tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

FRAMEWORK FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY IN TOURISM CITY DESTINATION

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1. The National Department of Tourism identified Universal Access in Tourism (UAT) as an important initiative to enhance South Africa's competitiveness, which is in line with the desire to be one of the Top 20 Tourism destinations by year 2020.

1.2. Universal Access in Tourism (UAT) responds to Article 2.2 of the UNWTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism which states that:

"Tourism activities should respect the equality of men and women in that they should promote human rights and, **more particularly, the individual rights of the most vulnerable groups, notably children, the elderly, the handicapped, ethnic minorities and indigenous people**."

1.3. It further responds to the Cape Town Declaration of 2002 on Responsible Tourism in Destinations and the National Minimum Standards for Responsible Tourism (SANS1162), which advocates for a Universally Accessible Tourism Sector. Coupled with the above, the NTSS identifies Universal Access as adding a quality dimension within the tourism sector.

1.4. In March 2010, the NDT developed the Universal Access in Tourism Stakeholder Forum which helped to develop a UA Action Plan for South Africa and the UA in Tourism Declaration.

1.5. Accessible Tourism enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. This definition is inclusive of all people including those travelling with children in prams, people with disabilities and senior citizens.

1.6. South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007. Government departments across all spheres of government are expected to ensure compliance with the articles of the United Nations Convention. Article 9 of the United Nations convention refers to Accessibility which largely impacts on tourism activities.

1.7. The United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with Disabilities builds on the Bill of Rights as contained in chapter 2 of the South African Constitution and therefore the obligations placed on government by the Convention, is in the main therefore not new.

1.8. NDT therefore organized the first Universal Accessibility in Tourism consultative workshop with key industry stakeholders on the 12th March 2010 utilizing a universally accessible venue. The target audience was largely comprised of the following organizations with enormous knowledge on the field of Universal Accessibility in Tourism:

- Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities
- South African Disability Alliance (SADA)
- Tourism Provincial Tourism Authorities
- Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA)
- Tourism Associations

1.9. The objective of the workshop was to take stock of progress made towards the realisation of Universal Accessibility in Tourism, identify priority areas of intervention and develop the UA Action Plan as well as to discuss the need for an industry commitment/declaration.

1.10. Delegates at the workshop also formulated the following vision for Universal Accessibility in South Africa, i.e., "To position South Africa as a Universally Accessible Tourism destination, implementing best practices and systems".

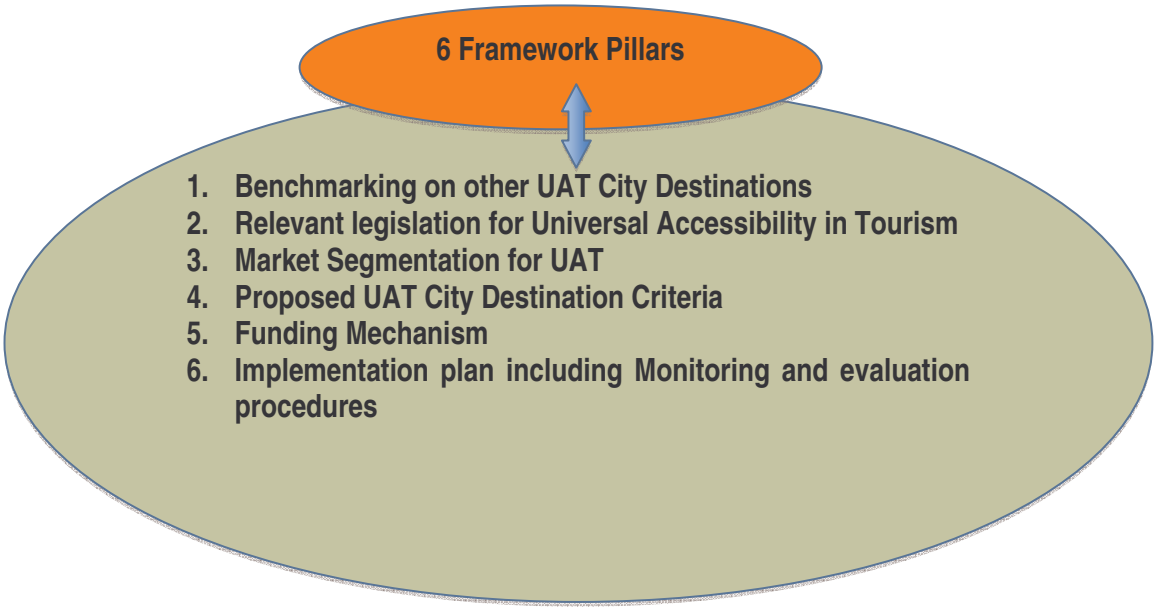
1.11. A follow-up Universal Accessibility in Tourism consultative workshop was held on the 12 April 2010 and delegates at the workshop developed the Universal Accessibility Action Plan and Universal Accessibility Declaration.

The Universal Accessibility Declaration that was drafted is a commitment to the implementation of UA principles by role-players in the broader tourism value chain to achieve the following objectives:

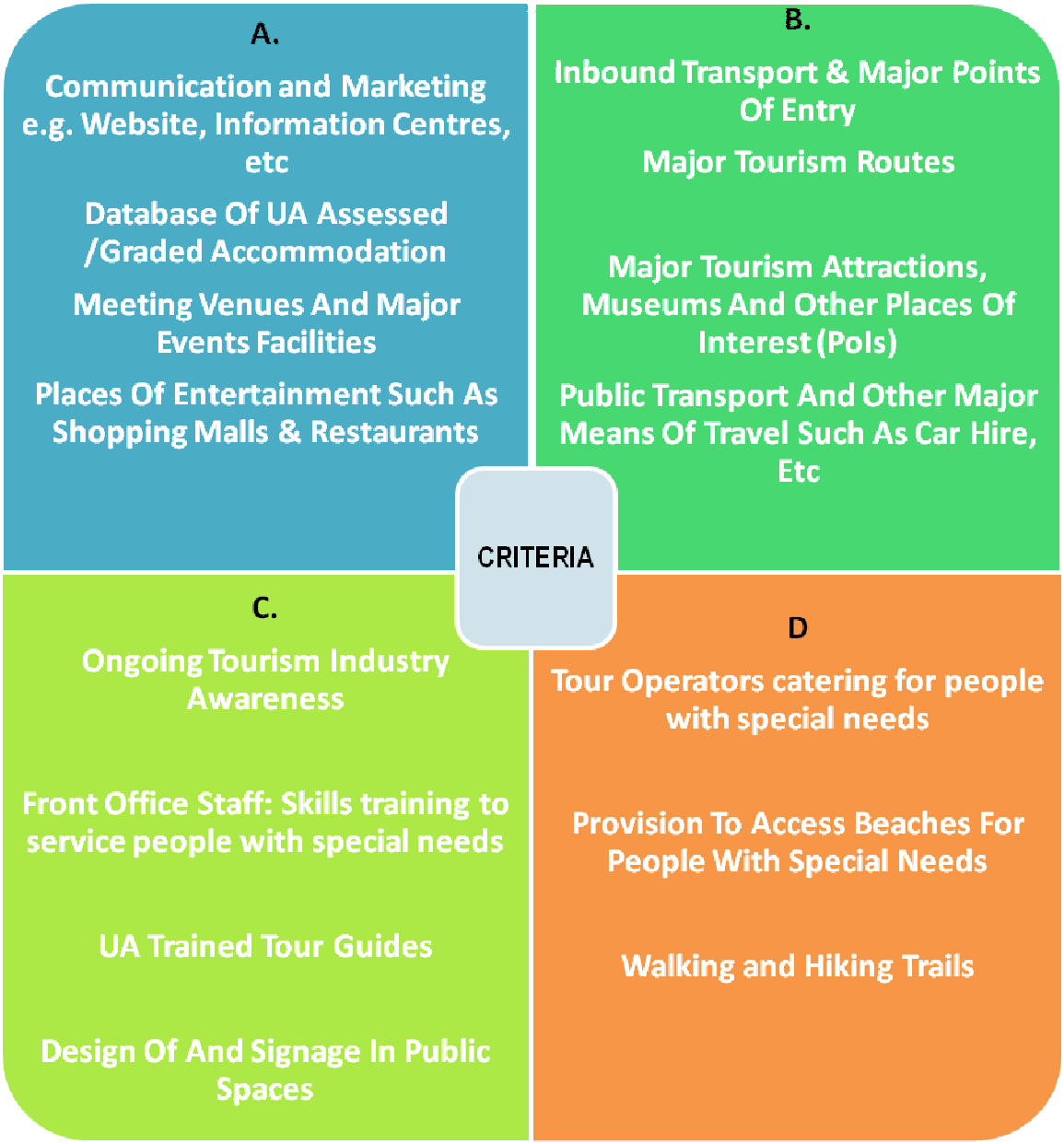
- Provide the same choices for all travel consumers;
- Ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities (including the elderly & families with children);
- Protection of the individual's right to travel with dignity; and
- Encourage tourism practitioners to include the principle of universal access to tourism infrastructure, products and services in Tourism master plans, policies and programmes.

The Universal Accessibility Action Plan contains a detailed plan of action aimed at ensuring universal accessibility within the tourism sector as well as responsible organisations, entities and or government departments.

2. FRAMEWORK PILLARS



3. STRUCTURE: DRAFT UAT CRITERIA



4. PROBLEM STATEMENT

4.1. Currently in South Africa, there is no one City Destination that can be pronounced universally accessible that could host various mega events (sporting /cultural /conferences, etc. As could be required by Clientele with Disabilities and /Special Needs. This therefore implies that the NDT's Vision of being a Top20 Destination by year 2020 will remain unachievable as attracting such Clients and such Mega Events will remain impossible to fulfil.

4.2. This is a proactive approach by the NDT so that when a demand for hosting such events arises, hosting can be done with ease thereby generating the desired revenue, influx of the targeted Clientele and repeat hosting of these Mega events.

4.3. Universal Accessibility is a highly contested term in the tourism sector as it is generally understood as meaning 100% accessibility in more than one mobility areas, e.g. more than one wheelchair ramp; extended entrances to fit different types of a wheel-chair; catering for audio and visual mobility needs and covering all floors of a given facility /building /city.

4.4. This comes with a heavy price tag to implement or comply with these needs which in some cases is being seen as an unnecessary additional cost and inconvenience rather than a basic requirement, a basic Human Right as entrenched in the South African Constitution while on the other hand it carries with it a quality dimension to the receiving client about the image of South Africa and the tourism sector.

4.5. It must also be pointed out that reluctance relating to affordability of converting some areas of establishments has been shown especially by the small tourism establishment owners whereas the large operators with a bigger financial muscle are happy to invest and as they see the cost/benefit of such an investement.

4.6. In South Africa, through the TGCSA, UA grading is undertaken within the following areas of grading:

- Mobility grading: accessibility grading for people with physical limitations;
- Communication Grading: accessibility grading for people with audio and cognitive limitations; and
- Visual Grading: accessibility grading for people with sight limitations.

The grading process is yet to be extended to other sub-sectors within tourism including restaurants and tourist attractions where there's an influx of tourists and visitors.

5. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF A UAT DRAFT CRITERIA

- A desktop study of Institutions conducting Universal Accessibility grading was conducted.
- Case studies such as Sydney and Halifax Municipality in Australia were reviewed.
- The NDTs UAT Action Plan and the DTI's Accessible Tourism Study (2011) were utilized as reference documents.
- A draft City Destination Criteria was developed and presented to the Universal Accessibility in Tourism Stakeholder Forum on 02 November, 2012.
- The Draft Criteria was also presented to the City of Cape Town on 22 November, 2012, and to the City of Ethekwini on 22 January, 2013.
- The Draft UA City Destination Criteria was presented at the Governance Working Group (GWG) on the 16 January, 2013 and MIPTECH for further inputs.
- The NDT Research Unit and the Policy and Knowledge Services branch management was consulted.

6. OBJECTIVES OF UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY IN TOURISM CITY DESTINATION FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the Framework would be to provide the tourism sector; municipalities and all the Interest Groups (IGs) with a blueprint guide document that can be used towards achieving a Universally Accessible city destination. Over and above, the Framework seeks to:

6.1. Increase access to tourist attractions by people with disabilities/elderly and those with accessibility needs.
6.2. To enhance SA's ability to compete for events and conferences that require UA destinations
6.3. To heighten industry awareness of organisational benefits that accrue from accessible products supply in tourism.
6.4. To encourage building of new tourism structures and facilities which are universally accessible.
6.5. To encourage development of tourism experiences, attractions and destinations that are universally accessible.

7. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The following legislation also emphasises the importance and relevance of Universal Accessibility in tourism:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 9).
- The Disability Rights Charter of South Africa.
- The Constitution (1996) (Chapter 2 guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens, Section 9, is the equality clause and the right to freedom from discrimination based on a number of social criteria. In this clause discrimination based on disability is specifically mentioned and disabled people are thus guaranteed the right to be treated equally and enjoy the same rights as all other citizens.
- White Paper on the Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997).
- National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act No. 103 of 1977 (as amended).
- Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, No 4 of 2000.

It was against the above-mentioned background that NDT in partnership with industry role-players, including organizations representing people with disabilities spear-headed the process of ensuring universal accessibility in all tourism activities within the tourism sector.

8. INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES

Case studies such as Sydney and Halifax Municipality in Australia on Universal Designs were reviewed.

8.1 This study reveals that North Sydney Council developed Accessibility Standards, known as Charter for Universal Access (CUA) which is a commitment to ensure that its facilities (built environment and services) are accessible to the greatest extent possible.
8.1. The Charter for Universal Access is a set of rules that a person /organisation must follow to identify or remove to prevent barriers for ease of accessibility by people with disabilities and or those with Special Needs.
8.2. It also aims to assist the tourism industry to increase the accessibility to tourism products for people who have specific access requirements thereby increasing industry awareness and understanding of the accessibility needs of tourists.

8.3. Furthermore, it promotes Universally Accessible infrastructure as a way of life rather than a privilege and encourages that Universal Designs are built around those with accessibility needs.

8.4. These Accessibility Standards are similar to the NDT's UAT Declaration which is a commitment to the implementation of UA principles by role-players in the broader tourism value chain.

8.5. The current focus of these studies is for now limited to the Built Environment & Open spaces which includes the categories listed below:

- Signage & way finding
- Parks; street lights; signals and lighting
- Benches and bus stops
- Boarding platforms

The study further reveals that UA clients are encouraged to experiment within the upgraded environment in terms of accessibility and provide feedback to the municipal website for further improvements, etc. Part of their way forward is a "Reward systems" for cities investing in UA and those that make an effort of investing or upgrading their facilities and built environment.

9. MARKET SEGMENTATION FOR UNIVERSAL DESIGNS

Examples of functional user groups of Universally Accessible tourism facilities:

- Travellers with temporary or permanent physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities;
- Pregnant and breast -feeding women;
- Obese travellers;
- Families with babies and small children;
- Families /groups with a member (s) with special needs; and
- Travellers requiring luggage support and services.

(Source: Neuman,P & Reuber,P. 2004).

10. DRAFT CRITERIA FOR A UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE CITY DESTINATION

For a City to be deemed accessible the following areas need to be assessed or reviewed.

10.1. **Communication and Marketing e.g. Website, Information Centres, etc.**
This refers to the way the staff members within the Visitor Information Centres (VICs) relate to people with accessibility and or special needs, what kind of assistance is being offered to make their life easier /have pleasant experiences.

10.2. **Inbound Transport & Major Points Of Entry**
Sufficient provision should be made to accommodate people with accessibility needs including mobility; visual and audio as per the current Tourism Grading Council of South Africa's (TGCSA) criteria.

10.3. **Public Transport And Other Major Means Of Travel Such As Car Hire, Etc**
All public transport systems should accommodate passengers with accessibility and / special needs including audio and visual aides /assistive devices that communicate the various stop /drop off points, etc.

10.4. **Database Of UA Assessed /Graded Accommodation**
All the visitor information centres should have a database of Universally Accessibility /graded establishments which indicate their level of compliance.

10.5. **Meeting Venues And Major Events Facilities**
This category includes the International Convention Centres (ICCs) across the country where major conferences and meetings are held e.g. (COP17 recently held at the Durban ICC; the annual Cape Town International Jazz Festival held in Cape Town; the Disability Conference recently held at the Sandton ICC and the tourism month hosted at the East London ICC).

10.6. **Major Tourism Routes**
These could include the accredited tourism hiking trails that visitors /tourists with accessibility needs can enjoy independently or with very little assistance.

10.7. **Major Tourism Attractions, Museums And Other Places Of Interest (PoIs)**
All such facilities should be assessed for Universal Accessibility. These could include Heritage sites like the Robben Island Museum; the Table Mountain which has officially been pronounced the "7th Wonder of the World, and the "Apartheid Museum" to mention but a few.

10.8. **Places Of Entertainment Such As Shopping Malls & Restaurants**
The popular shopping malls (e.g. Sandton City; the V & A Waterfront in Cape Town) with a potential of hosting major entertainment events to local and visiting tourists. These should provide as much accessibility points as possible including dedicated Parking Bays for Baby – boomers; the elderly and the disabled.

10.9. **Provision To Access Beaches For People With Special Needs**
A dedicated entry point for people with special needs where multiple assistive devices are available should be created.

10.10. **Walking and Hiking Trails**
There should be tourist attraction hiking trails that are (UA graded) user-friendly for persons with accessibility /special needs.

10.11. **Design Of And Signage In Public Spaces**
Signage should be provided for ease of getting around independently for those with accessibility needs. Brailled signage as available in the Cape Town Stadium precinct is recommended.

10.12. **Front Office Staff: Skills training to service people with special needs**
The front office staff should be very well equipped and trained to handle clients with special needs but allow them to operate as independent as possible.

10.13. **Tour Operators Catering For People With Special Needs**
The Tour Operators vehicles should cater for passengers with accessibility needs including installing the audio /video system and the wheel chair ramp for such passengers.

10.14. **UA Trained Tour Guides**

Such guides must have undergone a relevant specialised training for people with special needs by an accredited Institution.

10.15. **Ongoing Tourism Industry Awareness**

There must be a schedule of ongoing awareness road -shows that are held throughout the country to sensitise the tourism sector, its stakeholders and the relevant interest groups.

11. PILOTING THE DRAFT UA CRITERIA

11.1 The draft Criteria is set to be tested out in one of the four identified Cities throughout the country and these include the City of Johannesburg in the Gauteng Province; the City of Ethekwini in the KZN Province; Buffalo City Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province and the City of Cape Town in the Western Cape Province. The selection criteria of the above cities was among other things based on visitor numbers and ability to host major events and conferences.

11.2 Further stakeholder consultations with individual cities will continue to sell the idea of a UA City Destination until written agreements are secured.

11.3 The medium term plan is to incorporate UAT as an extension of Responsible Tourism Awards for the City Destination that has done a lot of work towards being Universally Accessible.

11.4 The NDT in consultation with the participating cities; the Tourism Grading Council and other relevant tourism stakeholders will agree on a common assessment Criteria for the envisaged awards.

12 COORDINATION & PARTNERSHIPS

The NDT will be a lead Project Coordinator for this initiative supported by the Provincial and Local Government Organisations in rolling out this initiative. This therefore means there must be dedicated financial and human resources / Project Task Team to spearhead this initiative in line with the agreed upon approach. A roll out plan is of utmost importance to ensure prioritisation of key areas of this project at local government level although for a quicker response the buy in must be pitched at Senior Management Level including the Political Heads so that it becomes incorporated in the IDPs of the Local Municipality, this will help unlock all the bottlenecks. The following are the proposed partners for this initiative:

- NDT as a lead department at national level
- Provincial departments of Economic Development and Tourism
- District Municipalities /Metros
- SALGA
- Tourism Authorities and;
- Any Interest Groups such as SADA
- TGCSA

13 COLLABORATION WITH OTHER NDT INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORK

The NDT through the SRI –EPWP Projects, has a duty to ensure that Universal Designs are incorporated as part of the funding criteria for new infrastructure projects. On the other hand the Municipalities Building Plans Department should ensure that B&Bs and Lodges meet the minimal UA standards whenever they build or upgrade their facilities.

By so doing we will all be in a position to see tangible process made by the NDT and the Tourism Sector.

14 PRE-REQUISITES FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

- Financial resources
  - Dedicated funding from all the Partners
  - 0% based loan from finding institutions such as the IDC /DBSA
  - Incentives and Grant funding
- Strategic partnership
- Human Resource (dedicated personnel for the project)
- Stakeholder buy-in and participation
- Formally nominated Task Team and support structures

The list above is just some of the ideas that need to be explored to make this project a reality while new ideas and creativity is required as all the partners are operating with limited budgets.

15 IMPLEMENTATION

NDT is committed to facilitating implementation of the UAT City Destination Framework, to support this commitment there is a need to build internal understanding as well as an implementation capacity.

For any project to be successful and for the investors to assess and determine a positive impact, a "before; during and after" assessment becomes very invaluable for the future projects and fine tuning to replicate in other parts of the country. This means therefore that the NDT's Monitoring & Evaluation Directorate must be on board this project to do an objective assessment of progress and working towards achieving this UAT City Destination.

ENDS

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