Dili.

The original TWG members need to be contacted, if possible. Where are they now? What are they doing? Is the TWG still active? If not, can it be re-activated? Might some TWG members become the Community Trainers, funded by MAF; after all, they have studied Tourism?

- Some are working at MTCI. Others are possibly part of ASTRABEKA?

Community-based tourism ... the community needs to be involved in decision-making; they must have a say in their future. ASTRABEKA is a formalised registered association, made up of selected community-sector representatives, assumed not a public forum.

- ASTRABEKA is the ideal organisation to be the ‘Executive’ of an informal (unregistered) Community Tourism Association, holding regular public meetings at the community centre to interact openly with the wider Hatu-Builico community (minutes taken & documented):
  - Updates - Local Progress in the Tourism Sector;
  - Information - Upcoming New Tourism Projects;
  - Announcing Short-Term (casual work) Employment Opportunities;
  - Details of Training Courses Availability / Registration;
  - Community Feedback
  - Community Business Ideas (people may want this consultation in private?)
  - Other announcements related to Tourism

In conjunction with the local clergy, and primarily funded by MAF, might the ASTRABEKA / Catholic Church combination provide the necessary Community Tourism & Business Training, such as, basic business, overall hospitality, food & beverage, customer satisfaction, house-keeping, guide-training and hygienic composting toilet construction?

## Project Continuity

A ‘Master Plan’, covering a multitude of ideas/requests/mini-plans and projects, from dozens of stakeholders all with differing agendas, priorities and timeframes, is unlikely to satisfy the majority of stakeholders, the majority of the time.

Alternatively, if the ‘Master Plan’ is considered a ‘Project’, and is broken down into numerous smaller sub-projects (each being actioned and completed separately), the ‘Master Plan’ may have a chance. Tick all the boxes ... the overall job gets done.

Changes to the Timor-Leste Government occur frequently, alliances fracture, priorities change and existing projects are put ‘on-hold’, some permanently. International obligations are often ignored and funds re-directed. Proper management of the Timor-Leste Protected Areas (46) is one such obligation. The resulting economic benefits (as previously discussed), are semi-formally conditional on meeting many international obligations, and the lack of any real progress is internationally noticed.

A common excuse in many SMP consultations for the lack of PA progress, is “No Funds / No Staff”.

**Money management is key to the success of this Eco-Trail SMP.**

## Master Plan INDEPENDENT:

The following are deemed ‘**MPI**’, independent of the ‘Master Plan’; not affected by the ‘Master Plan’.

These items are all considered separable Eco-Trail ‘Micro’ projects that need to be implemented regardless of larger ‘macro-level’ master planning activities, and can be implemented at any time. With a general theme of ‘Tourism Attractiveness’ ... Customer Satisfaction, Eco-Trail Maintenance & Safety, and Environment Preservation.

## Chapel Re-Development / Plateau Gate

Unfortunately, in October 2020, fire destroyed the main Chapel Building. On account of the wooden pews out front not receiving any fire damage whatsoever, it is expected that the fire was limited to the Chapel structure only (traditional style house), and probably started either inside or very close by. The Chapel re-building must include some fire prevention measures (fire extinguishers?). Restricted access is also advisable i.e. a lockable door and security windows.

The Catholic Church, spiritually claims ownership of the Mt. Ramelau peak from the Chapel Plateau gate, through the Chapel area and up to the Virgin Mary. Three things are in urgent need of attention; the Chapel, the Chapel wooden pews and the entrance gate to the Chapel Plateau.

Notwithstanding MAF’s legal obligations as the area’s protector, including the cultural assets of which the Chapel is one, the Church sees it as their ‘cause’ to re-build the people’s Chapel on Mt. Ramelau, with financial assistance from MTCI. **Without the Chapel, tourism will be difficult to promote.** It is understood that MTCI has plans in action for this to proceed.

## **Suggestions:**

1. Volunteers built the old Chapel. Re-build logistics planning and the recruiting of volunteers needs to begin immediately, as once approval and funding are in place, there should be no delay in getting started. The new Chapel should be part of the October 2022 celebrations.
2. The re-build style, at least perceived from the outside, should remain the traditional style. The Timorese people are unlikely to accept a modern building in replacement for their much-loved traditional-style old Chapel, and more-so it's the traditional-style Chapel that foreigners want to experience. It should be the same size, with the same outlook (looking out & looking in), with some modernized internal features. Internally, concrete block construction may be a good fire-proofing option.
3. An open fireplace is not suggested. Perhaps a sponsored large double-combustion hob-top burner with a chimney to the outside, in the main room. An open-fire three-stone cooking shed can be created near the water tank. **NO SMOKING INSIDE** the Chapel.
4. Firewood will be required. Large fallen trees (many are hardwood) left to rot can be chain-sawed & split into appropriate-sized pieces and transported to the Chapel immediately before festivals and pilgrimages. Harvesting of live firewood must be forbidden.
5. The water tank (possibly need a second tank) needs a strongly-designed, rainwater-harvesting system.
6. A 2m concreted / stone 'edging' surrounding the new Chapel will help protect from fire. It also marks the 'No Smoking' zone.
7. The existing toilets up behind the Chapel position are clearly no longer maintained. Can they be resurrected? Do they need a separate water system? New toilets? Temporary toilets (Port-a-loos) are required during pilgrimages and festivals.
8. The wooden pews need fixing, replacing or centre supporting.
9. Regular, voluntary maintenance climbs are necessary. This includes weeds and grass cutting / removal from the Chapel surrounds, water safety precaution (small chlorine tablet), general cleaning and checking.

The Chapel Plateau used to have an 'entrance'.

Pilgrims should feel and know they are entering a special area, somewhere sacred; the entrance to the Mt. Ramelau Church / Chapel needs to give that message.

Whatever it was, it isn't now.

*Fig. 11:  
Old Chapel Plateau Entrance  
© TFA / Steve Underhill*



## Poor Basic Infrastructure / Public Facilities

**Note:** Sanctuary development is dealt with separately. The following refers to the Eco-Trail.

Considering Decree Law 05/2016, Article 37 (Management Committee) ... Article 38 (Powers), Clause 1. "The Management Committee shall: h) Participate in the creation of ecological tourism facilities and infrastructures, particularly in providing water, shelter, food and waste disposal"; except waste disposal, very little has been/is provided.

Additionally, by charging the intended entrance fee there is an implied legal 'Duty of Care' to the fee-payers, within MAF's financial constraints. Although not a major issue for locals, foreigners take this seriously, along with their insurance companies. Should an insured foreign national die on the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail, due to the negligence of MAF / MTCI, the legal ramifications could be serious.

From the Trail Head to the summit, the Eco-Trail facilities are poor; Mt. Ramelau is currently NOT 'Tourist Friendly', visitors are effectively on their own. Guides, are just that; walking-group leaders.

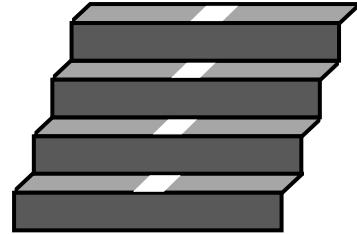
- **Inadequate Rest Stops** - It is suggested in this SMP (refer below) that along the Eco-Trail some 20 x large green garbage bins are made available. By having a bench seat at the same place (most garbage is created at rest stops), the likelihood of the garbage bins being used is high. 20 x sponsored? bench seats need to be sourced and installed.
- **Shelter Facilities** - Not seen as practical, given the Eco-Trail geographic and topographic characteristics. MAF might facilitate a Sanctuary 'Renta-Tent' business. Quality lightweight tents rented out at \$5 per day ... climbers can carry their own emergency shelter.
  - A large obvious electronic "Today's 'Peak' Weather" display, warning climbers of the potential weather conditions, alerting visitors to what they should take with them (sales of which are nearby at the Supplies / Souvenir Shop), is recommended at the Sanctuary. A Climber Log (especially for foreigners) is also advised.
- **Water Facilities** - Natural spring water appears available in two spots along the Eco-Trail, possibly perennial; to be confirmed, and the water tested to ensure drinkability. By using a small, very simple dam concept containing a filtered inlet, PVC piped to a PVC tap, where climbers don't need to get their feet wet, a drinking water re-filling facility can be provided.

## Track Maintenance / Safety Issues - Preventative Tree Felling

There are a few difficult spots, but generally the track is well-worn and easy to follow. However a lack of, or incomplete track maintenance has led to unnecessary visitor-safety issues, especially during the hours of darkness, when most tourist activities (climbs) commence. Rain then adds an extra safety concern; slipperiness.

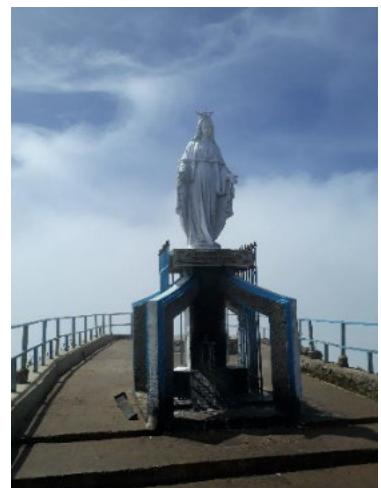
### **Steps:**

- Stone/concrete steps provide easy access at the Trail Head; an estimated first 15% of the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail. It appears that the steps were NOT a safety initiative as there are very few long steep drops at the bottom of the Eco-Trail. Government change? Funding cuts? The steps, constructed for climber convenience have created a dangerous situation.
  - Water flows either side of the steps, forming open channels that are continually deepening. Considering the high usage during hours of darkness, the danger posed by possibly not seeing the outer edges of the steps, needs to be avoided.
  - Using rubberized paint, similar to road marking, a roughly painted bright-white centre-line would be a reasonable solution. Re-painting will probably be an annual task.
  - Many steep trail sections higher up require concreted stone steps; the looseness of the path (rock fragmentation) causing people to slip & fall, especially when wet. The steps project needs to be completed. A thorough survey is needed, using GPS technology, to identify the applicable trail sections.



### **Barriers:**

- A few barriers have been erected along the Eco-Trail at places where people can fall down a steep slope; they are ineffective. The belief of many climbers that the barriers will prevent a fall is false; they are poorly fixed in the ground, at the edge of the path, which has become loose. They are not attached to bed-rock; many move, have moved, or certainly would move with a person's weight.
  - Existing barriers along the track should be replaced with obvious multi-lingual warning signs. Additionally, at places where a barrier might be used, concrete/stone the path to avoid slipping accidents and paint the bright-white, rubberized paint, centre-line.
- During festivals and pilgrimages the area around the Virgin Mary statue at the Mt. Ramelau summit is exceedingly dangerous. A railing has been erected at the statue site to stop people falling a few meters, but nothing protects people from falling off the steep cliff nearby; **a potentially deadly fall.** Such danger exposure is not acceptable to foreign tourists, or foreign insurance companies.



*Fig. 12: Barrier Around the Virgin Mary  
© TFA / Steve Underhill*

## The Cliff-Top Barrier is of the Highest Priority.



Fig. 13  
No Barrier at Cliff-Top  
© TFA / Steve Underhill

Although climbers are doing so at their own risk, MAF may be seen as legally negligent for not ensuring the access to the Virgin Mary is safe, especially when very large crowds congregate at the peak.

Crowd management is one answer. However, a few thousand highly motivated, spiritually-charged people are difficult to control. A simple roped fence solution is necessary.

### Signposts:

Trail signage is definitely lacking; there are places where, without a guide, climbers might get confused, especially at night.

- Where required, a simple method to show the track is orange reflective discs on posts cemented into the ground; they can also be nailed to trees if suitable positioning is available. The reflectiveness needs to be visible in torch-light.
- At major junctions, arrowed direction signs are required. After 200m, none were seen.
- Informational, 'Interest' boards are suggested i.e. at viewing points along the Eco-Trail describing what is being seen. Viewing points / platforms may need to be constructed for safety reasons; again, using GPS etc., places / views of interest need to be identified and documented.



### Dead Trees:

A number of dead trees overhang the trail. They are rather ugly, and are ALL going to fall some windy day; pro-active prevention is recommended. In many cases, they and other fallen trees are also a good source of hardwood firewood.

A regular chainsaw project; this source of firewood is ideal for pre-stocking the Chapel before any major event.



Fig's. 14/15  
Overhanging Dead Trees  
© TFA / Steve Underhill

## **Tree Trimming**

Trees fall in high winds; many fall across the Eco-Trail. The clearance of those trees is not sufficiently broad or high enough; head wounds are likely for taller people.

Mid-week trail checks need to be carried out to ensure the path is clear of major obstructions. A tree across the Eco-Trail effectively closes the normal route to the Virgin Mary and avoiding those obstructions (many will try) may place the climbers in added danger.

## **Summit Steps:**

The final steps up to the Virgin Mary are crippling for some after climbing Mt. Ramelau. Sore legs have difficulty in ascending 18" steps. To improve people-traffic flow to/from the Virgin Mary, the Catholic Church might consider improving the access i.e. constructing 'half-steps'

## **Poor Waste Management / Graffiti Control**

Providing insufficient garbage bins, not replacing the broken garbage bins, and not emptying them often enough is clearly a major environmental issue. The Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail, in places resembles a garbage dump.

All Parties associated with the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail thank Telkomcel for their 2019 sponsorship of the current garbage bins; the bins however do have a shortcoming. On windy days, even half-full bins will have trash blown out and distributed over a wide area; latched lids are a must. Empty 1½ liter water bottles are light enough to fly!



*Fig. 16  
Leave It for the Wind  
© TFA / Steve Underhill*

Garbage can be spotted well off the track, having been wind-blown, or thrown in efforts to disguise. Visitors are also using rotted-out tree stumps as ashtrays / garbage bins.

And, given the level of the garbage in many of the bins, it has been a while since any was processed off the Eco-Trail. The MTCI cleaners have clearly not been to the peak recently. Garbage was being blown from the single over-flowing bin over the cliff edge, when this photograph was taken from the summit steps.

The community is fully aware of the insufficient waste management facilities and processes existing along the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail.



*Fig. 17  
The Single Bin at the Peak  
© TFA / Steve Underhill*

## **Suggestions:**

1. Considering the state of the existing bins, a new sponsored? bin programme is required. Self-draining, lidded, green garbage bins are recommended every 200m - 300m along the Eco-Trail, well sign-posted. A sponsor message (large sticker) will be clearly visible. Estimated numbers are, Sanctuary (5), Chapel (5), Chapel Campground (3), the Peak (3), and the Eco-Trail (20), a total of 36 (240L size, with latchable support stands).
  - a. Stands are required, onto which a foot-operated crusher will be securely attached (welded?). It is recommended that a 1m<sup>2</sup> level concrete pad is constructed into which the stand base-plate is cemented.
2. Additional bins (possibly hired) will be required at areas of congregation during pilgrimages and festivals i.e. the Sanctuary (10), the Chapel (10), and at the Peak (5).
3. Garbage Removal:
  - a. Standard removal is likely to be manual. It is recommended that MAF issue a Labour-Only Quotation Request / Tender (TOR) for an Eco-Trail Garbage Collection Contract. Specifications to be advised.
  - b. During the low tourism season, the 'Garbage Collection Trek' (GCT) is probably only required every two weeks. Boys using shoulder-strapped padded back-frame, each carrying a sack, will bring all PET bottles and aluminium cans (both crushed) back to the Sanctuary for recycling. Other garbage will be burned in dedicated fire-pits along the Eco-Trail.
  - c. All Eco-Trail, Peak, Chapel, and Chapel Campground garbage bins are to be regularly checked & emptied. During medium/high tourism season the GCT may be required weekly. The GCT timetable requires monitoring and is adjusted (frequency and / or No. of Boys) according to need.
  - d. During pilgrimages however, logistics become challenging. The collection and recovery of garbage produced by 5,000-10,000 people using a track crowded with pilgrims isn't feasible.
    - o Large plastic bags of crushed PET bottles & aluminium cans can be left for later collection. The burning of 'Other Garbage' may be possible at these times, but only in designated pits away from public view, **and after the pilgrimage has finished.**



*Fig. 18  
Green Wheelie Bin & Stand  
© Draffin Street Furniture*

Almost all the track signage has permanent-marker Graffiti, unlikely to be cleanable using solvents, without damaging the signs. Given this, new signage is required throughout the Eco-Trail.

- A detailed signage budget is required. A signage sponsor, (**USAID**?) can then be sourced.
- The front face of each sign can be protected with a clear UV proof hard plastic cover that is cleanable using a solvent to remove permanent-marker graffiti.

## Sanctuary Tourism Development

Prior to any Sanctuary development, demarcation clarification is required. A sizeable residential structure has been recently constructed near the Trail Head (main gate) and probably 80%+ of the usable Sanctuary land has been fenced off. MAF / MTCI need to confirm with the land owner as to his intentions; perhaps intending to control camping, water supply from a local spring and parking etc?

Sanctuary development IS a separate venture. Being focused on community-based tourism growth, this would be an MTCI development project, a public / private partnership opportunity, funded by MTCI; income being generated from concession fees. Business concession fees are likely to be based on a percentage of turnover / profit to be attractive to business owners, at least for the first five years.

An important consideration for the success of any Sanctuary development, is vehicular access. Currently limited to 4WD vehicles and trucks, for the Sanctuary to become a tourist attraction in its own right, the Maubisse - Hatu-Builico - Sanctuary access requires serious attention, allowing general access for all vehicles. Road development is not part of this SMP

It needs to be appreciated that all Sanctuary facilities, in effect provide a support function for the main attraction, the climbing of Mt. Ramelau and experiencing the Chapel and the Virgin Mary. As such, for the continued development of community-based tourism in the Hatu-Builico / Mt. Ramelau area, the Sanctuary facilities need to be professionally organized, maintained and managed, possibly through a public / private partnership.

Given that mains power is now available at the Sanctuary, many tourist facilities are possible. However, permanent structures are what tourists like to see; they are expensive, require planning and are not generally achieved in the short-term. These form part of the '**Master Plan**'.

A 8m x 8m block building with a 8m x 3m covered balcony and rain-water harvesting, could accommodate (but not limited to) the following MP items:

- Park Office / Visitor Centre / MAF, MTCI, ASTRABEKA & Conservation Management
  - Ticket Sales (Climber Fees)
  - Rentals - Camping Spots
    - Tents, Air-Beds, Blankets
    - Torches, Walking Poles
  - Security, Cleaning & Gardening Mgt.
  - WIFI Internet Access
  - CCTV Monitoring & Facebook Control
  - Guide Hiring
  - Massage Bookings
  - Local Handicraft (Wall Displays)
  - Wind Breakers (Thin Parkas)
- \* General Store / Souvenirs / Café / Bar - Outdoor Tables on Balcony
  - Tea, Coffee & Cookies
  - Deep Fried Snacks
  - Alcohol incl. Tua Mutin & Tua Sabu
  - Torch Batteries, Toilet Paper, Ice
  - Filled Bread Rolls (rolls baked on site)
  - Timorese Breakfast Snacks (HB Supplier)
  - Bottled Water, Energy Bars
  - Professional Trail Maps incl. Photos
- \* Massage Parlor - Locals to be trained, possible internships in Dili.

\* Operated by the private sector.

Many outdoors facilities are recommended. The Mt. Ramelau Sanctuary can **quickly** become a 4WD spontaneous weekend away from Dili with a number of initiatives considered '**Master Plan Independent**' (MPI) that can be implemented immediately. Control / bookings at this stage can probably be done from the Hatu-Builico Administrative Post using ASTRABEKA volunteers. The initiatives include:

- A water harvesting system, water tanks, etc.
- Clean, operating, shower facilities (token operated instant hot water), toilet facilities and kitchen facilities
- Designated, easy to identify (numbered) camping spots, complete with adequate lighting. Toilets nearby.
- Tent, Airbed, Blanket & Umbrella Rentals
- Security, Cleaning & Gardening Mgt.
- Picnic Tables & Seating, Gas BBQ's (token operated), Constructed Fireplaces
- Basketball Hoop & Volleyball Court

## **Tourist User Fees? - Value for Money**

Whatever tourists pay for, they expect value for money; they expect to see what they are paying for, they expect to see progress. **Currently, Eco-Trail progress is close to zero.**

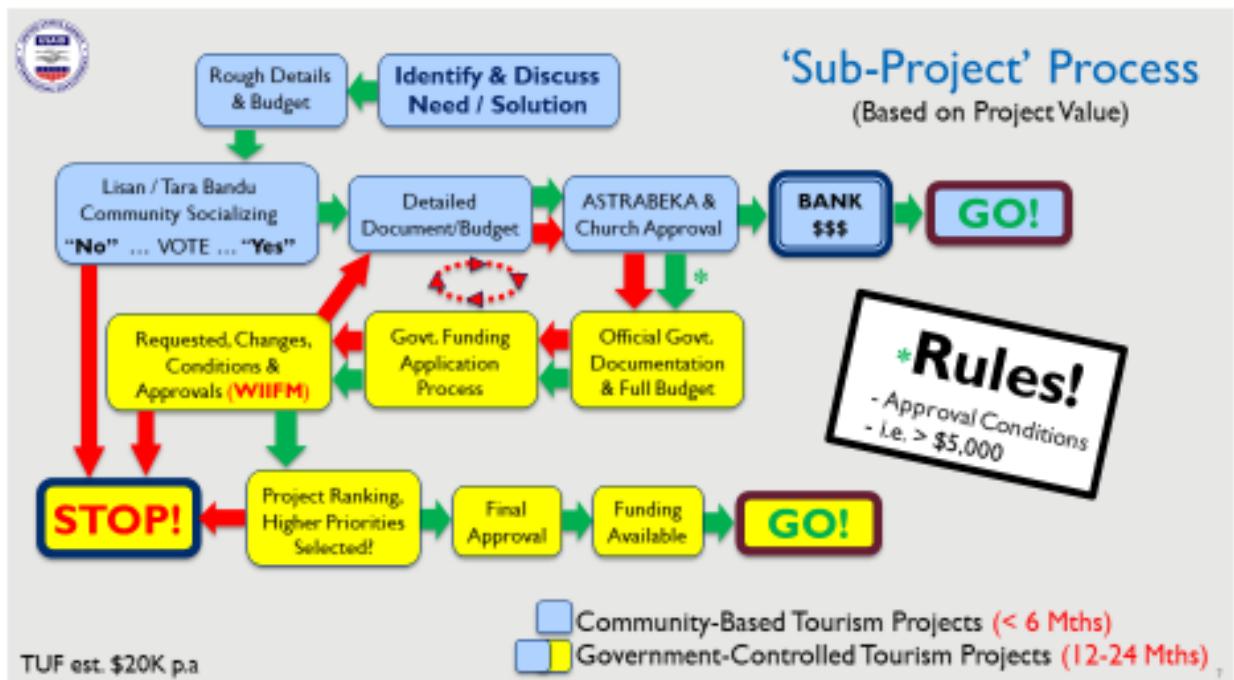
The public doesn't need to know about GOTL's slow progress regarding Timor-Leste's PA Program; the 'Master Plan'. The MP background does not affect the visitor's experience on the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail; it's the foreground that matters, the visible MPI's that are easily implementable, with immediate user-benefit.

As has been discussed previously within this SMP, a large amount of Timor-Leste Government income (i.e. funding grants and loans from development partners) is indirectly derived from having a system of PA's, managing them in accordance with international standards, signing up to international accords and being part of the global community on global warming and other environmental issues.

**All MAF's & MTCI's, PA & Sanctuary Development expenses relevant to this SMP are effectively PRE-FUNDED into the Timor-Leste Government consolidated funds, therefore neither Ministry requires, nor should expect operational funding from the proposed Tourist User Fees (TUF).**

Both Ministries plan their departmental year and respective projects; producing annual budget allocation requests covering all operational expenses, then fully fund their operation. If smaller 'sub-projects' need to process through the governmental funding allocation method, the system stalls. Minor PA / Eco-Trail jobs that need to get done simply fall through the cracks and get forgotten. And minor funding requests to State Treasury are often rejected due to other projects of higher priority.

The following diagram depicts the two possible project processes:



As per Decree Law 05/2016, it appears that neither MAF nor MTCI can charge an entrance fee to the PA without a specific diploma (amendment) to the Decree Law, which details the collection & distribution of funds. Does this prevent the Church from having their own ticketing system? Legal clarification may be required.

On behalf of **USAID**, a document created by Chemonics June 18 2021, 'Points for Consideration in the Development of a Protected Area Fee System'<sup>21</sup>, includes additional clauses for incorporation into Decree Law 05/2016, Article 42. The document is comprehensive and covers many points in agreeance to this SMP, with **two exceptions, collection points and the distribution of funds**:

- The Eco-Trail is one of many paths to the peak, therefore it will be necessary to have a second collection & ticketing point, probably at the Chapel Plateau entrance gate. This SMP will form the basis of further planning to develop the existing tracks from Letefoho, Atsabe and Ainaro, thus alleviating this issue.
- As PA implementation generally results in restrictions to community livelihoods; they are resented. **To appease this, community programs need to be started immediately, to lessen the eventual pain, facilitated by the Church and ASTRABEKA.**

<sup>21</sup> USAID - Tourism For All Project, Chemonics, (2021), 'Points for Consideration in the Development of a Protected Area Fee System'.

- **This SMP is premised on TUF funding NOT BEING DISTRIBUTED AT ALL, but locally accessible and held in an account at a mainstream bank with branches in Maubisse and Ainaro. The Bank must be made aware that they must adhere to the 4 x signature requirement (THAT MATCHES THE SIGNATURE CARD ON FILE) or they may be liable for any fraud that occurs.** Access to funds is to be intentionally difficult; all cheques (cash or otherwise) requiring signatures, or letters of authority (can be written, signed, photographed by smartphone, then sent via WhatsApp) to sign on behalf, of the following:

  - Hatu-Builico Administrative Post Senior Manager
  - Hatu-Builico Catholic Church Priest
  - ASTRABEKA Chairperson
  - MAF or MTCI Representative (depending on the project)

- All planned projects requiring funding must adhere to set rules. Access to funding is key.
  - The Catholic Church, the 'voice' of the people, probably understands the community needs & priorities far better than any governmental organization. When urgently required, funding needs to be quickly accessible; not requiring a formal central government application proposal, auditable financial justification and the approvals of many officials along an extended process ... possibly for less than \$5,000, perhaps only a few hundred dollars.

If, as proposed by MAF, the entrance fee is to be re-introduced in approximately 3 months, the public needs to be given advance notice; the new fees need to be announced ASAP.

It is suggested that during those 3 months many of the listed MPI initiatives are completed or at least be in progress, a feasible objective considering most of them are independent of each other.

**ALL MPI initiatives listed within this SMP should be completed by October, within 6 months**, fully funded by GOTL.

## **Operational Funding**

It is estimated that approximately \$20,000 annually will result from entrance fees at the Sanctuary gate, an appropriate annual operating budget for the Hatu-Builico community training and assistance programs that will be in demand from the wider community.

The onus will be on the Church and ASTRABEKA to ensure the funds are spent, and spent correctly.

**The required Decree Law 05/2016 specific diploma in this regard needs to specify a detailed list of allowed expense activities / projects, as per community requirements.**

This SMP, in particular the community training and assistance programs, needs to be 'kick-started'. It's understood that approximately \$20,000 - \$30,000, from previous entrance fees, is held in abeyance, waiting for a distribution decision.

- This SMP suggests that, the Prime Minister might use his discretionary power to release these funds to be only used by the Church for two purposes:
  - As per the Operational Funding (estimates only) section on the following page, the Church requires \$10,000 to be combined with \$15,000 (MTCI) for the Chapel rebuild. Another \$7,000 is required for other things at the Chapel / Peak
  - The remaining will be used to establish community training / assistance programs, ahead of the inevitable news the community will receive when the Mt. Ramelau PA is demarcated and formalized; the rules put in place.

**All expenditure on the community by the Church i.e. small-business & tourism training, ideas incubation, etc., will be subject to independent auditing.**

**A detailed budget IS required**, however for the sake of this SMP exercise, the following 'guessed' estimates for the '**NOW**' (3-6 months) MPI initiatives, are usable.

The Eco-Trail, as a Tourist Destination needs the following:

SUB-PROJECT	POSSIBLE \$\$ RESPONSIBILITY				
	USAID/TFA	Church	MAF	MTCI	Total
• Tourism Capacity Building - Training Design	\$5,000	-	\$10,000	-	\$25,000
• Community Tourism Training Implementation			\$10,000		
• Other Community Training i.e. Business					
• Chapel Re-Build - Modernized (Block?) Interior	\$3,000	\$10,000 *	-	\$15,000 *	\$28,000
○ Toilets, Water Tank & Water Harvesting	-	\$2,500 *	\$2,500 *	\$2,500 *	\$7,500
○ Cooking Hut, Pews & Entrance Gate	-	\$2,500 *	-	\$2,500 *	\$5,000
• Virgin Mary Cliff-Top Barrier (Rope Fence)	-	-	\$20,000	-	\$20,000
○ Virgin Mary Half Steps	-	\$2,000 *	-	-	\$2,000
• Thorough GPS Eco-Trail Survey	\$3,000	-	-	-	\$3,000
• 36 x Green Wheelie Bins, Stands, Crushers	\$12,500				
• 36 x 1m <sup>2</sup> Concrete Slabs	-	-	\$4,000	-	\$17,500
• 100 x Tin-Can Ashtrays	\$1,000				
• 30 x Bench Seats	-	-	\$9,000 **	-	\$9,000
• Steps - Bright White Rubberized Centre Line Painting	-	-	\$2,000	-	\$2,000
• Spring Water Harvesting - Dam/Tap Set-Up x 2	-	-	\$2,000	-	\$2,000
• Signs	\$3,000	-	-	-	\$8,000
• Sign-Posts & Poles (Constructed)	-	-	\$5,000	-	
• Dead Trees & Firewood Collection/Transport	-	-	\$2,000	-	\$2,000
• 15 x Garbage Sack Padded Back-Frames	\$3,000				
• 100 x Printed Sacks	\$1,000	-	-	-	\$4,000
• Renta-Tent Program (Tents, Airbeds, Blankets)	\$3,000	-	-	-	\$3,000
	<b>\$34,500</b>	<b>\$17,000</b>	<b>\$66,500</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$138,000</b>

The **Sanctuary**, as the Eco-Trail Entry Point & Tourist Destination needs the following:

<b>SUB-PROJECT</b>	<b>POSSIBLE \$\$ RESPONSIBILITY</b>				
	<b>USAID/TFA</b>	<b>Church</b>	<b>MAF</b>	<b>MTCI</b>	<b>Total</b>
• Water Harvesting System & Tanks (Fillable by Truck)	-	-	-	\$10,000	\$10,000
• Levelled, Grassed, Marked Out Camping Spots	-	-	-	\$2,000	\$2,000
• Picnic Tables & Seating	\$10,000	-	-	\$5,000	\$15,000
• Dedicated Fireplaces & Gas BBQ's (Token Operated)	-	-	-	\$3,000 **	\$3,000
• Extra Lighting Towers	-	-	-	\$5,000	\$5,000
	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>

\* Possible Papal Foundation Sponsorship

\*\* Other Possible Sponsorship

Overall estimates to get the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail revitalized in the **short-term** are:

• MTCI - \$45,000 (\$20,000 *) (\$3,000 **) • MAF - \$66,500 (2,500 *) (\$9,000 **)	Net \$22K Net \$55K	• USAID / TFA - \$44,500 • Catholic Church - \$17,000 (\$17,000 *)	(Net \$44.5K) (Net \$0)
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## VISION STATEMENT, MGT. OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

A vision statement for the Mt. Ramelau PA is suggested as follows and is open for discussion:

*“With its natural environment, biodiversity and essential ecosystems secure,  
Tatamailau, the People’s Mountain, our protector, our spiritual pride, to be enjoyed by all  
and contribute to the sustainable livelihoods of neighboring communities.*

*Our social and cultural heritage preserved”*

The following management objectives and targets aim to provide a clear pathway forward over the coming years to achieve this vision. The objectives provide a step-wise process for developing a full PA management plan, while concurrently addressing immediate term concerns (and capitalizing on opportunities) to tackle the identified key sustainability challenges.

Objectives related to both terrestrial and socio-cultural considerations have been amalgamated in this SMP, as these early management steps need to be taken holistically. For understanding convenience and to simplify the process, the objectives have been divided:

- **MP** - Part of, or dependent on the Master Plan. Generally ‘Macro’, and Long-Term.
- **MPI** - Master Plan Independent. Generally ‘Micro’, and Short-Term

To achieve these objectives, a pre-requisite step is the establishment of a common platform, bringing together and engaging all relevant stakeholders. ASTRABEKA, as the locally (Hatu-Builico) recognized Stakeholder’s Management Committee & formal tourist association, will be tasked with many of the identified objectives, and might later be expanded / transformed into the complete Mt. Ramelau PA Planning and Management Team (PMT), as defined in Decree Law 05/2016 on the National System of Protected Areas, Article 37.

### **Applicable Mt. Ramelau PA Planning and Management Team (PMT)**

As per Decree Law 05/2016, Article 37:

- Representing MAF, the Head of the PA (Committee Secretariat)
- A Religious Leader
- FOR EACH SUCO ... Local Authorities
- National Police
- One ‘lia na’in’ (traditional leader)
- State's decentralized services responsible for tourism, cultural heritage and environment
- A Youth Representative
- A Women’s Representative
- An Elderly Representative
- Any other member determined by the government

In terms of implementing the below objectives, this committee is referred to as the “Planning and Management Team” (PMT).

## MP Objectives - 'Macro'

MP objectives can be considered 'long term', in this case to be completed over three years.

Management Objective		Target	Year
Obj. I	<b>HIGH PRIORITY</b> Review and determine the external & internal (community) boundaries of the Mt. Ramelau PA, in particular the Eco-Trail sub-PA.	PA boundary and zoning plan is finalized.	I & 2
			3
This objective is further divided into the following sub-objectives.			
Sub-Obj. I.1	Clarify, refine and define the Mt. Ramelau PA External Boundary.		I
			2
			3

Using the outputs of objectives 2 and 3, the PMT can review and assess the existing boundary of the PA, to determine whether:

- a) The existing boundary effectively captures all of the identified core values and assets of the PA, or
- b) The existing boundary should be adjusted.

From the consultations conducted through this SMP work, it is anticipated that some adjustment / minor expansion in the PA boundary may be considered, to ensure the PA incorporates natural assets identified by communities and wider stakeholders as essential elements of the regions' heritage.

For this sub-objective, the PMT will need to draw upon the results of the surveys and assessments (conducted under objective 2), as well as other existing administrative maps, road maps, cadastral maps, aerial photos etc. wherever available. The PMT should also consider that the boundary should enable the conducting of legally 'allowable activities' and should enable the cessation of legally 'prohibited activities' as outlined in Decree Law 05/2016 on the National System of Protected Areas.

<b>Allowable Activities</b> (S.4 - Art. 33)	<b>Prohibited Activities</b> (S.4 - Art. 34)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Subsistence hunting of unprotected species;</li> <li>(b) Subsistence fishing for unprotected species;</li> <li>(c) Subsistence farming in home gardens recognized as such by the leader's community and traditional</li> <li>(d) Cutting and removal of unprotected wood; only from land less than 1,500 meters altitude and has a slope of less than 25%, for family subsistence and other uses domestic, traditional or cultural, building traditional houses and construction of religious buildings;</li> <li>(e) Commercial photography and recording activities, in any format, including film and video;</li> <li>(f) Expeditions for tourism purposes;</li> <li>(g) Expeditions for scientific research and education purposes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Directly or indirectly introduce pollutants of any kind type in any form or dispose of waste of any kind nature by extraction or excavation;</li> <li>(b) Burn or perform any other destruction activity of forest;</li> <li>(c) Cut, burn, uproot or harvest protected flora;</li> <li>(d) Introduce invasive alien species of flora or fauna;</li> <li>(e) Hunt or fish for wild species or perform any other activity that interferes with its development, reproduction or migration;</li> <li>(f) Use firearms, explosives, toxic substances or any other harmful methods of fauna and flora;</li> <li>(g) Extract, excavate or perform any other activities related to the commercial exploitation of non-renewable resources;</li> <li>(h) Burn or perform any other destruction activity of pastures;</li> <li>(i) Spoil, deface or destroy natural property, historic, cultural or artistic or remove integral objects of the same;</li> <li>(j) Destroy protected area infrastructure, including roads and ways;</li> <li>(k) Alter, remove, destroy or eliminate marks or signs of border or any signs or markers placed, for management purposes outside or inside the area protected;</li> <li>(l) Any other activity determined in the management plan or, reasonably, determined by own diploma Government member responsible for protected areas.</li> </ul>

Work under this sub-objective should also recognize the existence of the communities living within the PA boundaries, and respect their rights to abode; with clarity provided in any refined boundary definition of the acceptance of these societies as integral to the human-nature landscape of the PA.

Management Objective		Target	Year		
Sub-Obj. I.2	Develop / demarcate internal PA zones (communities) to support effective management.		1		
			2		
			3		
<p>Once the outer boundary of the PA has undergone any revision / is clarified / determined, the PMT can start to designate zones within the PA (sub-PA's), and determine community boundaries.</p> <p>As per Decree Law 05/2016, MAF is required to provide signboards and markers to inform and promote awareness of the PA and zone boundaries, and to ensure the local community is fully aware of the permitted and non-permitted activities in each area.</p> <p>Under Decree Law 05/2016 on the National System of Protected Areas, three types of zones can be designated within a PA (Section III, Article 32): (1) Restricted access zones, (2) Buffer zones, and (3) Areas of use.</p>					
<p>a) <b>Restricted access zones</b> - “for the preservation of the area without human interference, where the use of resources is not allowed”. (III, 32[a])</p> <p>To identify these zones, the PMT need to consider the core values of the sub-PA and the assets that are most important (in terms of natural heritage and ecosystem services) to preserve and protect. This may include, for example, water catchment areas where zero cutting or felling of trees should be permitted in order to maintain hillsides, reduce sediment run-off into neighboring areas/ the coastal plain, and enhance water catchment services to improve groundwater reservoirs.</p> <p>Importantly, this zone designates areas that should experience '<u>no human interference</u>', which may mean physical access to these zones is limited / not permitted. Such designations should be identified with full PMT involvement, particularly with local communities. The protection of these zones may be further enhanced where relevant by the concurrent designation for protection under local customary systems, such as <i>Lisan</i> and <i>Tara Bandu</i>. Refer Box P.52</p>					
<p>b) <b>Buffer zones</b> - “intended to support the conservation of restricted access zones, where the resource management and human activities are subject to specific rules and restrictions”. (III, 32[b])</p> <p>These zones will allow some level of access and utilization, but under strict conditions. Sites appropriate for designation under this zone classification may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas proximal to ‘restricted access zones’ (to limit movement, or nearby degradation impacting the core zones for protection)</li> <li>• Areas of cultural or religious importance (where activities may be limited to only those deemed culturally appropriate). This may include sites of high tourism value, such as the Virgin Mary statue area, where access to tourists is permitted, but certain behaviors are required of visitors, such as dress code, not leaving trash, etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Buffer zone designations can benefit from having concurrent designation for sustainable management under local customary systems, such as <i>Lisuk</i>, <i>Fatin Lulik</i>, <i>Lisan</i> or <i>Tara Bandu</i>. Refer Box P.52</p>					
<p>c) <b>Areas of use</b> - “where the construction of access and management support infrastructure in the area, installation of services for human use and where natural resources may be used in accordance with management instruments”. (III, 32[c])</p> <p>These zones would designate the areas of human habitation and approved development areas within the sub-PA. To appropriately designate these areas, the PMT need to work closely with local communities to identify and delineate the boundaries between suco / aldeia areas, and the customary tenure prevalent within and between societies in the area.</p>					

Management Objective		Target	Year
Sub-Obj. I.3	Establish local cultural systems to address deforestation.		1
			2
			3
<p>As mentioned, for some 'restricted access' and 'buffer zones', it may pay to work alongside the relevant local and cultural leaders (with a connection to those areas) to produce associated customary laws to regulate the limited access or limited use expectations for their specific areas.</p> <p>Traditional designations, such as <i>Tara Bandu</i>, can complement the PAs formal zoning system to ensure communities respect and adhere to regulations, such as the restricted cutting of trees. Communities can also be involved in the collaborative management of areas once they are customarily recognized as protected under cultural frameworks. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members supporting active maintenance activities at a site.</li> <li>• Community members working with the local authority to provide ranger support for management.</li> <li>• Improved socialization of the conservation and preservation goals within local societies.</li> </ul>			

### Traditional Natural and Cultural Preservation Systems in Timor-Leste

**Tara Bandu:** Refers to local customary laws that regulate the relationship between humans and the environment surrounding them. Under a Tara Bandu, restrictions and prohibitions can be applied to the use or extraction of natural resources. The motivations for a Tara Bandu can be varied, and may include: protecting religious, spiritual or ceremonial sites; protecting community resources from theft or damage; promoting effective land management (e.g. prohibiting the felling of trees in certain areas to maintain slope integrity and avoid landslides or flooding); promoting optimal harvesting (e.g. by restricting access for set periods of time); or promoting re-generation (e.g. in exploited habitats, or by protecting marine areas to promote re-generation of fisheries stock).

Tara Bandu is a well-known tradition, thought to have first been documented during the Portuguese occupation of Timor-Leste, with some reports suggesting the tradition was actively blocked under Indonesian occupation. Since gaining independence, communities across Timor-Leste have been reinstating this tradition, with the custom experiencing a resurgence of interest particularly amongst the younger generations.

As a form of customary law, Tara bandu is supported by formal law through Article 8, sub-sections 1, 2 and 3 of the 'Environmental Base Law, No. 26/2012'. Once a community agrees on a Tara Bandu, all parties are bound by it. A person found guilty of violating a Tara Bandu restriction may be fined and / or have to hand over assets to the community, with many believing such a violation incurs a curse upon that individual. Tara Bandu is commonly used to safeguard trees, coconuts, bamboo and other agricultural products.

**Lisuk:** Is a standard of customary law that regulates the model of mutual cooperation in exploratory work related to land, livestock and construction by members of a particular community.

**Fatin Lulik:** Is a properly identified sacred site, recognized and respected by local communities.

**Lisan:** Is a set of unwritten rules that apply in a given family grouping, dictating behaviors and attributing rights and obligations to members of the same community belonging to the same family tree.

Management Objective		Target	Year
Obj. 2	Building on the information available (as identified in this SMP) and undertake further surveys of the PA / sub-PA to fill the gaps in knowledge related to existing socio-cultural and terrestrial assets and existing land use patterns.	Full information available on the assets of the Eco-Trail sub-PA.	1 2 3

In collating the information provided, this SMP goes some way to identifying and documenting the natural, cultural and historic assets of the Mt. Ramelau sub-PA. However, further work is needed to fill the gaps in knowledge. This includes the following:<sup>22</sup>

- Biophysical ecological surveys and mapping of the terrestrial landscape (biodiversity of flora and fauna, ecosystem services, and geological characteristics)
- Governance surveys (including community tenure, local governance frameworks, stakeholder mapping and understanding cultural governance systems)
- Socio-cultural surveys and mapping of the historical, spiritual and cultural assets (man-made and natural) occurring within the sub-PA.
- Socio-economic surveys and mapping of livelihoods, land-use systems and economic / livelihood dependencies within the sub-PA

The surveys should document both the status and threats to the above sub-PA assets and dependencies.

Management Objective		Target	Year
Obj. 3	Identify and agree on the core values of the protected area, and the threats and opportunities facing the sub-PA's key assets.	Core values, assets, and threats to assets are understood and agreed by all key stakeholders.	I & 2 3

In essence, a SWOT Analysis.

Considering the two primary stakeholder groups will likely have differing opinions that will change over time, it is suggested that the PMT perform this exercise every 6 months to monitor any changes. They are:

- The **Communities & Residents within & surrounding the Eco-Trail sub-PA** affected by the lifestyle and livelihood restrictions as a result of the PA creation. For the assets to provide benefit to the community, the community programs must be more than fair when balanced against their perceived lost lifestyle and livelihood opportunities.
- The **Visitors / Tourists**. Their positive / negative experience.

Using the results of the above surveys and assessments, the PMT can work to agree on the core values of the PA. This should articulate:

- What makes the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail sub-PA special?
- What are the key natural and cultural assets in the sub-PA and why are they important?
- Who are the beneficiaries of those assets?
- What are the key threats to those assets?

The identification of these values needs to be consultative and engage all key stakeholders. This is particularly important, as presently the key stakeholders have different visions and disparate views that need to become more unified

<sup>22</sup> Where possible / appropriate, the PMT may consider recruiting / involving local university students and / or development partners with experience in such types of survey work. For example, partners such as Conservation International have experience in terrestrial landscape surveying and mapping; Permatil has experience in agro-use surveying and mapping; and Sustainable Solutions Timor-Leste have experience in socio-cultural, historical and socio-economic surveying and mapping.

Management Objective		Target	Year
Obj.4	Determine the desired mutually agreed ' <b>COMBINED</b> ' GOTL operating parameters and management targets for the applicable areas, specifically the Sanctuary-Peak Eco-Trail.	<b>Inter-Agency Coordination.</b> ‘Micro’ projects to use the ‘SMART’ management system and associated indicators to measure success.	1 2 3
		The main governmental organisations involved (MAF, MTCI & Ministry of State Administration) must set operational parameters for working together throughout the PA network; co-ordination of roles & responsibilities needs to be clarified (individual adherence to respective Decreed Laws). Separate draft law amendments need to be combined; there needs to be a single united agenda. The Inter-Ministerial Commission for Tourism Development must be more actively involved.	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular combined meetings to confirm unity of activity (incl. a <b>PMT Representative</b>). Minutes must be kept and distributed to all attendees. If not controlled, priorities distort and people / organisations head off on tangents.</li> <li>A rolling project / sub-project register, available to all stakeholders, to be set up and regularly updated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Title, Project Mgr. Name, Budget \$\$, On Track \$\$, % Complete, Other Notes</li> </ul> </li> <li>The PMT needs to set Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART) management targets, and develop a monitoring process to show ‘Micro Project’ achievements.</li> </ul>	
		The PMT must regularly monitor proceedings of all projects / sub-projects and ‘nudge’ when necessary.	
Sub-Obj. 4.1	Actively protect sites of religious and cultural importance through multi-stakeholder collaboration.		1 2 3
		Through the consultations, concern was raised on several occasions over the lack of control and security for religious sites in the Eco-Trail sub-PA. Therefore, in the development of management targets for the PA, it will be important to consider:	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting appropriate targets for the effective management of these sites in close collaboration with the Church, local authority and local communities.</li> <li>Involving local communities in security activities around religious sites.</li> <li>Ensuring regular management presence at sites, and socialization of the agreed regulations amongst all key stakeholders (communities, private sector business, tourism operators, etc.).</li> <li>Providing multi-language noticeboards at key religious sites to ensure full awareness to all visitors and promote respect for the sites.</li> </ul>	
Sub-Obj. 4.2	Improve waste management infrastructure and systems.		1 2 3
		Concern over the lack of effective waste management systems was raised on several occasions during consultations with key stakeholders. Recommendations for management consideration include:	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing / installing more rubbish bins at key tourism sites.</li> <li>Providing signboard information at key tourism sites to ensure visitors use the bins provided.</li> <li>Ensuring rubbish collection and management systems are regular, systematic and effective.</li> <li>Socializing the importance of effective waste management with all key stakeholders (communities, businesses, tourism operators etc.)</li> </ul>	
		Communities have also requested more public toilet facilities be provided at key visitor areas, with improved water supply for hygiene. Businesses operating within the PA need to also ensure they have appropriate waste management systems. Regulations for septic tanks and / or appropriate sewage management systems need to be established and implemented.	

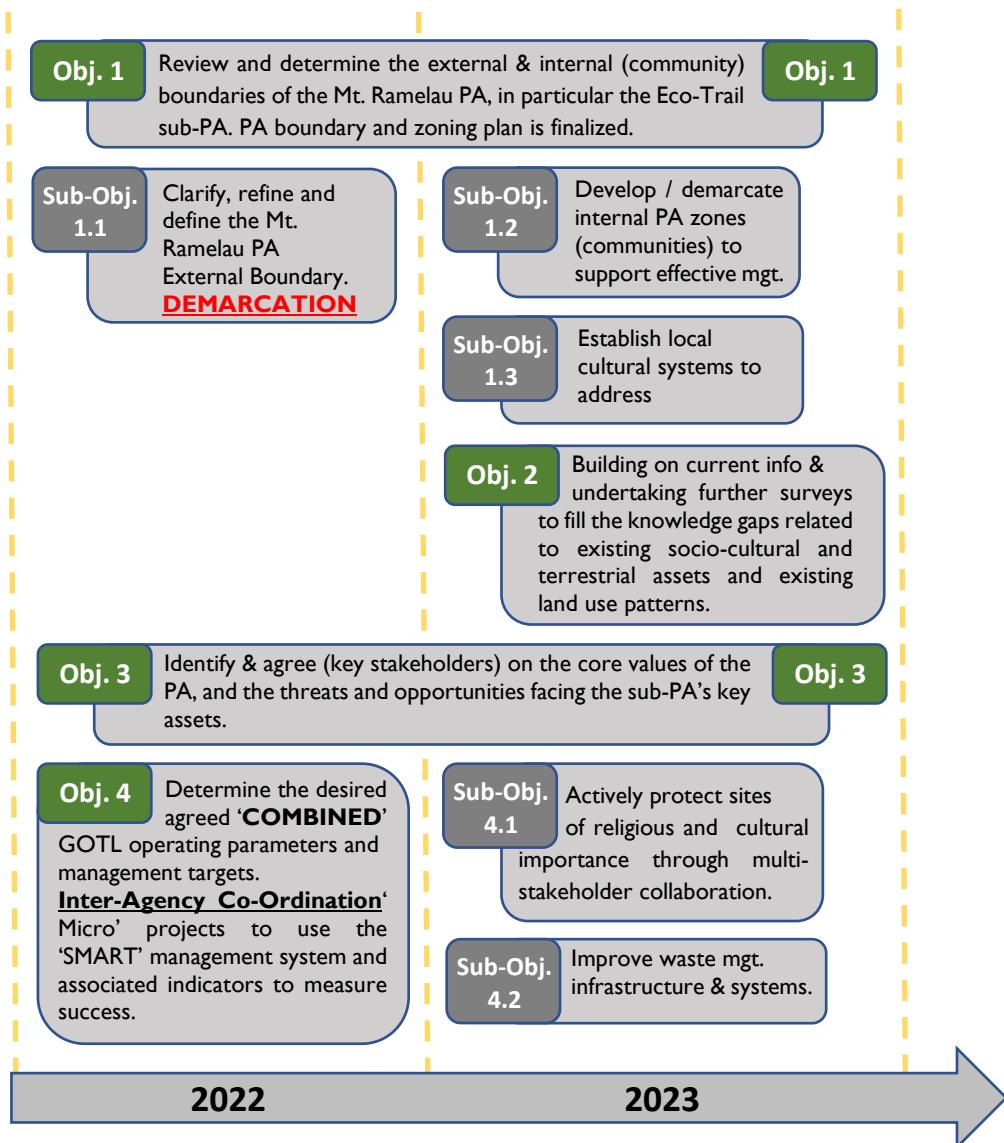


Fig. 20: Timeline showing the SMP 'Master Plan' objectives and sub-objectives.  
 © TFA / Steve Underhill

## MPI Objectives - 'Micro'

In the process of developing this SMP, stakeholders identified many ‘Micro Project’ considerations for the Sanctuary and Eco-Trail sub-PA. All of the listed projects are achievable within 6 months, will be noticed by visitors, and make their visit / climb a more enjoyable experience.

This SMP is ‘background-focused’ on tourism, in particular tourism at the Mt. Ramelau Eco Trail. Visitors, whether they be Timorese or foreign, object to favored destinations degrading through lack of attention, or neglect (complacency); a very negative message to send to the ‘Tourist World’.

It is suggested that a Consulting Project Manager or Project Management organisation be contracted to achieve as much of this by October 2022. Suggested budgetary funding is as per the estimated costings (P. 47).

Most of the following are explained within this SMP; in no particular order of importance:

\* Possible sponsorship

<u>Sub-Project Description</u>	<u>Church</u>	<u>MAF</u>	<u>MTCI</u>	<u>Other</u>
<b>• BUDGET APPLICATION</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
• Specific Diploma - Entrance Fee Structure (Announce)		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>ECO-TRAIL</b>				
• Chapel Re-Build - Internally Modernised	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	
○ Toilets, Septic System, Water System	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
○ Cooking Hut, Pews & Entrance Gate	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	
• Cliff-Top Barrier (Rope & Poles), plus 10 x Bench Seats *		<b>X</b>		
• Virgin Mary Half-Steps	<b>X</b>			
• 36 x Garbage Bins *, Stands * & Concrete Slabs		<b>X</b>		
• 20 x Bench Seats * for Trail Rest Stops		<b>X</b>		
• 2 x Mini-Dam Catchment Water Re-Filling Facilities		<b>X</b>		
• Steps Centre-Line Painting & Danger Signs *		<b>X</b>		
• Full Trail Survey (GPS) *		<b>X</b>		
• 20 x Garbage Sacks (Designed & Made) *		<b>X</b>		
• Dead Tree Felling & Tree Trimming		<b>X</b>		
• Renta-Tent (Private Sector?) *, Walking Poles			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
• Directional Sign-Posts / Orange Discs*		<b>X</b>		
• Graffiti-Proof Signage *		<b>X</b>		
• Weatherproof Feedback Box & Climber Log *			<b>X</b>	
• Community Training Programmes	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
• Hatu-Bulilico Tourist Association (TWG?)	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
• Tour Guide Training (Association), <b>First Aid Training</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>SANCTUARY</b>				
• Dedicated, Flattened, Camping Spots with Lighting			<b>X</b>	
• Tent, Airbed, Blanket and Umbrella* ( <b>Bintang?</b> ) Rentals			<b>X</b>	
• Picnic Tables, Gas BBQ's (tokens), & Set Fireplaces			<b>X</b>	
• Toilets incl. Hand-Washing Facilities			<b>X</b>	
• Water Tanks (Rain & Truck Filled), Washing Tubs			<b>X</b>	
• Kiddies Playground, Volleyball Net, B'ball Hoop			<b>X</b>	
<b>OTHER</b>				
• Free, Faith-Based, Non-Renewable, 30-Day Tourist Visa			<b>X</b>	
○ Promoted to West Timor Catholic Churches		<b>X</b>		

**Note:** The West Timor (Indonesia) Catholic Church 'tourism market' is open; estimates put their Catholic population at 50,000+. A **FREE**, non-renewable, faith-based tourist visa for pilgrims that would like to join their Timor-Leste cousins could attract a few thousand extra international visitors to Timor-Leste who would more than likely visit friends and relatives (probably Dili). They will eat, drink and spend.

## MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Notwithstanding its input to the greater Mt. Ramelau Protected Area Management Plan, this SMP for the Eco-Trail is intended to assist in providing a clear direction forward for effective management planning and sustainable development of other pilgrimage trails to the Mt. Ramelau peak from Letefoho, Atsabe & Ainaro. Also, many other Timor-Leste walking trails will gain from this exercise.

Delays to the development of this SMP due to Covid-19, and the lack of existing data about the site has resulted in the SMP aiming for a 2-3 year timeline in an effort to accelerate the acquisition of the baseline ecological, socio-economic and cultural information required.

In terms of monitoring, evaluation and learning, the Eco-trail is a 'Work in Progress'. This SMP hopes to encourage the authorities to engage international 'best practices' for Trail Development, however given the financial constraints many of the desired initiatives are not feasible, but a policy of 'Continuous Improvement' ... is free.

It is recommended that progress towards achieving the objectives contained in this SMP is assessed every 3 months for the first year as most of the effort will be on the **immediately implementable** 'micro' projects, the initiatives visible to the visitors; the tourists which this activity is aiming to attract and impress. Thereafter, annual assessments are advised.

## OTHER

- Sustainability relies on **Funding**. Globally there are hundreds of organisations that should be approached. Money will open eyes and minds ... the development of the 'Tourism Product' will be the result.
- A big part of mountain safety is **Communications**. A radio system linking Management, Security, the Hatu-Builico Emergency Services, and other necessary people etc. is suggested.
- **People Logistics** (crowd management) is always difficult. By adding a dangerous mountain pilgrimage into the mix, it's sheer luck more people don't die or get seriously injured. Spreading the pilgrimages from 2 days to 4 days may be an option.
- Tourists, particularly foreigners, even on holiday rely on the **Internet**; it's the world we all live in now. Serious attention is required in the area of data communications in the Hatu-Builico area.
- Unused TUF funds, can be utilised in a **Continuous Re-Forestation Programme**.

\*\*

This preliminary Sustainable Management Plan for the Mt. Ramelau Eco-Trail sub-PA  
has been produced with support from independent consultant  
**Stephen Underhill**.

## **Annex I: Stakeholder Consultations**

For the development of this preliminary SMP, the following overt informant interviews were held with the following departments / organizations and individuals:

### **Dili : National Level**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Contact Number</u>
1.	Moses Tilman	Ministry of Tourism Commerce & Industry (MTCI)	National Director, Community-Based Tourism	77143587
2.	Gil Esperito Santos	Ministry of Tourism Commerce & Industry (MTCI)	National Adviser	77631398
3.	Joao Antalmo	Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries (MAF)	National Director, Forest Conservation and Eco-Tourism	78592736
4.	Pe.dro Pinto	Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries (MAF)	Department Chief, Forest Conservation and Eco-Tourism	77664501
5.	Joao Carlos	Secretary of State for Environment (SOE)	General Director	77327062
6.	Father Angelo Salshina	Catholic Church	Vocal Point	77355658

### **Hato-Builico - Field Level**

7.	Father Francisco Soares	Hato-Builico Church	Parish Priest	77669393
8.	Manuel Tilman	ASTRABEKA	President	77428488
9.	Adelia Barbosa	ASTRABEKA	Secretary	
10.	Alexandrino Araujo	Cultural and Alecrim	Leader & Owner	77304366
11.	Various	Women's Group		
12.	Armando de Araújo	Post Administration	Administrator	77304113
13.	Nuno Alves Araújo Fernandes	Post Administration	Deputy	75342702
14.	Novita Alexandre Maria de Araújo Ximenes	Restaurant, Food Production, Customer Relations, House Keeping	Owner	77742753
15.	Hilario da Conceição B. Soares	Nuno-Mogue	Village Chief	76401620

## Annex 2: Pre-Independence Paper on Tourism Development

(P.69 - 71 Excerpt)

### Paper 2: Environmental Protection and Tourism: Issues for East Timor

by Vicente Ximenes (CNRT) with Bill Carter (University of Queensland)

Ximenes, V. and Carter, R. W. (2000) Environmental Protection and Tourism: Issues for East Timor. Paper presented at the *Reconstruction: Review of the Past and Perspective for the Future Conference*, Tibar, East Timor, 30 May-2 June 2000.

#### “A Quick Review of the Past

In Melbourne, I presented a paper outlining the contribution tourism can make to the East Timorese economy. I stressed the importance of early policy formulation and development planning to control and shape the nature of tourism, so that negative impacts are minimized. This message remains relevant.

Because tourism can be of economic benefit for East Timor’s development, and because it relies on the support of many industry sectors, I proposed it could act as a focus of much infrastructure development. Because tourism relies on clean environments, I proposed that it should, at least initially, be strongly linked with environmental protection. In terms of the last proposition, CNRT has moved to make such a link, but tourism remains in the wilderness in terms of being a focus for the future.

I acknowledge the efforts of UNTAET and other UN agencies in many areas of concern, and look forward to seeing the benefits of their efforts flow through to our people. However, many of my specific areas of concern, remain concerns.

#### Environment

Briefly, I am aware that many environmental management issues are being addressed as part of health and infrastructure development programs. I am also aware that many programs are being designed that have the potential to significantly impact upon the environment. I strongly encourage UNTAET to review all projects in terms of both their social and environmental impacts. I am not calling for delays, merely disciplined and transparent consideration. In this sense, I am dismayed to hear that UNTAET is considering making environmental considerations everyone’s responsibility.

I am concerned that if it is everyone’s responsibility, then no-one will actually be responsible. Authority and responsibility are separate issues. At times it is appropriate that they be integrated: at other times they must be clearly separated in the interests of public accountability. I call on this assembly to consider this issue carefully. I consider that even well-meaning units within UNTAET perhaps need an independent environmental watch-dog. I encourage UNTAET to consider the many models from around the world that establish such independent agencies and the rationale for this.

Specifically, I draw this conference’s attention to two serious environmental issues that perhaps go un-noticed by many. **Firstly, forest destruction for firewood and small pole timbers. One merely has**

to travel the road behind Dili to see the forests being removed. This resource is renewable but it is not being renewed. The loss of the forests will seriously undermine hill stability and reduce water quality.

Re-forestation is a priority. Those responsible for projects that call for timber products must consider the environmental impacts of their actions, otherwise the community of East Timor may be left with a seriously degraded environment and major land stability issues.

The second concern is related. In many of our mountainous districts, farming practices are unsustainable. I particularly refer to the farming of steep slopes. Again, land degradation is inevitable under these land management regimes and valuable top-soil is currently flowing out to sea, polluting our rivers and despoiling our marine resources. Improved agricultural production is a worthy goal, but it must be sustainable, environmentally. Again impact assessment is necessary.

I remain concerned for waste generation and disposal, the control of noxious chemical use, the quality of our waters and trust that everyone here is equally concerned. These matters are not luxury items to be considered last. On-going commitment to environmental best practice now, is essential to our future.

I am not suggesting that we should not exploit some of our environmental resources, and I include clean air, water, forests and productive soils. Indeed, I fear that for pragmatic reasons we will probably have to exploit in the interests of developing our nation in the short term. However, all environmentally impacting activity must be reversible.

I have not done the environmental issues we face justice in this paper, but I will raise others in my discussion of the future of tourism.

## **Tourism**

At the Melbourne conference, I proposed that tourism should be environmentally focused, community driven and different to what is offered elsewhere in the region. I proposed that we should begin planning and doing things on the ground immediately. Since returning home, I have had no reason to change my views. But unfortunately, little has happened to implement the vision I outlined. In fact, there are some involved in the reconstruction of East Timor who appear not to share my vision.

Tourism is happening right now. Our market is a bored UNTAET staff that either travels off-shore on their days off or visits places such as Baucau, Ramelau and Tutuala. In all cases, we are not taking advantage of this market and developing a tourism industry in a gradual, controlled way.

Soon, “real” tourists will arrive, based on word of mouth recommendation and those wishing to not only see the effects of recent events, but to also contribute, in a small way, to the reconstruction of our nation. If we act now, East Timor can have a bright tourism future. If we do not want to lose control of how tourism develops...if we want local people to benefit from the visits...then we must

plan now and build the capacity of local communities to respond to tourism demand with quality services and attractions.

In Melbourne, and at last week's economic development workshop, I spoke of the importance of protecting natural and cultural resources, and providing necessary physical developments. Today, I want to present a strategic framework for beginning to establish a tourism industry at minimal cost and maximum benefit to local communities, and in turn the national economy.

Yes, we will eventually need capital intensive development; but it will be best if we prepare the community in advance. We must start now. I estimate that we have, at the most, three years to get our plans, policies, infrastructure and businesses in place, along with an aware community ready to meet the challenge of tourism for the country's benefit.

### **Some Immediate Actions**

So what can be done, now?

Firstly, we must show the world that while our country is young, we are mature. We must show the world that we have natural environments that we value and wish to share. We must move to establish a national park system, with the support and co-operation of local communities. This requires funding for community consultation, training of park management staff and to take stock of our natural environments for the selection of suitable areas and for presenting their values. A well-managed protected area system is an indicator of a developed and responsible nation.

We need some funds for infrastructure development, so that tourists can be accommodated, presented with memorable experiences, and appropriately charged for services. We need people to manage natural resource impacts; trained guides and individuals to provide hospitality services to value-add and gain economic benefits.

Prospective staff are waiting in villages to be trained and involved. They are prepared to invest with their own sweat. We need a cultural rejuvenation program to revitalize our dance, carving, basket making and fabric weaving traditions. These products must be identified, certified and sustained as being authentic, if we are to reap maximum economic benefit. Tourists pay a premium for authentic experiences and souvenirs. At the same time, our culture and individuality as a people will be sustained.

### **An Example**

Let me give an example.

At Tutuila we have a community interested in being involved in tourism. They have a rich cultural heritage, expressed in craft, dance and lifestyle. Seed funding can rejuvenate traditions. Such traditions are tourist attractions. We have spectacular coastal and mountain scenery, rainforest from mountain to sea. These resources are suited to hiking trails. We have reefs for diving. We have beaches and

clean waters for water activities and relaxation. We have abundant wildlife, including monkeys and deer.

Tourists are attracted to these resources which are also ideal for national park establishment. We have an existing guesthouse that can be easily renovated. UNTAET and other aid agency staff are already visiting: so we have an existing market. What we do not have is a packaged tourism product. We do not have a trained staff to exploit this opportunity and develop it.

### **Phase 1**

So, what I am proposing is a simple, small-scale project.

1. It involves initial awareness of what is involved in managing a nature based tourism business.
2. It involves rejuvenating traditional arts and crafts for paid exhibition and sale.
3. It involves training the local community in hospitality and skills such as track construction.

None of this is expensive. Within three months, the Tutuala community could be receiving an income directly from tourism. A tour-guide service out of Dili could be established to take visitors to the destination. Small retail outlets along the way would benefit. A small craft business could be operating and visitors would have their expectations met and leave with fond memories, souvenirs and stories, further promoting the destination and East Timor.

### **Phase 2**

Phase 2 of this project would be to expand infrastructure: walking tracks and accommodation. Accommodation need not be 5-star. Rather, traditional houses could be constructed with community sweat money to provide an authentic East Timorese experience. Some additional hardware, such as refrigeration, beds, stoves, etc., would be needed ... but compared with other projects, these costs are minimal, yet bring immediate return. This could be implemented within six months, and the community would be ready to respond to more capital-intensive development. **This type of grass-roots project could be repeated throughout East Timor, for example at Hatu-Builico.**

The benefits of this approach are that:

- It gives added meaning and an economic rationale for regional infrastructure development;
- It gives a rationale for the conservation of natural resources;
- It brings cash to local communities;
- It earns taxation revenue;
- It prepares local communities for larger scale tourism;
- It is equitable, the wealthy are not advantaged;
- It meets our conservation obligations, which the world community expects of us; and
- It shows the community that something to benefit them is being done.

### **Capital Intensive Development**

So what about “big tourism” business and major economic investment?

If we show the world that we have safe, quality, financially viable tourist products, then foreign investment will naturally follow. But we must have our investment policies and tourism development strategy in place. We should be developing these in draft form now and review them as our experience with tourism increases!

We have a window of opportunity to get ready for tourism. What I propose seems to match UNTAET, CNRT and most aid agency objectives. What I propose, I believe, is sustainable: environmentally, culturally and economically. We have a supportive local community. We have a local environmental NGO to provide in-country and on-site support. We have expertise ready to respond to the task. All we need is a small amount of funding to set the process in motion.

### **For Those Who See Tourism as Too Hard**

Some people say that tourism can wait. I say, if we are not to be an aid-dependent country in the future, we must be proactive. If we do not take the initiative, external investors will determine our tourism future, with profits leaking offshore. Our communities will merely be employees, not owners.

Some people say tourism is a dream. Who would want to visit? I say, they must not have visited the places I know. I say, look at Cambodia. Look at Laos. Look at Sri Lanka. Look at Vietnam. Tourism is happening, but these countries are responding only. They react. They do not direct. We can have a tourism industry that is unique: the world’s best ecotourism and cultural tourism example...but only if we give it some priority.

### **What Priority Should Be Given to Tourism?**

Is tourism planning and action really a priority? My answer is simple. We have struggled for at least 25 years, a generation, for independence. I do not want a future for my children that is economically dependent. I do not want a country that is environmentally degraded for them to live in. I do not want a community that has lost its cultural soul.

If we are visionary... if we care for our children’s future: then perhaps this generation should continue the struggle, and do without for just a little longer. I say, tourism is part of our future and part of our independence. It will give meaning to environmental protection.

Yes! It is a priority, because it is an economic necessity for we East Timorese.”

## Annex 3: Inter-Ministerial Commission - Tourism Development

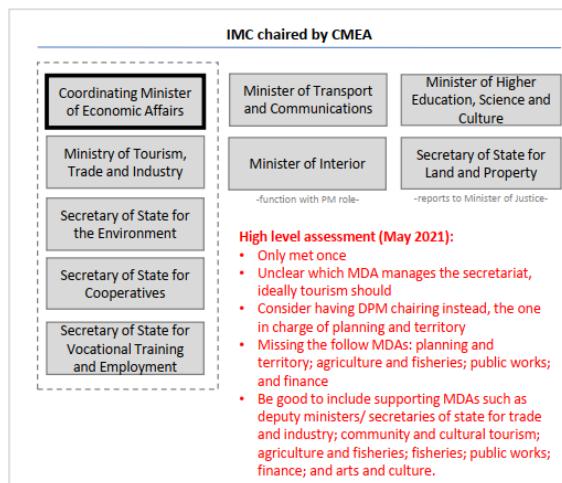
# Inter-Ministerial Commission for Tourism Development

Established June 12, 2019

### Inter-Ministerial Commission (IMC) for Tourism Development

#### COM Meeting [Minutes](#) (June 12, 2019):

- The Council of Ministers approved the creation of an inter-ministerial commission for tourism development.
- The tourism sector is recognized by the Government as an important pillar of Timor-Leste's economic, social and environmental development, essential for sustainable growth and the creation of this commission intends to strengthen inter-sectorial and inter-ministerial coordination and collaboration mechanisms to enhance the competitiveness of the country as a tourist destination of excellence.
- The Commission will be chaired by the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs and composed of Ministers responsible for tourism, land use, transport and communications, interior, culture, environment, cooperatives and vocational training and employment.
- The commission will be responsible for promoting the preparation of the Tourism Master Plan, analyzing the necessary legislative initiatives and promoting interdepartmental coordination in the implementation and execution of the Tourism Master Plan."



**WB letter sent to Minister of Tourism, Trade and Industry (November 16, 2020)**

The inter-ministerial commission (IMC) for tourism development was expected to guide the Tourism Demand Assessment. For the IMC to operate effectively, it must meet; agree on the arrangements for technical level day-to-day coordination and engaging with municipalities and the private sector; and have a secretariat to support its activities. See Annex 1 on agreed next steps, revised timeline, and recommended role of the IMC.

**Recommended role of the inter-ministerial commission:**

December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Second meeting of inter-ministerial commission:</li> <li>Agree on arrangements to effectively hold inter-ministerial meetings; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical level team for continued coordination in between meetings;</li> <li>Secretariat to support the commission;</li> </ul> </li> <li>Agree on arrangements for engaging meaningfully with municipalities and the private sector;</li> <li>Agree on and prioritize interventions to overcome immediate country-wide tourism challenges (visa policy, flights, credit cards, large/key investors).</li> </ul>
Nov-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify all relevant ministries' 2021 budget needs and ensure allocations for country-wide interventions and the destination-level ITMPs.</li> <li>Select destinations for priority development based on specific criteria (e.g. attractiveness, readiness, fit into itineraries) and assess their likely scale.</li> </ul>
Mar-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guide the preparation of the ITMPs for selected destinations and ensure consultation with municipalities, private sector and other local stakeholders.</li> </ul>
Dec-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all relevant ministries' 2022-2026 budget allocations for a program for better spending for tourism-relevant hard and soft infrastructure.</li> </ul>
Jan-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervise and guide implementation of the program.</li> </ul>
Dec-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guide possible expansion to new priority destinations.</li> </ul>

Recommendation  
-confidential:

**IMC should become effective to act as the multi-sectoral platform delivering Timor-Leste National Tourism Policy, Strategy and Implementation Plan, including destination-level Integrated Tourism Master Plans (ITMPs) and the preparation of the proposed Tourism Development Project (TDP)**

Contributing departments (direct report to proposed member)	Members	Role (as per organic law)	Alternatives to considered
Deputy Minister of Community and Cultural Tourism	Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry	Deputy Prime Minister; Minister of Planning and Territory	Prime Minister Minister of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers
Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment	Secretary of State for the Environment	Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs	Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs
Secretary of State for Fisheries	Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries	Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries	Minister of Finance Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry
	Deputy Minister of Public Works	Minister of Public Works	National parks, biodiversity, agribusiness & fisheries
		Minister of Transport and Communications	Electricity, watsan, equipment
	Deputy Minister of Finance	Minister of Finance	Responsible for ports, airports, civil aviation & comms
	Secretary of State for Arts and Culture	Minister of Higher Education, Science and Culture	Financing/ PPP, budget, customs, tax & procurement
			Universities, cultural heritage, & human capital
			Other MDAs to be consulted
			Minister of Education, Youth and Sport Deputy Minister of Education, Youth and Sport Secretary of State for Land and Property Secretary of State for Youth and Sport Secretary of State for Communications



# MOUNT RAMELAU ECO-TRAIL SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A **USAID** - Tourism For All Project



**USAID**  
HUSI POVU AMERIKANU