



BRIEFING NOTE #2

Health & Safety Protocols for Hospitality & Tourism

MYANMAR TOURISM STRATEGIC RECOVERY ROADMAP (2020-2025)

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COVID-19 has hugely impacted hospitality, travel and tourism in Myanmar since the closure of borders, country lockdowns, and restrictions on domestic and international travel. This Briefing Note sets out criteria and guidance for the safe and gradual restart of tourism activities with health and safety protocols for hospitality and tourism organisations in Myanmar. It builds upon the Myanmar government guidelines and presents them in the broader context of international tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The current crisis continues to severely affect travel and tourism businesses of all sizes, from the largest international airlines to the smallest independent hotel or travel agency. The immediate response by tourism businesses has understandably focused on managing their short-term survival.

MYANMAR COVID-19 RESPONSE

As the crisis evolves, the MoHT has worked with the industry and other stakeholders to develop the **Myanmar Tourism Strategic Recovery Roadmap**¹ which identifies key priorities to facilitate recovery in the immediate, medium and longer-term.

The Government has also established guidelines and safety measures promoted both by the Ministry of Health & Sports² and the Ministry of Tourism³ to help the tourism sector follow agreed basic protocols and practices.

A key concern and ongoing area of uncertainty for many tourism businesses across all parts of the sector are the conditions under which they will be allowed to reopen and operate, and whether it will be viable for the business to resume activities under these conditions.

Many hotel groups have also been proactive in proposing new operating standards and protocols, which seek to protect workers, restore travellers' confidence, ensure social distancing, and put in place the necessary cleaning and hygiene

standards. Internationally, WTTC has also presented new global protocols to restart tourism, named "Safe Travels"⁴ and UNWTO, OECD and the EU⁵ have also made recommendations for safe travel.

OPENING TOURISM – RISK MANAGEMENT

Once public health starts to improve and the virus spread is contained, then Myanmar will consider lifting 'community restriction measures.' This should prepare the safe easing of preventive and protective measures, in particular blanket travel restrictions.

Once the country begins to lift restrictions on travel-related activities, it is expected that people will gradually resume domestic, regional and later on, international travel.

However, lifting measures too quickly may cause a sudden resurgence of infections, and until a vaccine is available, the needs and benefits of travel and tourism need to be weighed against the risks of a resurgence of cases requiring a reintroduction of confinement measures.

As lock-down measures are reduced, it will be essential for people to maintain physical distancing measures, in order to safely resume tourism activities, especially as tourism will attract people from different geographical areas within and outside the country.

Protection of the health of citizens, including hospitality and tourism workers and travellers, must remain the key priority. This includes

considerations for travellers in the period before, during and after their stay at a given place of accommodation and for staff and while visiting restaurants, coffee shops, bars or other facilities in connection with tourism.

SAFE TOURISM RESTART PRINCIPLES

COVID-19 incidence has declined to low levels

The main criteria for the relaxation of COVID-19 community restriction measures and for resuming tourism activities is MOHS evidence showing that the spread of the disease has significantly decreased and stabilised for a sustained period of time, and is likely to remain stable.

Sufficient health systems are in place

Sufficient health system capacity must be in place for local people and tourists, so that in the event of a sudden increase in cases, primary care, hospital and intensive care services are not overwhelmed.

This would be especially important on a State and Regional level, for tourism destinations that can expect higher rates of visitors, such as resorts, areas close to beaches, cultural site and landmarks, etc., which may not be close to healthcare infrastructure.

Remote touristic areas may have limited health care services and if considerable additional number of visitors can be expected, they may require the implementation of additional response mechanisms, such as medical evacuation flights, etc.

Surveillance and monitoring in place

Increased surveillance and monitoring capacity on a local level should be ensured to prevent introduction of the virus through travellers into touristic regions as well as spread from local populations to tourists.

Testing capacity is in place

The lifting COVID-19 containment measures relies very much sufficient testing capacity in order to detect cases and monitor the spread of the virus, combined with contact tracing and isolation measures to slow down transmission.

A new 15-minute Covid-19 antigen test was approved for commercial use in Europe in September. The test is portable and can be done at the point of care. It should be commercially available by the end of the October in participating countries.

Contact tracing is in place

Contact tracing is an effective public health measure for the control of COVID-19. The aim is to quickly identify and manage contacts of COVID-19 cases in order to reduce further transmission.

Contact tracing can also allow the sharing of relevant information between countries where there is international tourism. Close collaboration and coordination between ASEAN Member States, or bordering countries around contact tracing could be important as borders re-open.

The MOHT MTSRR Action Plan commits to working with MOHS towards a tracing app broadly available for Android and Apple phones.

Coordination and communication mechanisms are in place

It is essential that mechanisms be in place to ensure coordination and communication between the authorities and operators active in the tourism sector as well as between local and State/Regional governments.

In addition, cross-border coordination, information-sharing and communication using established channels is essential, where cross-border tourism is allowed. ASEAN Member States should inform each other in due time before announcing measures related to restoring cross-border tourism traffic and take into account their views.

In addition, the National Central Committee for COVID-19 Prevention and Control, the Tourism Executive Committee and other existing coordination channels for transport and travel should be used in line with their respective mandates.

Risk communication, including through digital means, for the travellers and tourists is also vital, ensuring they are informed about the local context, measures to follow in case of suspected COVID-19 cases, how to access healthcare etc.

KEY ACTIONS NEEDED IN DESTINATIONS

Local arrangements

Public health measures in the tourism sector will need to comply with general measures applied by the local and national authorities and take into account guidance for the workplace. Such measures in place in the tourism sector need to be at least as stringent as the recommendations for the general public.

There should be a constant dialogue between local and/or national public health authorities and places of accommodation to ensure the latest rules and regulations in a given geographical area are shared and applied, including:

- ◆ Specific arrangements for guests, including guests from other countries, to obtain medical advice and treatment, including access to ambulatory and hospital care, in the event that they exhibit symptoms associated with COVID-19.
- ◆ The need for owners of hotels and other accommodation providers to collect detailed information regarding contact details which serve public health investigations should a case arise at the accommodation.

Management:

- ◆ A specific action plan detailing the role and responsibilities of staff should be presented to all staff and made available at all times.
- ◆ A preparedness plan should be in place prior to the arrival of guests
- ◆ Elderly staff and staff with pre-disposing chronic medical conditions that are known to place them at higher risk of COVID-19 should be assigned to activities which reduce contact with the guests.
- ◆ Measures that decrease the number of staff on site should be considered, such as working from home for all staff performing duties that may be compatible with remote working.
- ◆ Measures decreasing the number of physical contacts and the time of physical contacts between people in the tourism business should be considered, including shifts in work, shifts in meal-times, using phones and electronic means of communication.

- ◆ Upon departure, guests should be requested to immediately notify the hotel if they develop symptoms associated with COVID-19, or obtain a positive test result for COVID-19, within 14 days following departure.
- ◆ The hotel should ensure that the contact details of the guests are available in case they are needed for contact tracing.

Training and management of staff

All the staff working in tourist facilities should be aware of COVID-19 symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, etc.) and should be briefed on basic infection prevention and control (IPC) measures.^{vi}

- ◆ Staff, or their household members confirmed as COVID-19 cases, experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19 should not enter the working environment, should self-isolate, and should be advised to follow MOHS guidance and seek medical assistance if symptoms worsen.
- ◆ Specific training for the staff on IPC measures and the actions to be taken in case of guests presenting with COVID-19 compatible symptoms should be considered.

Information for guests

- ◆ Prior to arrival, guests should be sent information on current guidance by MOHS and local public health authorities and specific measures that are put in place in the accommodation.
- ◆ Guests should be informed that they should defer their stay if they have symptoms compatible with COVID-19 or if they have been in contact with a person with COVID-19 or with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 in the 14 days prior to their planned stay.
- ◆ Specific signage and leaflets should be displayed before the entrance of the accommodation to inform guests about signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and instruct them what to do in case they develop symptoms.^{vii}

TOOLS FOR RESTARTING TOURISM

COVID-19 Health Status App

UNWTO, ICC (International Chamber of Commerce) and AOKpass have developed and are piloting a privacy-preserving COVID-19 health verification system. Travellers on specific routes can already securely verify they have obtained mandatory negative PCR test results required for entry by a growing number of countries.

The app will also help restore confidence among travellers that other co-passengers have tested negative for COVID-19 and potentially allow them to avoid long quarantine periods at point of destination.

Global Safety Stamp to Recognise Safe Travels Protocols

WTTC (World Travel & Tourism Council) has designed a **Global Safe Travels Stamp** which aims to allow travellers to recognise governments and companies around the world which have adopted health and hygiene global standardised protocols - so consumers can experience 'Safe Travels'.

Each of the Safe Travels protocols for hospitality and tourism has four pillars: 1. Operational and Staff Preparedness, 2. Ensuring a Safe Experience, 3. Rebuilding Trust & Confidence and 4. Implementing Enabling Policies.

The Safe Travels stamp is based on self-assessment and it is not a certification. Countries, destination authorities and companies using the stamp have

confirmed that they have implemented, and will ensure ongoing compliance with, the Safe Travels protocols.

Systematic COVID-19 testing before departure

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) proposes development and deployment of rapid, accurate, affordable, easy-to-operate, scalable and systematic COVID-19 testing for all passengers before departure as an alternative to quarantine measures in order to re-establish global air connectivity.

IATA will work through the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and with health authorities to implement this solution quickly. The ICAO process is critical to aligning governments to a single global standard that can be efficiently implemented and globally recognized.

IATA does not see COVID-19 testing as a permanent part of air travel, but it will likely be needed into the medium-term for air travel to re-establish itself. Testing will be a much-needed interim solution.

Pre-departure COVID-19 testing

A new 15-minute Covid-19 antigen test costing just US\$5 was approved and should be commercially available by the end of the October in participating countries. The test could be administered at airports before passengers depart and could negate the requirement for quarantine at the arriving country or on return home.

REFERENCES

¹ MOHT (2020) Myanmar Tourism Strategic Recovery Roadmap – Strategic Action Plan

² MOHS (2020) Safety & Health Procedures for Tourism Businesses

<https://mohs.gov.mm/Main/content/publication/2019-ncov>

³ MOHT (2020) Tourism National Guidelines For COVID-19 Safe Services <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Ministry-of-Hotels-and-Tourism-Update.pdf>

⁴ WTTC (2020) 'Safe Travels': Global Protocols & Stamp for the New Normal - <https://wttc.org/COVID-19/Safe-Travels-Global-Protocols-Stamp>

⁵ EU-OSHA (2020) COVID-19: Back to the workplace - Adapting workplaces and protecting workers. - <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/covid-19-back-workplace-adapting-workplaces-and-protecting-workers/view>

⁶ WHO (2020) Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) for COVID-19 Virus

⁷ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. COVID-19: guidance for the workplace

ANNEX: TOURISM NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19 SAFE SERVICES^{vii}

CHAPTER 1

Operational Guidelines for Air Travellers

1. Airport Arrival
 - a) Routine Health Check
 - b) Health/ Immigration counter
 - c) Luggage Collection
 - d) Common facilities and Restrooms
2. Airport Transfer
3. City Sighting
4. Travelling within the country
5. Guidelines instructed and released from Ministry of Transport and Telecommunication
6. Ministry of Health and Sports' Guidelines for Vehicles
 - a) Travellers/Tourists
 - b) Bus Crewmember
 - c) Taxi Drivers
 - d) Vehicles Owner
 - e) Highway terminals/ Rest Camp

CHAPTER 2

Accommodation Sector (Hotel, Motel and Guesthouse)

1. Important measures to be taken at Car Parking and Reception Counter
2. Important measures to be taken at in-house restaurants
4. Important measures to be taken within the hotel premises/facilities
5. Important measures to be taken for the hotel staff

CHAPTER 3

Operational Guidelines for the Food Sector

1. Important measures to be taken for the Restaurant Owners and Managers
2. Important measures to be taken for catering staffs
3. Important measures to be taken for kitchen staffs
4. Important measures to be taken for guests
5. Supplementary measures for hygiene and safety

Social Distancing guidelines at Tourist Destinations

1. Guidelines to follow in the tourist destination such as Pagoda and Museum
2. Social Distancing Guidelines to follow by the visitors

CHAPTER 5

Destination Attractions, Projects and Management

1. Guidelines for Personal Hygiene
2. Travel planning and management

CHAPTER 6

Travel Agencies, Tour Guides and Tour Operators

1. Travel Agencies and Tour Operators
 - a) Pre-identification and Travel Plan
 - b) Taking responsibility for travelling management
 - c) Handling the COVID-19 suspected patient is reported
2. Tour Guides/ Interpreters
 - a) Taking responsibility to manage the places in travel plan and the places the visitors are interested in
 - b) Implementing an appropriate and safe social distancing measures for the visitors

CHAPTER 7

Guiding Principles for Hotel and Tourism Training Centres

1. Handwashing
2. Preventative Measures for Coughing and Sneezing
3. The distance between one and another
4. Regular Cleaning and Disinfection
5. Risk Awareness Campaign
6. Managing the Covid-19 suspected trainees

CHAPTER 8

Directive of the National Central Committee for COVID-19 Prevention and Control

CHAPTER 9

Departure at the Airport