MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY IN EGYPT'S TOURISM

COVID-19
& a better comeback for Tourism & Biodiversity

Resolve, Return & Reform

May 2020

"What's normal with COVID-19?

Nothing."
— Anthony T Hincks

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Acronyms

MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoTA	Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities
PA	Protected Area
WG	Working Groups
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment



Scenario

Tourism is one of the pillars of the Egyptian economy, with the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimating that 12% of the national GDP originates from this sector. Tourism grew consistently from 2017, with 8.3m inbound tourists in 2017 and 9.5m in 2018, with projections of a nominal growth rate for the period 2018–2022 of 18%. Through international tourism, Egypt was also able to improve performances in domestic tourism, and experienced estimated 12.7m domestic tourists in 2018. International visitors are dominated by some regions, with Europe exceeding 50%, the Middle East region (22%), followed by African countries (7%) and Asia and Pacific (6.6%). This industry was able to generate 1.8m jobs in 2014, representing 9.5% of the total employment in the country (WTTC). International tourist arrivals could drop by 60% to 80% in 2020 (World Tourism Organization). This will heavily affect the whole Egyptian tourism sector.

The spread of COVID-19 is currently delivering structural damage to Egyptian society. Tourism is currently suffering disruption from many angles: travel restrictions, social distancing preventing people from interacting, barriers between countries and between regions within countries, people reluctant to tour in fear of the virus, cancellation of trips, postponement of trips and decisions about future tourism plans kept on hold. For example, in Egypt tourism cancellations reached 80% in mid-March compared to 2019, with an initial 138,000 jobs estimated to be at risk. It is expected that COVID-19 will reduce national GDP by 0.7–0.8% for each month of the crisis. If the crisis lasts for three to six months the cumulative loss for 2020 is expected to be between 2.1% and 4.8% (IFPRI Middle East and North Africa, Regional Program Policy Note 04, March

2020).

Until a vaccine is developed, or suitable medications discovered, the situation will stay uncertain and unpredictable for a long time. We expect that restrictions will be in place and vary according to virus epidemiology and the capacity of the health sector to respond.

In designing future scenarios, one of the key drivers will be the shift of people's expectations and behavior. A survey of consumer behavior and expectations (McKinsey, 2020c) indicates that consumers expect reduced income and expenses with discretionary spending likely to be postponed, which will directly affect tourism spending. In addition, the increase of digitization in many people's lives is changing the way they work and consume. These changes are expected to become permanent and consumers will be cautious to return to previous habits. Travel, particularly international travel, is not likely to come back soon. Customer behavioral changes are going to have a great impact on economy and society. Tourism and hospitality are expected to see a major transformation due to changes in people's travel preferences, as well as a reduction of their spending power.

While we expect a big shift from consumers, the workforce is also expected to be managed differently. The crisis is reshaping how we work. More people are adapting to work remotely and this can also be expected to stay in future. Innovation will be forced on workplaces everywhere and companies and industries will reorganize and restructure their modus operandi. People have already realized that they can conduct business without travelling, thus changing business travel and the model of business conventions and fairs. Innovation and automation will lead to unemployment at un-precedent scale. Labor income will be reduced thereby further depressing demand and spinning the crisis into a negative loop, which affects consumption and investment.



Crisis Management

The evolution of the crisis is unpredictable and we do not have yet a clear trend of its outcomes. We expect that it will affect all sectors of society with cascading impacts and loops that will amplify negative disruption. Managing structural damage across sectors requires government, tourism and environmental sectors to stay on top of emerging problems and to be able to respond timely. To properly address this peculiar and unique crisis, the Ministry of Tourism & antiquities (MoTA) and the Ministry of Environment (MoE) should intensify and enhance their mutual cooperation. Both the tourism and the environment sectors are confronted by the urgency of giving specific responses in their respective areas of operation to the short-, medium- and long-term COVID-19 impacts. While focusing on what each sector should do, the value of avoiding wasting time is also clear. Inefficient responses or even contradictory actions where the policies of one sector impact negatively the other, such as the tourism sector increasing medical waste that will be dispersed in the environment, negatively impacting natural resources, must be avoided. Cooperation and coordination between the MoTA and the MoE is of uttermost importance, particularly to address the problems that are emerging from the COVID-19 impact.

At first the MoE and the MoTA should establishment a crisis management action group, which also involves stakeholders and sectors leaders, to coordinate the overall response of the country. This action group could be tasked with:

- Collecting and sharing information
- Assessing impacts
- Discussing and coordinating responses
- Monitoring

- Updating scenarios
- Following up the crisis across its stages.

The project could activate its WGs to provide inputs and as a framework for coordination.

A brief review of the policy areas and issues confronting the environment and tourism sector will be described in the following section of this document. This is followed by a framework identifying areas of cooperation between tourism and environmental sectors outlying policies and actions where there is ground for the MoTA and the MoE to work together and coordinate their response to the crisis.



The global impact of this health, social, economic and environmental crisis is expected to be huge with a long and painful recovery. Countries will follow different and unique paths with social and economic costs that are difficult to estimate. Further resurging waves of infection can be expected, complicating matters and potentially further delaying our efforts.

In designing a recovery plan, delay is dangerous. We need to assess how our systems can operate and work under new circumstances. For many companies the question will be to go big or to go home. We are in a time of unprecedented action, therefore we need to move fast and smart. Doing more of the same will not pay. The crisis is showing us how our systems are fragile and how they were pushed to the limits. Our design of the recovery is the answer to a challenge. It is not a document or a prescription, rather, it is an approach, a diagnosis of a problem, the understanding of the forces at work and how we can reshape ourselves. The life-cycle of this crisis seems to play around the following stages (Mendy A. Et all 2020):

- **Resolve**
  - How can we ensure business continuity now?
- **Return and resilience**
  - How can we return to business and increase our flexibility to thrive in the 'new normal'?
- **Re-imagination and reform**
  - How can we improve our business over the long term, in a world changed by the pandemic, and emerge into the future even

stronger?

The **first stage** is about resolving and managing the crisis. This implies taking care of employees' safety and security, reorganising the workplace, improving remote work, and finding ways to remotely control assets. From a financial point of view, we need to improve liquidity and assess and review our supply chain to identify potential weaknesses. Costs are required to be reduced.

In the **second stage** we need to plan how business will go back to normal and how our resilience will improve. This implies looking at issues such as connectivity and cybersecurity, real-time procurement, new services to support sales and management, and price optimisation in relation to market conditions.

In the **third stage** companies will look more about their flexibility and how to operate under new conditions. Government policies should address long-term sustainability problems, improve the capacity of the country to mitigate risk and help society to adapt and reorganise in a post-COVID-19 scenario.

The recovery will require flexibility and speed and the capacity to adopt strong actions and policies based on understanding and balancing opportunities with risks. It will be built around a holistic approach addressing the weaknesses and flaws that were highlighted by the crisis. In assessing future alternative options it will be critical to understand where the value is going to be. The COVID-19 crisis will be a period of business innovation. In a changing world rules will be rewritten.

Strategic areas for a recovery plan

- **Customers and suppliers**. Customers and suppliers will behave differently. Changes will be intentional or made subconsciously. Some will be temporary and other will stay forever. Change is expected in the areas of how we serve customers and work with suppliers.
- **Demand and supply**. Understand change, and shape the demand to fit the supply. Also shape the supply to fit the demand. Build backup and safety plans.
- **Segmentation**. Both supplier and customer strategy should figure out how to avoid single points of failure.
- **Continuity**. Through the different stages of the pandemic, plan to ensure continuity and robustness of the business.
- **Third parties**. Our weaknesses may come from third parties that are vulnerable and that transmit their vulnerability onto us. How we can build barriers and breaking points to avoid being destabilised by external parties?
- **Team**. In a pandemic and in a post-pandemic scenario, we need to team up with the health sector and the public sector. We are expected to do bold moves such as merging with our competitors, or acquiring the know-how we lack.
- **Innovation**. Technology and new processes to remote-control and establish virtual collaboration are paramount. Automation and digital

commerce are areas to explore. Customers, employees and supply chains will be forced into digital channels. The use of digital information will increase and will become more strategic to stay on top of problems.

- **Risk**. Switch from fire-fighting to risk management. Minimising risk with flexibility and structural change. In the past there have been few incentives to prevent pandemics because these events are unlikely. Now traditional disaster management plans need to be expanded.
- **Resilience**. We need to increase our capacity to absorb shocks and to emerge from a crisis even stronger.
- **Communication and transparency**. Customers and all our stakeholders expect communication and transparent messages about how we are responding, so they can trust us and our business.
- **Scrutiny**. The public sector is investing in preserving societies, and governments are taking a more active role to ensure the resiliency of our societies. With many sectors receiving government funding there will be more scrutiny. The relationships between government and business and between society and government will change.
- **Reputation**. External and internal stakeholders will judge and assess how we operated in this exceptional time.
- **Globalisation.** If the crisis is going to be a tipping point, destroying globalisation is debated. While more integration will require time in order to build and develop confidence and institutions, a more pragmatic approach would be to see the world as a less open, less prosperous and less free environment.
- **Bottom line**. We are transitioning toward a new bottom line: profit, people and the planet.



Tourism in Egypt is mainly driven by biodiversity and heritage. This is the capital that feeds the tourism industry. It must be protected even when the country is in the middle of a crisis that is directing efforts and resources to health priorities. Neglecting the protection of national capital assets will cause great and long-lasting damage to the future development of the country. Policies should be designed to make Egyptian society more environmentally smart and sustainable.

- **Policy**. Government interventions and policy responses to the pandemic need to be aligned with issues such as climate change, biodiversity and environmental protection. The recovery effort is a time that offers the opportunity to rethink environment policy and to include the environment in the economic recovery plan. While introducing short-term fiscal and tax provisions to address the crisis, it is critical to avoid unintended negative environmental impacts. Do not reverse environmental standards as part of recovery plans. Introduce sector-specific financial support conditional to environmental improvement. Introduce measures that enhance levels of environmental health, thus building resilience into society. Enhance communication about the benefits of improving the environment.
- **De-carbonising**. Short-term and long-term measures and policies should help to make the economy less dependent on carbon.
- **Ecosystem services**. We need to improve the protection of ecosystem services and introduce policies for their payment that are able to finance conservation and environmental management in innovative ways.
- **Nature services partnership** (شراكة خدمات الطبيعة). Partnerships for sustainable

ecosystem services should be promoted and reinforced inside and outside protected areas. With the Sharm El Sheik declaration, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Biodiversity (COP14) affirmed the importance of "*investing in biodiversity for people and planet*". The conference recognized "*the need to promote alliances and develop coordinated approaches.....to mainstream biodiversity*". Lessons learnt in Egypt and worldwide indicate the importance and value of co-management of natural resources, where ecosystem services can be the engine for local growth, providing renewed livelihood options for communities, such as in the case of their involvement in the tourism sector. In planning local development, stakeholders need to coordinate their actions in a more integrated fashion to minimize negative impacts, avoid harmful side-effects and by introducing sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.

- **Environment and tourism**. The relationship between tourism and environment and its biodiversity becomes important in a time where tourism strategies shall be revised and adapted to respond to the emergency and to the changes it will bring to us. A new approach to tourism development should be developed incorporating environmental sustainability. Amid current constraints, the conservation sector should use this situation to focus on on-going issues that need to be tackled, such as addressing the problems related to over-tourism.
- **Financing conservation**. This is the time to redesign plans and strategies for the future of conservation financing. We should expect shortage of funds and we need to increase our efforts to find additional and complementary sources for revenues and monetary streams to support conservation and nature management. This requires a new vision and innovative approaches. We cannot stay locked into the abused concept that tourism pays for conservation. It will not be enough.
- **Baseline**. The absence of visitors is an opportunity to establish environmental baselines and to monitor environmental conditions in pristine environments not affected by the presence of tourists.
- **Domestic tourism**. When tourism will rise again, it will start with domestic tourism. People will flood to parks and protected areas, as they cannot travel abroad, or because they want to escape from lockdowns. We need to prepare and be ready to manage the coming storm of domestic visitors.
- **International tourism**. Regional tourism will probably come first, followed by international tourism. Protected areas need to be ready to manage new visitor expectations and new behaviors.



Some tourism companies and businesses will be more exposed and challenged than others by the current crisis. Past unsustainable strategies and practices will be questioned and their resilience put to test. Many companies operate by choosing quantity over quality, with short-term growth as the primary focus of their operations at the expense of the value of the tourism experience delivered. Some companies focus on controlling the market from the supply side. These companies are not driven by market competition in delivering quality services to retain and gain customers and will face serious challenges once regulations which favour more free markets evolve. Other companies are stretching their operations too much with a broad and un-targeted offering of products, missing the point of being able to develop the value of a more targeted brand. They lack a clear positioning in the market, which weakens them. Other incumbent companies have strategic growth leads by price discounts. This proves to be an expensive and difficult game: difficult to sustain in ordinary times and impossible under current conditions. These are some of the strategies that will be challenged by the current crisis and that need to be re-evaluated and re-assessed very carefully. Their common flaw is the lack of understanding of customer expectations: What customers need; how they want experiences, services and products to be delivered; where do they research and look for tourism experiences and how do they select them.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2020) identify the following priorities for tourism recovery:

- Provide liquidity and protect jobs.
- Recover confidence trough safety & security.

- Public-private collaboration for efficient reopening.
- pen borders with responsibility.
- Harmonize and coordinate protocols and procedures.
- Added value jobs through new technologies.
- Innovation and sustainability as the new normal.

The COVID-19 crisis may set in motion big shifts in the tourism market. Before the current crisis, the tourism sector was already challenged by many drivers of change and contradictions. Now this change can assume new dynamics which are fuelled by the need to give solid answers to the current crisis. In the emergency phase, we need to respond to immediate challenges. This will be followed by a recovery phase where the sector should adapt to new conditions. Along with the recovery the sector should reinvigorate itself by building stronger foundations for the industry that will emerge after the crisis, taking into account trends of change.

- **Vision.** This crisis will help countries to rethink their vision of the future of the tourism industry. What we want to stand for in the future?
- **Resilience.** Tourism needs to incorporate more resilience and sustainability in the economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions.
- **Governance.** How do we build new governance for the sector to deal with a changed landscape?
- **Collaboration.** The tourism sector should collaborate more and link with local administrations, mayors, town councils, local private sector, civic and local communities and social organisations. They have to collaborate to define a more holistic approach to tourism and hospitality.
- **Stakeholder alignment**. Tourism will be improved through stakeholder alignment.
- **Confined spaces**. Tourists will be concerned about travel where people are required to stay in relatively confined spaces, such as airplanes, cruise ships and other forms of mass transit. Physical distancing rules will play a grat role in the reorganization of the sector. Organizing safe and seamless travel will be of key importance as well as the set up of public spaces that respect distancing rules and the introduction of contactless payment systems across the tourism value chain. These issues should be addressed based on the understanding of how the virus is transmitted.
- Information on health requirements and procedures and health protocols for accommodation, transportation, restaurants, parks and attractions). Introduction of new cancellation policies.
- **Rules.** New rules will be required to deal with the new COVID-19 scenario. Managing and accessing and using public spaces will require a creative approach. This includes how to handle beaches, pools, buffet restaurants, tour buses and public and private transport.
- **Certification**. How places and destinations are certified as 'safe' from the health point of view? This applies to hotels, travel vectors, house rentals, public spaces and restaurants. How existing certification schemes and standards are updated and include the post COVID-19 scenario?
- **Lockdown**. Lockdown measures will be on and off for a while to manage

the rise and fall of the virus. There will be windows of opportunity to travel that may last over variable periods of time. How flexible are the products we offer to match this new situation?

- **Business travel**. The familiarity with new tools and the introduction of new organizational ways to manage business remotely is expected to remain after current restrictions are reduced, with a reduction of business travel.
- **Domestic tourism**. In the short term people are expected to resort to domestic tourism. Short-haul will be the first sector to recover with people wanting to get away after being in lockdown for weeks or months. Once they are reassured that flying and traveling is safe again, they will restart traveling, initially domestically and later on long-haul leisure trips. The resumption of international flights usually takes more time after a crisis and the situation is currently too unsettled for people to start thinking about it. International flights will first rebound regionally and later globally, with a rate that will depend by health conditions after COVID-19 has been managed.
- **Proximity travel.** People will start to travel close to home. Short-haul and proximity tourism can be expected to recover first. The pressure for domestic tourism will also rise due to financial constraints. A price drop will not help to encourage people to travel. If you are scared of traveling, a 30% price discount does not make you 30% less scared. People will prefer to visit close to home so they can be evacuated easily.
- **Demand.** There is a reset in the vision of tourism that many companies need to undertake if they expect to grow in the future. Give less attention to what they sell and focus more on what customers want to buy. Tourism development, marketing, promotion, products and services should shift and become more demand-centered, developing a market that gives more options to customer choices. The reality that tourism companies have to face is that customers have more options than companies think. Customers are acquiring more and more tools and expertise to get what they want and they are on a journey to out-smart the barriers that traditional tourism institutions and companies have so far used to keep them dependent on a static and profitable tourism product's offer. By refocusing on authentic tourism demands, tourism businesses can write a new history of growth and opportunities.
- **Retailers.** Customer will find ways to reach suppliers directly, without the need of retailers. Technology is providing new tools to customers to directly reach the products they are looking for. For example Google's reserve service is proposing a consistent book and pay customer experience where suppliers receive money from customers directly, at time of booking, without going through the retailer's bank account. (https://bookingkit.net/blog/reserve-with-google-tours-and-activities/). Is this the time when retailers become tour operators?
- **Segmentation.** The same customer may need different experiences, delivered in different ways, in different occasions. Traditional customer segmentation fits tourism experiences on offer to limited broad categories.

One customer, responding to a set of criteria, falls in a defined segment. But this customer at different point in time may have different expectations and look for different products. A working professional is not necessarily limiting their interest to a relaxed and recharging stay at a high-ranked hotel. They may instead fall in different categories based on whether they are looking for a shopping experience, an adventure, something related to a sport, or a cultural or historical trip. A simplified segmentation of customers generates many overlaps between brands and products. A more accurate understanding of customers' needs will enable a better match of what customers are looking for and the products they offer.

- **Personalisation.** Product personalisation will increase, thus requiring travel agents to rethink supplier communication because retailers will need to communicate the adjusted, personalised, tour products.
- **Value.** The value of a destination is about innovation, the place where you can connect and link with forward-thinking and innovative people. People also tour in order to link with innovation, local creativity and knowledge.
- **Destination.** Destination management should change and start to look at local residents' needs and how they link to tourism. Community collaboration and involvement in tourism is key to building the future of more authentic tourism experiences. A stronger destination management with a mandate from the communities is needed for building more engagement and authenticity. Local small business must become part of the plan and new ideas about visitor economy can grow without disrupting local communities. Careful planning, selection and investment in new products and in building sustainable infrastructure are required. Destination management should move toward a destination stewardship that takes into account community resilience and sustainability issues.
- **Community network.** Tourism experiences benefit from strong community networks in the private, public and civic sectors that are capable of raising the quality of the overall tourism experience. For example, while visiting a monument you are also linking with the surrounding community and using the services and experiences it has to offer.
- **City.** How can a city like Cairo, with nearly ten million people, be promoted as a unitary destination? A city is a network. It is a network of neighborhoods. People expect to align themselves to the place they visit. Which part of a city fits more to a certain person's culture and expectations? Do not sell the city, but the multiple experiences it has to offer to different customers. In such a big city you have infinite possible choices that may better fit the tourism drivers of today.
- **Community.** Communities need to reinforce their resilience and tourism can play a role. It is not only about adapting but also about transforming how they operate, particularly in relation to the tourism sector. Communities are sustainable if they serve future generations and the ecosystems on which we all depend. Destinations should be developed in alignment with the community's interests. Visitor spending is expected to benefit the wider community. This requires an overall destination

management strategy aiming to improve the local environment and economy as well as local socio-cultural settings to better match tourism.

- **Bottom-up tourism.** Community tourism and economic development should converge and work together. Tourism can be built from the bottom up: from local to the value of a national destination.
- **Stories.** Tourists consume stories. How do we build better stories, coherent with the community context and linking to cultural roots and local social dynamics? Stories should include elements of social purpose, be experience-driven and connected to the inspirational part of travel. How will stories be told and distributed? How will social networks be built around these stories? Stories must be distributed and validated and people can use their technology to assess them for consistency through other people feedbacks.
- **Social.** Products, services and experiences become part of the individual social universe where we live. When we look for a restaurant, we do not ask Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) where to eat. We ask advice from our peers and friends. Other people's opinions that have our same standards and expectations are where we get advice. People look for verification and review among peers they trust.
- **Guides**. Guiding tours will be disrupted by technology. Artificial intelligence is gathering momentum and already people are able to interact at home with smart speakers, such as Google Home, ivee Voice, Smart Things, Apple HomePod, D-Link Staples Connect and others. Google is pushing the research with its Meena digital assistant that can hold conversation using AI (https://artificialintelligence-news.com/2020/01/29/meena-google-truly-conversational-ai/). It will not be far into the future when digital humans will replace tour guides.
- **Micro-mobility**. People will look for individual and self-guided mobile devices. Autonomous vehicles will soon change the way that people commute.
- **Apps**. Information related to trips will soon be converged in applications that will give customers more power and control of the selection of tourism activities.
- **Urban tours**. Urban tours will use digital technologies and prices will plummet, with human storytellers considered to be a luxury product.
- **Virtual tours**. Virtual experiences will multiply with 3D online museum tours, to webcams sharing views from touristic locations.
- **Locals as tourists**. Locals are no longer considered a set of people who by definition are not interested in local tourism. Instead of what we traditionally define as local, there are many people with the curiosity and interest to explore local tourism. This is similar to people who move to a city because of work opportunities and develop an interest in learning more the root culture of the place. While we try to treat visitors like locals, we should also think about treating locals as tourists.
- **Bio-passport**. We have passports that define our belonging to a sovereign

state. But in the future, your vaccination status in regard to COVID-19 may become required with your passport. In past times, people carried a yellow fever vaccination card. Could we expect a form of bio-passport sometime in the future. How will it be managed? Will it be digital? Will it use blockchain technology? How do we prepare for the necessary infrastructure?

- **Testing**. Do we need to test every person coming from abroad? And should they be tested before they travel back?
- **Health**. If we have to live with the virus how do we manage the health of people? How we streamline procedures about dealing with infected people. Repatriation policies, quarantine policies and assistance policies. Selecting a destination close to hospitals and where there is availability of qualified health assistance will be a factor. People will travel if they feel safe to do so. Travel will be linked to the health standards of countries.
- **Insurance**. Virus insurance will become an option. This implies medical evacuation and health assistance.
- **Reconnect**. As the crisis passes we will need a strong message to reconnect destinations to markets. Our new vision will help to define the key messages. Creativity about a destination will be rewritten.
- **Gauging**. Gauging trends and new demands is key to developing successful products. Gauging will be even more important in the recovery phase. How do we identify the right signals that tell us the situation is changing? How do we know about the directions that customers are taking? Data will help to craft our offer and our messages will need to be more targeted and effective.
- **Gradually**. The recovery will be gradual and non-homogeneous in the products targeted. What are the priorities? Which structures and services do we need in place first? How do we discover who is interested in our products and services, how do we align our messages to the market?
- **Technology**. Tour operators have always pushed back technology, possibly in the fear that people are able to link directly. This will probably change. Tourists will have greater choice of tools to reach and book products, restaurants, accommodation, tours and experiences. In addition, digital products can sell tourism experiences to people who cannot travel to a specific destination for whatever reason. Many people who are interested in an experience but cannot afford the cost may resort to virtual experiences. Digital experiences also help to educate future travellers. People will use virtual technology to assess and check whether a product is worth booking for real. Overall, digital will help people to travel better and have a better experience. While tourism is marketed in traditional ways, people consume it differently with their cell phones. The phone with its tools is the path driving the consumer. People select restaurants and cultural events, and book travels, on the phone.
- **Automation**. Automation is becoming critical for saving time and money. This will be the time to discharge old technologies and equip us with updated tools and new technologies.



Resolve – how to ensure continuity: 2–4 months

Resolving and managing the COVID-19 crisis is expected to last 2–4 months beginning with the start of the pandemic. During this period of time the focus will be on dealing with the initial emergency response actions to the spread of the virus. Measures and policies in this short-term phase are aimed at minimizing damage caused by the pandemic to the environment and tourism sectors.

Manage and control the emergency

In the emergency phase, key issues to be addressed relate to the alignment of policies and guidelines between the tourism and environmental sectors to manage the virus. The control of the virus requires joint efforts and coordinated actions so that problems that may arise in one sector do not spill into the other.

In managing the emergency, both sectors are expected to implement the identified guidelines for managing the virus and controlling its spread. This will require spreading information about COVID-19 management among employees in PAs, hotels and the tourism business. Information will focus on health issues and their impacts on conservation and tourism, such as managing people in emergencies and dealing with medical waste. Issues of concern for both sectors include managing the virus, infection prevention measures, use of medical equipment, and minimizing direct and indirect damage to the environment caused by medical waste.

Avoid disruption of natural capital and biodiversity assets

During the emergency phase the MoE should ensure that waste management systems are in place and operating efficiently, and the tourism sector should cooperate to manage waste. The objective is to prevent waste accumulation and contamination or spread in PAs, which would cause environmental damage and increased management costs later.

In the emergency phase the tourism sector should focus on plans for recovery that do not discount the environmental dimension. The MoE can support the tourism sector with technical advice about cost-effective and sustainable alternatives.

Medical waste is a common issue of concern for both the tourism and environment sectors during the COVID-19 emergency. The management of medical waste generated by hotels and reducing its spread in the environment, which causes harm to Pas, is an important priority in this phase. To address this problem, the MoE should develop guidelines for the proper management of medical waste produced by tourism in the emergency phase and in the future. The implementation of these guidelines by the tourism sector will be critical to ensure that natural assets are not be compromised by accumulated medical waste in the environment and/or mismanagement of medial waste which might lead to contamination and virus spread inside tourism facilities.

Lack of income and unemployment in the environmentally-rich areas where tourism activity is currently halted may drive local people and communities to use protected natural resources for their survival. The depletion of natural resources and natural assets to address short-term and immediate needs can cause great damage to the environment. For example, marine resources in environmentally sensitive areas could be greatly damaged by illegal fishing for food. The MoE should seek the collaboration and involvement of stakeholders and businesses in the tourism sector who have an interest in the protection of environmental resources, such as the diving and water sports industries. This sector can collaborate with the MoE to provide information and to support the monitoring of critical environmental areas in order to avoid the disruption of natural resources.

Protect business

In the short term, the tourism sector needs to identify efficient and short-term cost-saving solutions in order to survive the crisis. For example, waiving of PA entrance fees and licenses during the emergency phase can be a great help to preserve the tourism businesses. Waiving can be introduced with some conditionality in relation to the adoption of a set of environmentally sustainable practices.

The MoT should plan to communicate with customers to keep them informed about what the country is doing to manage the situation and deal with COVID-19, particularly in relation to the protection of the environment and the preservation of environmental conditions in PAs.

The tourism sector should start preparing communication that will be directed at

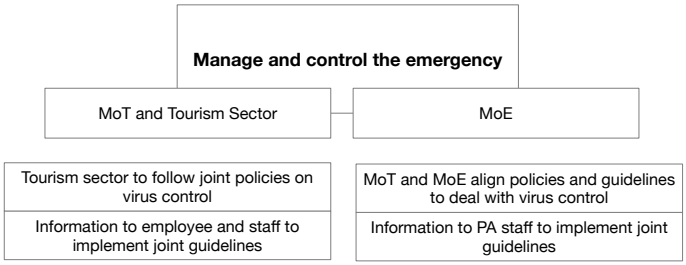
regional and international markets. In doing so, it needs to coordinate with the MoE in order to adapt PA management, infrastructure and operations to future tourism markets. Both the MoTA and MoE will cooperate in building Egypt's reputation as a country to trust for tourism by showcasing national response and sector capacity to deal with COVID-19.

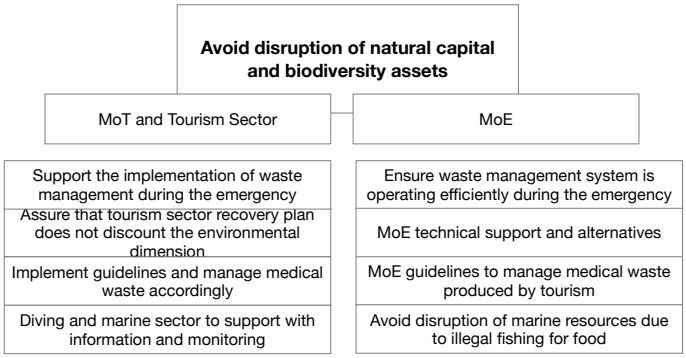
The short-term tourism will be based on the domestic market. While this sector will be developed by the MoTA and the tourism sector, PAs should be prepared to accommodate and manage this category of tourists. This will include their management and operation, as well as adapting existing services, introducing new services and adapting law enforcement accordingly. The MoE will focus on the preparation of PAs to welcome domestic tourism and for the reopening of the country to regional and international tourism.

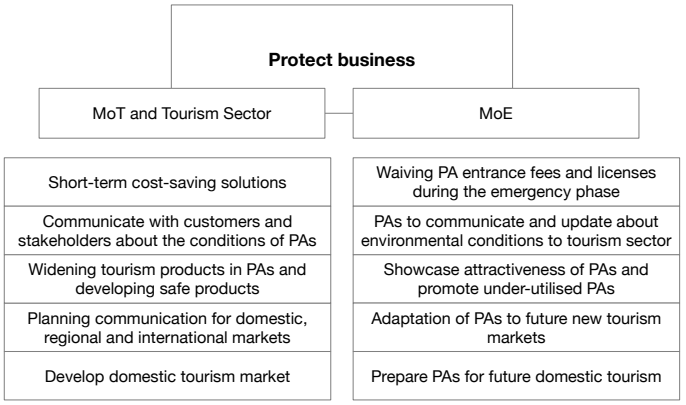
Monitoring systems in PAs

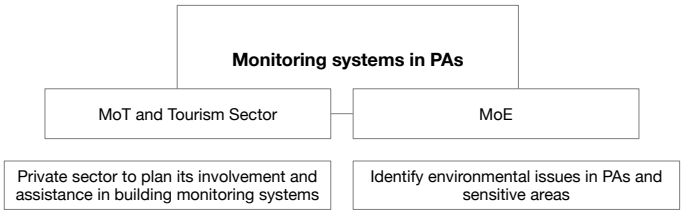
The MoE will identify environmental issues and problems in PA sensitive areas that require more robust monitoring in the future. Environmental monitoring will be planned with the involvement and assistance of the tourism private sector. This will pave the way to future phases where cooperation between the two sectors will be enhanced.

RESOLVE: ENSURE CONTINUITY (2-4 months)









Return and resilience: 4–12 months

The return and resilience phase is expected to last 4–12 months. During this period of time, the focus will be on restoring society and the economy to their normal functioning, while simultaneously starting to activate strategic policies and actions that will help to prepare environmental and tourism sectors for the next phase of innovation and reform.

Prepare for the future

Both ministries should cooperate in reviewing and updating the MoTA sustainable development plan, vision and imagining the future role that PAs will play in the tourism sector is critical at this time. How different tourism market sectors will be targeted and the expected impacts they may have on the Egyptian environment must be carefully considered. Domestic tourism is expected to play a role into the diversification of the sector and the PA system will need to redesign its interface with a changing tourism market. Products and services that PAs can offer should take into account the expectations and nature of domestic and regional tourists and the tourism sector will build its recovery by targeting domestic tourism. Tourism flow will change, with more instability due to the uncertainty left by COVID-19. Tourism packages should incorporate more flexibility and PAs should be able to adapt to the new form of tourism that will emerge in the future. Visitor flow management is expected to be redesigned accordingly, in response to the change in tourism composition, addressing new expectations and adapting to the expected time variability.

Protected areas are expected to disseminate information and build awareness about the value and importance of the Egyptian natural capital to sustain tourism and ecosystem services. Building awareness among the public and potential tourists about the value of the national natural capital will help to build consensus and support of the measures to protect it. The MoE is expected to showcase national biodiversity value and less popular PAs and ecotourism products that are of value for tourism activities. In addition, the MoTA and tourism sector should renew their communication strategy and messages to re-connect Egypt with its global markets and customers, showcasing the diversity of the country and the tourism options offered by its PAs. The MoE can launch a national campaign to draw attention to PAs and showcase national biodiversity. Marine conservation campaigns and environment protection campaigns can support the building of a more environmentally aware public opinion, sparking interest for domestic tourism. The tourism sector will cooperate to diffuse information about the richness and value of PAs to tourists.

The MoE should inform the broader public about the benefits that the environment provides (ecosystem services), in order to encourage them to develop an interest in its preservation and to invite them to enjoy the Egyptian environment through tourism. The attractiveness of PAs will be showcased, and under-utilized and currently marginal PAs will be promoted, with the objective of balancing and spreading visitor pressures and flows. Tourism products in PAs will be widened including the development of COVID-19-safe products.

In this phase, the MoE and MoT should open a dialogue about the value of ecosystem services and how they contribute to the economy of the tourism sector. The introduction of comprehensive systems for payment for ecosystem services needs to be reviewed, including license fees and license regulations in PAs. Building the financial sustainability of PAs will be of critical value to ensure that the environmental protection system is maintained in place and functions efficiently in the near future.

Reduce environmental impacts

Preserving the quality of the environment and its habitats is of key importance for the long-term future of Egyptian biodiversity. This is also critical for the survival of the tourism sector that is built around the value of natural assets. The MoE and the MoTA have a shared interest in maintaining the natural assets at a high quality level, especially in PAs. The tourism sector is expected to renew its commitment to reduce environmental impact and the MoE can support this in assessing the effectiveness of regulations that aim to reduce environmental impacts.

Preserving the quality of the environment will be granted by the tourism sector's increased compliance to environmental regulations and by increasing its capacity to monitor and address environmental impacts. In PAs, license systems can be designed in such a way to be linked to environmental performances. The less the environmental impacts generated by a tourism operation/activity, the larger the premium offered, with decreased costs for the license of the operation. For example hotels that have a Green Star certification could be allowed to pay less for certain services. The less water they use the less the costs. The lesser waste they generated the more reduced the tariffs applied for waste management. Green-Fins certified diving center can obtain some facilitations, for examples more advantageous license costs compared to operators that are not certified. Minimizing the environmental impacts of tourist operations under license by using incentives to improve environmental performance is a policy that can help the tourism sector to improve its capacity to minimize environmental harm while at the same time reducing monetary costs.

The MoE should introduce pilot tests for Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) for tourism and other developments in selected PAs, thereby building national capacity and experience in this area. SEA will be important for the sustainability of the tourism sector because it will help to review development strategies and identify areas where investment can be more targeted. SEA can provide information to investors about better opportunities for developments that can operate with lower environmental impact while improving profit margins.

The reduction or prohibiting of unsustainable environmental practices in PAs will be important to preserve their biodiversity value and environmental quality. There is a common ground of cooperation between the MoE and the MoTA in improving the environmental quality and reducing unsustainable tourism practices in PAs. Both sectors are expected to cooperate in this phase in order to build a stronger base for the sustainability of tourism operations as well as the improvement of environmental habitats.

To improve the overall quality of the environment, a greater role should be played by tour operators and tour guides. Many environmentally non-compliant activities in PAs are the result of poor guiding. The MoTA , tourism sector and MoE can agree on the establishment of clearance mechanisms for tours and tour guides in PAs and jointly develop a joint policy that would support the implementation of this mechanism. The MoE can assist in the implementation of such system by enhancing overall compliance. For example, a scoring mechanism can be applied: a guide who operates in a PA receives an initial score which is lowered in the event of non-compliance with PA regulations. Below a certain threshold, the license is withdrawn and the guide or tour operator is forbidden to operate there anymore.

Co-management

Protected area environments and biodiversity are shared resources for Egyptian society and the tourism sector. Their protection is no longer perceived as a sole responsibility of the government. Other stakeholders play a decisive role in the protection and care of the environment. There is a crucial need for consensus in building new co-management systems and in developing a multi-stakeholder approach to PA management. The establishment of Nature Service Partnerships in Protected Areas can be the solution to establish institutional frameworks that enhance co-management between the private sector, local communities and PAs. The tourism sector is required to take a more active role and to participate in co-management in PAs. Partnerships in PAs will increase ownership among stakeholders and can offer an instrument to coordinate the recovery and the reform phases of the post-emergency era.

The management of tourism flows is an important area for cooperation between the tourism and environmental sectors. Tourism flows and tourism activities have environmental impacts that need to be integrated into PA management plans. The tourism sector should develop a joint plan with PAs about tourism promotion for the recovery phase. Recovery plans for the tourism sector should fit into the recovery plans of PAs.

To improve overall performances, PAs need to share more information with the tourism sector about the status and condition of the environment. Environmental monitoring in PAs should inform the tourism sector and should be incorporated in tourism operations and tourism decision-making. The MoE should improve environmental monitoring systems in PAs and be capable of feeding information into tourism planning and decision-making, thus helping the tourism sector move toward more sustainable practices.

The tourism industry relies on the quality of tourism experiences offered, and PAs in Egypt play a considerable part of these experiences. To improve the quality of tourism experiences in PAs, the MoE needs to identify and address points of failure related to management, communication and customer relations.

Health standards

COVID-19 is introducing unplanned changes in health and hygiene measures that need to be incorporated into the tourism sector and PAs. Some of the measures

include the review of spatial design of tourism infrastructure, services and products, to incorporate physical distancing and assure high health and hygiene standards. In addition, the access to public spaces and public areas should respect COVID-19 requirements. Both the tourism and environmental sector are expected to cooperate in introducing and enforcing rules and regulations for physical distancing and hygiene norms when tourism takes place in PAs, while insuring minimal impact of these regulations on natural assets i.e. not promoting the use of single use cutlery and prohibiting the use disinfectants that harms the corals such as bleach. This implies reinforcing health procedures and standards about COVID-19 in PA regulations that deal with tourism activities.

Where tourism takes place, there is the need to introduce and enforce standards for compliance about COVID-19 practices. Health and hygiene standards in PAs and hotels need to be aligned. People moving from hotels to PAs and visitor centres are expected to find uniform health standards and regulations. The PAs and the tourism sector must cooperate in disseminating health information to tourists and tour operators.

Safety and hygiene protocols should be harmonized across the whole tourism value chain, including PAs, tourist attractions and parks. Protocols should be communicated to customers and MoT and MoE will cooperate to make sure health standards are maintained in place.

MoT and MoE will work together to improve tourism experience by redesigning processes toward more digital touch-less operations in all possible touch-points. MoT and MoE are expected to work together in managing density of people, defining new protocols for the flow of tourists, ensuring tourists can maintain physical distancing.

RETURN AND RESILIENCE: RESTORING TO NORMAL (4-12 months)

Prepare for the future

MoT and Tourism Sector	MoE
Review tourism vision	Role of PA system in the future of the tourism industry
Target domestic and regional tourism	Products and services that PAs can provide for domestic and regional tourism
Flexibility in tourism packages and products for domestic and regional tourism	Adaptation of PAs to manage domestic and regional tourism flows
Connect with new markets and customers	Showcase PAs, national biodiversity value, unknown PAs and ecotorism products
Information to tourists about the PAs natural value and how to protect it	Showcase PAs. Marine conservation campaigns. Environmental campaigns
Revise payment systems for ecosystem services	Improve financing for PAs

Reduce environmental impacts

MoT and Tourism Sector	MoE
Commitment to targets to reduce environmental impacts	Assist tourism sector in implementation of regulations to reduce environmental impacts
Ensure compliance and monitor performances	License system linking to environmental performances
Review tourism development strategy. More targeted investment	Pilot tests of Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)
Reduce unsustainable environmental practices in PAs	Improve quality of PAs environment
Train staff, update systems	Establish clearance mechanism for tours and tour guides, assist in implementation

Co-management

MoT and Tourism Sector	MoE
Participate in co-management	Establish Nature Service Partnerships in PAs involving communities and private sector
Joint plan about tourism promotion for the recovery phase	Manage tourism flows and tourism impact and integrate tourism plans
Environmental monitoring to be incorporated in tourism operations	Sharing environmental monitoring in PAs with tourism sector
Improve quality of tourism experience in PAs	Review and address points of failure in PA management and communication

Health standards

MoT and Tourism Sector	MoE
Tourism products and services to deal with COVID-19 implications	Incorporate physical distancing and health and hygiene measures in PAs
Aligning health and hygiene standards in hotels and PAs	Aligning health and hygiene standards in PAs and hotels

Re-imagination and reform: more than 12-16 months

When the pandemic crisis is over, probably in one year's time, tourism and environment sectors will need to improve their resilience in coping with future shocks and similar crisis. Also, Egypt will need to adapt and reposition in a world that is expected to be deeply changed. In this period of time, Egypt needs to learn how to manage the 'new normal' that will emerge after the crisis is over. Both the tourism and the environmental sectors should plan to become more productive, efficient, sustainable, and aligned with best international standards.

Efficient use of resources

The future will be shaped by the capacity of society to become more efficient in using scarce natural resources. This is particularly important for the tourism industry, because it is built on the quality of tourism experiences, directly linked to the quality of the environmental assets where the tourism experiences take place. Policies need to be introduced to reduce the use of raw materials and energy resources with incentives for supporting better technologies and practices. The tourism sector needs to utilize resources more efficiently and to implement circular economy practices, reducing waste, waste water, energy, water, and inefficiencies. For example, reusable material should be taken out of the waste instead of ending up in landfills. 'Reduce, reuse and recycling' should become the standard for this sector. The MoE is expected to assist and support innovations that develop the circular economy. The MoE can support the tourism sector by facilitating access to green financing and technical expertise. Both the MoE and the MoTA are expected to cooperate to build more efficient ways of using resources, lower energy consumption and establish recycling chains.

Pollution is another critical area, and it is even more important in the context of PAs. The tourism sector is expected to commit to, and to operate under, the principle that pollution is reduced at the source. The tourism sector has a major responsibility to minimize pollution affecting PAs, such as daily trip boats and its impacts on marine life. The MoE is expected to provide incentives and to establish regulations to minimize pollution. Environmental liability should be introduced for those activities that take place in PAs.

One major source of pollution is linked with transport, and therefore efforts should be directed at driving out obsolete, pollution-causing technologies, in favor of introducing efficient, green transport. The tourism sector should aim to reduce levels of emissions in transport. To support the tourism sector in this regard, the MoE can provide technical support, assist in introducing innovations, introduce positive incentives, discourage bad practices with taxation, and invest in technologies that have low levels of emissions.

The use of less resources, while delivering better services, should be the objective of a more efficient and advanced tourism sector. The tourism sector can introduce improvements in several areas and is expected to be assisted in the introduction of efficient measures by the MoE. In order to reduce the consumption of

resources, the tourism sector can consolidate transport services, share management technology, introduce cross-industry services, and pool financial resources and financial services. Tourism is expected to be on a learning curve of how to increase business efficiency while benefitting from the advantages derived by a pool of shared resources, infrastructure and services. Increase efficiency in the tourism sector should go hand-in-hand with achieving the delivery of high service standards. The assistance of the MoE in this regard is important and relates to technical support, investments and facilitation mechanisms, thus guiding innovation and transformation.

In designing the innovation of the tourism and environmental sector, the long-term objective will be the de-carbonising of the tourism sector and of PAs. To achieve this, the MoE and the MoTA need to develop plans for transitioning energy resources toward lower/zero carbon alternatives and to work together to guide the transition toward a more energy-efficient setup for the tourism sector and in PAs.

Tourism to become a green sector

Egypt is already a nature-based destination, with a large proportion of visitors coming to enjoy and experience the natural beauty of the country. The MoE and the MoTA are expected to work together to enhance Egypt's capacity to rank highly among the global green destinations. The MoE should develop and protect green destinations, particularly PAs and around PAs, while the tourism sector should promote them globally, and take responsibility for operating tourism activities which adhere to environmentally sustainability principles.

The push toward stronger and healthier green destinations can only be achieved if the MoE and the MoTA work together. To drive this process, the MoTA should start on applying green destinations policies and practices in those cities which are mainly tourism economically driven. The MoE should provide the needed technical support and recommendations for best policies and practices.

The adoption of sustainable environmental standards should be widespread in the tourism sector and the MoE should assist and promote the introduction of environmental measures and environmental certification for the tourism sector operating in and outside PAs. The MoE and the MoTA are expected to cooperate in building capacity in the tourism sector to share and optimize the use of resources, services and infrastructure, reducing environmental footprint and linking to sustainable and green tourism products, such as ecotourism.

To become a greener sector, tourism should start to consider the enormous value of ecotourism. Tourism development in the future should regard ecotourism more seriously, by helping the tourism industry to diversify and to become greener and environmentally sustainable. The MoE should assist with the establishment of a strong ecotourism sector by introducing guidelines for ecotourism inside and outside PAs. To develop a greener tourism sector, and to favour the establishment of robust ecotourism products, the MoE can use incentives and ad-hoc policies to incubate environmentally innovative ecotourism projects with the potential for up-scaling and becoming mainstream innovations across the tourism sector. Green financing can be attracted to support these developments.

Ecotourism will involve both the private sector and local communities, and the MoTA & MoE should offer policy incentives to support the development of environmentally based ecotourism projects. The development of ecotourism projects should be facilitated and be capable of bringing together communities, businesses, conservation and know-how. Actors involved in ecotourism, such as communities, should be made more responsible by having a direct role and responsibility in preserving natural capital and cooperating with PAs and MoE to achieve sustainability goals. Ecotourism will offer Egypt an option to further develop sustainable tourism products based on nature, rural areas and culture, creating a new set of tourism experiences that cater for small group tours and personalized packages.

RE-IMAGINATION AND REFORM (above 12 months)

Efficient use of resources

MoT and Tourism Sector	MoE
Utilise resource efficiency and circular economy practices	Assist and technical support in developing circular economy, access green financing
Prevention of pollution at the source	Incentives and regulations. Environmental liability when operating in PAs
Drive out polluting technologies in transport. Low level of emissions	Technical assistance, tax, incentives, investment and cooperation
Reduce consumption of resources	Drive resource efficient measures
Decarbonise tourism sector	Decarbonise PAs

Tourism to become a green sector

MoT and Tourism Sector	MoE
Market green tourism destinations	Develop and protect green destinations
Adopt and implement green purchasing guidelines	Green purchasing guidelines and green purchasing in PAs
Adoption of sustainable environmental measures and certified standards	Assist to adopt environmental measures and certification when operating in and out of PAs
Innovative tourism development linking to ecotourism	Guidelines for eco-tourism in and outside of PAs
Prioritise and support environment based ecotourism	Policy for licences of environment based ecotourism developments
Community involvement in tourism operations and ecotourism	Preserve natural capital with the involvement of communities

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