



AITO & THE TRAVEL FOUNDATION



STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP IN SRI LANKA

AITO has collaborated with the UK charity The Travel Foundation to set up a Responsible Tourism Partnership - a dialogue with the Sri Lankan industry and other local stakeholder groups as a means to identifying and overseeing projects to help Sri Lanka enhance its product and help tourism to improve local livelihoods.

During the AITO conference in Colombo in 2003 we held Responsible Tourism workshop at which we found enthusiasm for closer relations between the Sri Lankan industry and ours on matters related to RT. AITO subsequently put in a successful bid to the Travel Foundation for funds to set up and run this project, which kicked off midway through last year. Dick Sisman & Associates were appointed to set up the partnership.

When the tsunami hit on 26th December 2004, it became clear that this responsible tourism partnership and infrastructure was needed more than ever, so the project came to include the management and funding of a range of post-tsunami regeneration projects that are tourism-related. We realised that the amount of money required to make a serious difference in Sri Lanka is often very small, provided that there is an effective mechanism to ensure that any funds donated will be correctly and efficiently used in the medium to long term, and will help strengthen the industry and those who work in it.

The Responsible Tourism Partnership consists of a number of senior tourism figures and advisors in Sri Lanka.

Projects

“Trees for Life”

This project delivers species of trees of food, medicinal or economic value, where they are needed most in villages and southern coast conservation sites. Visitors to the nursery are encouraged to make a donation to purchase a tree in order to support a family. At the same time the visitor offsets the cost of operation, including free delivery of saplings, horticultural training, establishment of satellite nurseries and school environmental awareness programmes.

“Reviving crafts through tourism”

The poorest of poor women from Dikwela coastal villages are improving their skills as lace makers. A new building construction is underway to replace a tsunami-devastated lace centre. The next step includes further training in other craft production, public demonstrations, visitor facilities and creating direct sales opportunities.

For more information on The Travel Foundation click on www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk

