

ABSTRACT

Integrating the Community Perspective into Development Planning for Tourism In Mayaro

Desmond Hamilton

This research paper focused on the importance of community participation in the development planning process for tourism in Mayaro. Having defined “community” in the broadest sense to include all stakeholders; public and private bodies, citizen groups, religious organizations and local residents, it proceeded to address the constraints, challenges and opportunities for the effective promotion of community participation in tourism development.

The study undertook a review of relevant Caribbean and international experiences in community planning in the tourism development process, in order to gain a better appreciation of the range of issues involved. It found that the presence of strong well organized Community Based Organizations to manage the participatory process and the decentralization of power and authority from central to local levels, to plan and implement tourism initiatives, are the critical issues in moving the process forward.

It also undertook a critical review of the major development planning initiatives for the case study area. Special attention was placed on the initiatives of community planning that had their genesis within the Mayaro community. A critical evaluation was undertaken of these initiatives with a view to suggesting ways to strengthen the process.

The enabling legislation and existing government policies, and applications for tourism development were also reviewed to determine what development trend is likely to emerge in the area. It was found that despite vast potential for tourism development in the study area, this vision has not yet really begun to materialize. Consequently, the time is ideal for the community to intervene and get involved in the development planning process.

The study concluded by making recommendations for improving community participation in the tourism planning process.

KEYWORDS: Desmond Hamilton. Community Participation, development planning, tourism planning, Community Based Organization, Mayaro Decentralization.