



# Kawthaung District Destination Management Plan, Tanintharyi Region - Myanmar

(2021 - 2025)  
DRAFT 18/09/2020

Submitted to Thanintaryi Region Tourism Committee



# **Kawthaung District Destination Management Plan DRAFT (2021 - 2025)**

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The Plan was written by Angelo Sciacca with the constant support and feedback of Daniele Alleva STAR Project Manager, his assistant Giulia Cecchinato, and all members of the Kawthaung Destination Management Organisation (DMO). The plan is the result one year of work by the Kawthaung DMO, meetings, and territorial scouting and mapping conducted by Istituto Oikos field staff. Moreover, Istituto Oikos wishes to express its gratitude for the tireless involvement and commitment of MOHT Staff and all the Istituto Oikos team members.

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# Executive Summary

## OVERVIEW

The development of a Destination Management Plan (DMP) is essential to ensure the social, environmental and economic sustainability of the destination. The DMP for the Kawthaung District is the result of a participative process facilitated by Istituto Oikos Onlus and in the context of the STAR Project (Innovative Strategies for Environmental Protection and Social Inclusion through the development of a responsible ecotourism model) and sponsored by the Italian Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The DMP for the Kawthaung District proposes **12 interlinked strategies** in a **5-year implementation period (2021–2025)**. The DMP seeks to ensure sustainable tourism development across the district of Kawthaung. Moreover, these strategies take into consideration the impact and the need to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. The development process of the DMP has involved several stakeholders' consultations and workshops as well as field research and visits, including semi-structured interviews with the stakeholders.

Consultations, workshops and field research have all provided the means to identify challenges and opportunities faced by the district towards the development of a more sustainable tourism industry. These insights allowed the basis for drafting and then finalising the DMP for the district, framed by the current issues and in line with national tourism and tourism-related strategies, actions, policies and the broad institutional framework.

## STRATEGIES

**Strategy (1) – Post Covid-19 by Building a Resilient Destination** – aligns with the Myanmar Post-Covid-19 Road Map to emphasise the need to relaunch Kawthaung District as a safe and resilient destination. Health & safety and market adaptation are key terms in this strategy. It must be noted that while Strategy (1) specifically calls for the recovery effort, all the following strategies contribute to the *re-start* of the tourism sector.

**Strategy (2) – Visitor Experience and Product Diversification** – articulates specific actions aimed at improving the experience of tourists through the development of innovative products. These will also contribute to the widespread of tourism's direct/indirect economic benefits across the district.

In this strategy, key actions correspond to an evaluation of tourism assets, the development of cultural and nature-based products (including semi-adventure tourism products and their enrichment through heritage interpretation), as well as the evaluation of current restrictions to make some of the activities viable. Particular importance is paid to the potential of school tourism in the district. Strategy (2) strictly complements Strategy (1) by providing the direction to strengthen the tourism offer.

While Strategy (2) calls for product diversification and quality improvement, **Strategy (3) – Destination Accessibility** – aims to position Kawthaung District as an accessible destination for both domestic and international markets. Actions are directed to improve travel corridors with Myeik and

Ranong (Thailand) and diversify access points to the archipelago, which would facilitate island tourism and create additional local job opportunities. Moreover, this strategy seeks to motivate the development of a more rapid, clear and transparent system for travel permits to the archipelago.

The DMP should envision sustainable destination planning. In this line, **Strategy (4) – Destination Sustainability** – is characterised by 12 actions embracing sustainability issues. These actions seek to provide a direction towards the development of a Hotel Development Plan, Sites / Attractions Management Plans, improved waste management system (in Kawthaung and especially in the islands), and education, awareness and workshop sessions aiming at the sustainable use of resources. Moreover, sustainability incentives for green equipment and technologies are considered essential, along with the adoption of green standards.

Moreover, a sustainable destination should promote **Strategy (5) – Community Empowerment and Benefits** –, which aims to inform the communities about the benefits and impacts of tourism and to promote forms of tourism such as ecotourism and community-based tourism. This strategy further envisages regular communication between the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and the local communities, letting them be a part of the decision-making process. Also, within the next five years, the local value chain should be maximised by valorising local production and channelling to final consumers. This would strengthen tourism economic linkages within the district.

Economic linkages should also be promoted through direct employment. To this extend, **Strategy (6) – Human Resource Development** – seeks to increase locals’ involvement in specialised jobs, such as managers, scuba divers, trekking guides etc. It must also be ensured that all workforce is well trained on health and safety issues, along with the ability of conducting risk assessments and embracing digital marketing skills. The former is becoming increasingly important as we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Supporting local entrepreneurs and youth with innovative ideas is essential to strengthen the destination’s competitiveness and mitigate “brain drain”. **Strategy (7) - Business Development/ Support to Young Entrepreneurs** – seeks to incentivise young entrepreneurs’ small and medium enterprises as well as support existing businesses. Here, actions are aimed at providing financial incentives to specialised services, the local production of goods and crafts, and the creation of technical supporting programs on business planning, start-ups, investment advice and financial management.

**Strategy (8) – Infrastructure Development** – articulates a set of actions to sustainably develop tourism-related hard/soft infrastructures to improve the quality of service to communities, businesses and visitors. This strategy is concerned with sea access, road network, level of accommodation provision, electricity and water services. Particular emphasis is placed on health and safety issues and the creation of a contingency plan (which would also include suggested actions and regulations to be taken in case of Covid-19). Moreover, to further improve visitors’ experience, mobility should be improved. Sustainable forms of mobility include e-bikes and bicycle rental services.

Future planning strategies for the district should be based on reliable data. **Strategy (9) – Tourism Statistics** – aims to address this issue. While a digital application has been developed to systematically monitor tourism data, it seems that, in order to promote its wider usage, introductory training should be provided. This would be followed by regular maintenance, data analysis and interpretation sessions by designated responsible individuals.

Being a cruise, boat and island tourism destination, **Strategy (10) - Sustainable Cruise, Boat and Island Tourism** – seeks to address some of the challenges identified from this perspective. Actions are directed to “island tourism” by reinforcing carrying capacity and EIA requirements (Environmental Impact Assessments) as according to national regulations. Also, a system promoting

direct economic contribution to environmental conservation (Trust Fund) should be established, and zoning schemes outside Lampi Marine National Park should be extended (where appropriate). In terms of “boat tours”, the strategy envisions clearer guidelines for boat trips from Kawthaung and improved economic linkages with local communities. Finally, cruise tourism needs to be regulated, especially in terms of on-island activities.

**Strategy (11) - Destination Marketing, Promotion and Competitiveness** – discusses the development of the destination brand, a detailed marketing plan that considers the current and future effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the development of a destination website which is managed and updated regularly, and formative courses on destination digital marketing in a time where digitalisation is becoming increasingly important.

To conclude, the DMP recognises the importance of establishing and/or reinforcing collaborations to facilitate the exchange of practices. **Strategy (12) – Regional Collaboration** – will promote collaboration at regional levels with other destinations and the creation of category associations.

In their ensemble, all the strategies and actions pursue the same final objective: to facilitate the development of a sustainable and competitive tourism sector in Kawthaung District, by mitigating the effect of Covid-19 and promoting environmental, cultural and economic sustainability, along with social inclusion.

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Management Plan, Tanintharyi Region  
Myanmar  
(2021 - 2025)**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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The development of the Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Kawthaung District was facilitated by Istituto Oikos Onlus in the context of the STAR Project (Innovative Strategies for Environmental Protection and Social Inclusion through the development of a responsible ecotourism model) and sponsored by the Italian Agency for Development and Cooperation. Being developed in a fully participative and bottom-up manner, the DMP development process has involved a number of stakeholders during the identification of challenges and mitigating strategies and actions.

The Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Kawthaung District aims to propose a set of strategies and actions for the development of a sustainable tourism sector in the district and focuses on a 5-year time period (2021-2025).

The DMP is structured as follows:

1. Introduction to Kawthaung District;
2. Introduction to the DMP: aims, objectives and methodology;
3. Overview of the current situation with challenges and opportunities;
4. Presentation of strategies and actions;
5. Suggested implementation plan;
6. Appendices.

## 1. KAWTHAUNG DISTRICT

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Kawthaung District is located in the Tanintharyi Region, in the southernmost part of Myanmar, bordering Thailand on the right and the Andaman Sea on the left. The district comprises two townships - the largest being Kawthaung -, three sub townships and hundreds of islands and islets, including Lampi Marine National Park. Given the district's proximity to Thailand, Thai language is often spoken together with Burmese and local dialects. The population of 221,738 (MIMU, 2015)<sup>1</sup> is divided mainly in Bamar, Dawei, Karen, Mon and Moken ethnic groups, and most practiced religions are Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. The main economic sectors in the district include rubber, palm oil, seafood, and tourism.

Having been closed to visitors for over half a century, Tanintharyi Region and Kawthaung District are attracting more and more tourists each year. The idyllic Andaman coastline and

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<sup>1</sup> **Census – Reports & Publications.** MIMU, 2015. Available at: <http://themimu.info/census-data>



As an emerging destination, Kawthaung District requires a clear and structured plan to continue to develop sustainably and to ensure that the interest of the communities as well as micro and macro stakeholders are met while preserving the local cultural and natural heritage. Moreover, this DMP should build resilience to external shocks, such as the recent impacts generated by the Covid-19 outbreak. The DMP for the Kawthaung District articulates a 5-year plan (2021-2025) and should be seen as a roadmap commencing as post-Covid-19 recovery.

The plan briefly assesses the current performance of the destination and it also identifies problems, opportunities and challenges to its sustainable development. As set of prioritised strategic actions are the core of this DMP. Actions seek to meet visitors' expectations and needs as well as improving branding and marketing strategies. The latter are necessary to strengthen the current position of the District, in the domestic and regional tourism market, especially as part of the post-Covid-19 recovery effort.

The DMP is also indispensable to decrease fragmentation by bringing together stakeholders during the identification of challenges and opportunities, the development of strategies and actions and, ultimately, during their delivery. Additionally, the DMP informs the allocation of resources on the basis of prioritised actions.

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## 2.1. PLANNING PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

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This DMP should be seen as a collective effort in a process that involves the private sector's representative bodies, key departments of local authorities and civil societies, thus a balance of their interests is reflected on this DMP. With this in mind, the development of the DMP for the Kawthaung District has ensured the active involvement of key stakeholders throughout an 8-step process (Figure 2). Initial consultations were conducted by Istituto Oikos during 2018 with over 60 local tourism stakeholders. Moreover, in February 2019, Istituto Oikos undertook two weeks of field research. The aim was to develop an overview of the current state of tourism development in the district of Kawthaung. Research was conducted utilising rural appraisal techniques and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders that were identified during a stakeholder mapping assessment.

Public sector stakeholders included the MoHT (Ministry of Hotel and Tourism), MoNREC (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation), Immigration Department, Marine Police, Tourist Police, MoALI (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation) and the Tanintharyi Regional Government. Representatives from the private sector included tour operators, tour guides, boat operators, hotel and accommodation providers for both international and domestic tourists in Kawthaung, as well as Kawthaung civil society representatives. Interviews with stakeholders were conducted in English with translation to Burmese. Flexible interview guides were prepared, whereby not all stakeholders were asked about the same points, but together they provided a reflection of the current local situation. Results were cross-checked across interviews for verification. Complete confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and interviews were documented in written notes.

Following the Research Phase (Step 2), data was analysed, and a comprehensive SWOT Analysis (Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats) was conducted. The SWOT formed the basis for the identification of specific needed strategies and actions that were then shared with the key stakeholders for feedback. Following the feedback from relevant

stakeholders, a full draft of the DMP was developed, which was further discussed and endorsed by the local stakeholders, giving the means to finalise the DMP.

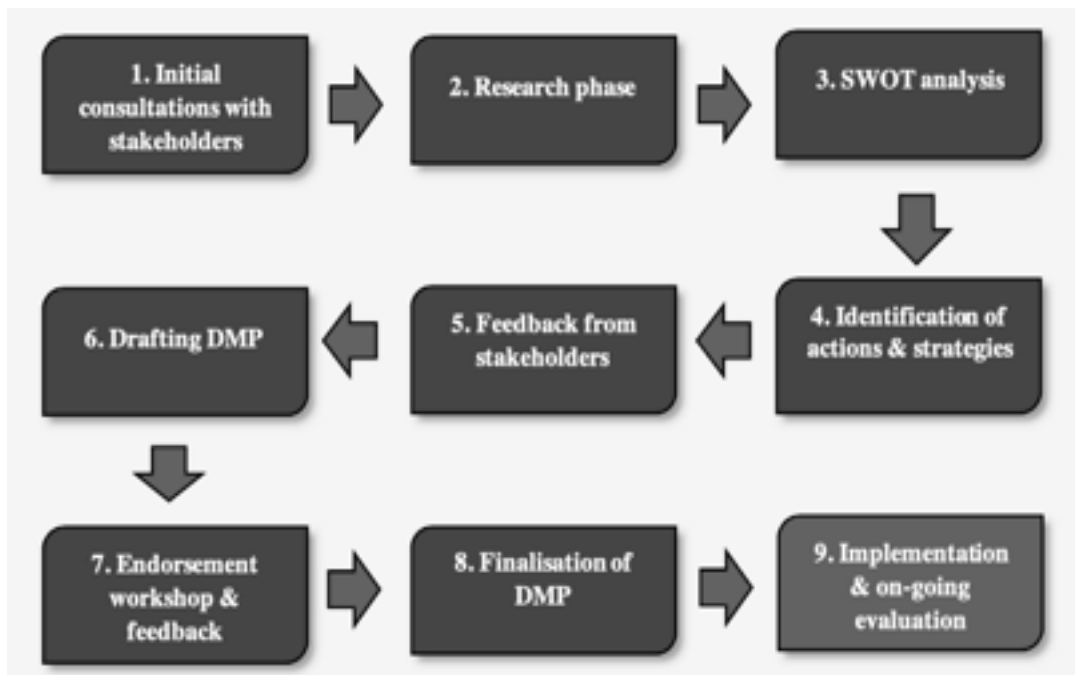


FIGURE 2. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN: DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

## 2. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The DMP for Kawthaung District should directly link and create synergies with related macro and micro laws, strategies and policies. It is therefore essential to include a summary of these below as well as outline the institutional framework.

### 2.1. LEGAL AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

A number of legal and strategic frameworks have been developed in Myanmar that inform this DMP and with which it should create synergies and be fully in line. These are summarised below:

The **Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012)**<sup>3</sup> provides a clearly stated vision towards the development of sustainable tourism Myanmar:

we intend to use tourism to make Myanmar a better place to live in – to provide more employment and greater business opportunities for all our people, to contribute to the conservation of our natural and cultural heritage and to share with us our rich cultural

<sup>3</sup> **Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy**. Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2012. Available at: <https://southeastasia.hss.de/fileadmin/migration/downloads/120901-Responsible-Tourism-Policy-Myanmar.pdf>

diversity. We warmly welcome those who appreciate and enjoy our heritage, our way of life, and who travel with respect. (p. 6)

This vision translates into **9 aims** guiding the responsible tourism policy:

- 1) Tourism as a national priority sector;
- 2) Broad local social-economic development;
- 3) Maintain cultural diversity and authenticity;
- 4) Conservation and enhancement of the environment;
- 5) Compete on product richness, diversity and quality – not just price;
- 6) Ensure health, safety and security of the visitors;
- 7) Institutional strengthening to manage tourism;
- 8) A well trained and rewarded workforce;
- 9) Minimising unethical practices.

This comprehensive national ambition should characterise this DMP.

Furthermore, the recently published **Myanmar Tourism Law (2018)**<sup>4</sup> fully reflects and develops upon the aims articulated in the **Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012)**. The objectives of the law should be mentioned as they also need to mirror on this DMP.

- 1) To support Myanmar as an international tourist destination by creating domestic and international markets effectively;
- 2) To protect the rights of tour operators and tourists, and to understand and comply with their obligations;
- 3) To ensure the quality and safety of tourism services;
- 4) To enhance coordination and cooperation for the development and management of the tourism sector;
- 5) To create employment opportunities and develop human resources by enhancing the awareness of tourism;
- 6) To develop responsible tourism activities that will contribute to the country's sustainable development, ecotourism and conservation of the natural environment;
- 7) To develop local businesses, small and medium enterprises based on tourism and economic opportunities for local communities, as well as community-based tourism;
- 8) To coordinate and cooperate with local and international institutions and tourism experts in conducting research for tourism development.

Two additional tourism-related policies should be mentioned directly in this DMP as they are particularly relevant for the development of sustainable tourism in the Kawthaung District.

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<sup>4</sup> **The Myanmar Tourism Law.** Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2018. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Myanmar-Tourism-Law-English-Version.pdf>

The **Myanmar Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism (2012)**<sup>5</sup> seeks to boost the development of locally owned and managed tourism activities. The policy was conceived as a means of enhancing “community involvement in the tourism industry by creating opportunities for the local communities and correspondingly expand the tourism product and appeal for domestic and international visitors” (p. 12). In this view, the following are the policy’s objectives, which are also embraced by this DMP:

- 1) Strengthening the institutional environment and civil societies;
- 2) Capacity building for community related activities in tourism;
- 3) Developing safeguards, systems and procedures to strengthen community planning;
- 4) Encouraging local entrepreneurship through micro and local enterprises;
- 5) Diversifying and developing quality products and services at community level.
- 6) Monitoring positive and adverse impacts of community involvement in tourism.

Moreover, the **Myanmar Ecotourism Policy 2015-2025** (2015)<sup>6</sup> should be briefly summarised given the relevance of ecotourism development in the Kawthaung District, more specifically in Lampi Marine National Park. In fact, the policy identifies Lampi Marine National Park as one of the national strategic locations for the development and promotion of ecotourism destinations in Myanmar. The policy brings forward a strategic vision, stating that:

We intend to use ecotourism as a driving force to strengthen the management of Myanmar’s expanding protected area network. Our aim is to engage all stakeholders to implement ecotourism policies, business models and management approaches that protect the unique ecosystems of our country and celebrate indigenous groups that have made these special areas their home. (p. 3)

This vision translated into **6 strategic programs** that were considered during the development of this DMP for the Kawthaung District. These strategies seek to:

- 1) Straighten the institutional arrangements towards ecotourism development;
- 2) Strengthen ecotourism planning in and around protected areas;
- 3) Engage local communities;
- 4) Invest in infrastructure and responsible business models;
- 5) Strengthen research and monitoring framework;

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<sup>5</sup> **Myanmar Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism**. Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2012. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Community-Involvement-Tourism-in-Myanmar.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> **Myanmar Ecotourism Policy and Management Strategy for Protected Areas (2015-2025)**. Myanmar Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry and the Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2015. Available at: [https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MYANMA\\_1-min.pdf](https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MYANMA_1-min.pdf)

6) Strengthen marketing and interpretation.

At the micro level, elements of the **Myanmar Ecotourism Policy 2015-2025 (2015)** have been integrated into the **Lampi Marine National Park General Management Plan (2014-2018)**, developed by a collaboration between the Burmese Forest Department and Istituto Oikos – and the updated version is due of approval by the Forest of Department of the MoNREC. The upcoming General Management Plan will propose strategies for the 2020-21 to 2024-25 timeframe, also in reference to the development of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in the Park.

Furthermore, as a response to the recent Covid-19 outbreak, the Myanmar Government has published the **Post Covid-19 Tourism Relief Plan (2020)**<sup>7</sup>. This plan is a direct reference for this DMP and is composed by **3 main strategies** with related action programs:

**1) Survival (Self Finance & Stimulus Package)**

- 1.1. Relaxation of tax, waive licence fees and lease fees for hotels and tourism business;
- 1.2. Stimulus packages;
- 1.3. Easing the impacts on tourism professionals and staff; evaluating the market and the position of products and destination.

**2) Reopening (Relaxing of Lockdown and Quarantine)**

- 1. Health and safety of travellers and staff;
- 2. Conducting paid training programs;
- 3. Marketing for the new normal situation;
- 4. Promote e-commerce platform and digital payment.

**3) Relaunching (Reinventing Myanmar Tourism and Relaxing of Regulations)**

- 1. Introducing communication campaign & marketing;
- 2. Travel facilitation (e.g. visa free for ASEAN);
- 3. Incentive programs for investment;
- 4. Finding grants and loans from DP.

Some of these strategies translate into the micro planning articulated by this DMP, especially in terms of reopening and relaunching the destination.

Moreover, legislations regarding protected areas are of concern for this DMP because of the existence of a main protected area in the district: Lampi Marine National Park.

**Legislations Governing Protected Areas**

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<sup>7</sup> **Covid-19 Tourism Relief Plan**. Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2020. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/covid-19-tourism-relief-plan/>



The Nature and Wildlife Conservation Department (NWCD) of the Ministry of the Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MoNREC) oversees the protected areas systems under the recently published **Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law (2018)**<sup>8</sup>, which replaced the **Protection of Wildlife and Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Laws (1994)**. The law empowers MoNREC to set up a system of payment for ecosystem services from protected areas (Art. 13), which could become relevant for tourism operations near protected areas. This opens the door for communities to generate income from ecosystem services. Such method may include sustainable forms of tourism, especially ecotourism. This revenue generation options should comply with the overall guidelines of the law:

- Preserve the varied ecosystems for their sustainment;
- Determine and permit zones for the public and visit for recreation;
- Prohibit effectively the extraction and human settlements that may adversely affect the marine ecosystems and nature.

**Other policies, laws and strategies of interest are listed below:**

- The Myanmar Tourism Master Plan (2013-2020)<sup>9</sup>;
- The National Biodiversity Strategies and Actions Plan (2015-2020)<sup>10</sup>;
- Myanmar Environmental Conservation Laws (2012)<sup>11</sup>;
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) National Regulations<sup>12</sup>;
- Myanmar Investment Law 2016 and Rules (2017)<sup>13</sup>;
- MoHT Notification 2/2011 on Hotels and Guesthouse Licencing, Tour Guides, Tour Operators and Transport;
- Order for Sustainable Coastal Areas MoHT Notification 2/2015 of 1 January 2015, aiming at regulating construction, operation and management of coastal beach areas.

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<sup>8</sup> **Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law**. Ministry of the Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, 2018. Available at: [www.myanmartradeportal.gov.mm/uploads/legals/2018/7/Protection%20of%20Biodiversity%20and%20Protected%20Area%20Law%202018%20\(Myan\).pdf](http://www.myanmartradeportal.gov.mm/uploads/legals/2018/7/Protection%20of%20Biodiversity%20and%20Protected%20Area%20Law%202018%20(Myan).pdf)

<sup>9</sup> **Myanmar Tourism Master Plan (2013-2020)**. Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/myanmar-tourism-master-plan-english-version-min.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> **The National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (2015-2020)**. Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, 2015. Available at: [www.cbd.int/doc/world/mm/mm-nbsap-v2-en.pdf](http://www.cbd.int/doc/world/mm/mm-nbsap-v2-en.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> **Myanmar Conservation Law**. Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2012. Available at: [www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Environmental\\_Conservation\\_Law\\_2012\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Environmental_Conservation_Law_2012_ENG.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> **Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure**. Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry Notification, 2015. Available at: [www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/pdf/resources/EIA-Procedures\\_en.pdf](http://www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/pdf/resources/EIA-Procedures_en.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> **Myanmar Investment Law 2016 and Rules 2017**. The Republic of Union of Myanmar, 2017. Available at: [www.dica.gov.mm/sites/dica.gov.mm/files/document-files/myanmar\\_investment\\_law\\_official\\_translation\\_3-1-2017.pdf](http://www.dica.gov.mm/sites/dica.gov.mm/files/document-files/myanmar_investment_law_official_translation_3-1-2017.pdf)

(See **Appendix 1** for brief explanation)

## 2.2. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

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**The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MoHT)** is the lead ministry in charge of the national tourism sector. Key functions of the MoHT include:

- Implementing systematic development of Myanmar's tourism sector;
- Encouraging national and international investment in the tourism sector;
- Developing opportunities for wide participation of private entrepreneurs in tourism;
- Promoting Myanmar as a world-renowned tourist destination;
- Determining hotel and tourism zones;
- Coordinating with relevant government departments and organisations to form and define the functions of tourism and hotel supervisory bodies in states, regions, districts and towns;
- Upgrading quality, standards and technical skills of the tourism industry;
- Creating jobs and raising standards of living through tourism development;
- Cooperating with ASEAN and other countries in tourism.

The MoHT is comprised of the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism (policy, planning, project management and tourism regulation) and the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism Development (business-related activities, e.g., tour operations, accommodation for state-owned, joint venture and lease facilities).

**The Myanmar Tourism Federation (MTF)** was formed in 2012 through the amalgamation of 10 tourism related associations. The functions of the MTF involve promoting Myanmar as a tourism destination; helping in the process of sustainable tourism development; assisting investors; and developing human resources for tourism-related industries (see **Appendix 2** for the full list of members).

### **Other ministers include:**

- Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Forestry (MoECAF) for and conservation issues;
- Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (e.g., food production);
- Ministry of Home Affairs (security);
- Ministry of Culture (antiquities management);
- Ministry of Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement (employment and welfare);
- Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (food production);
- Ministry of Health (medical provision).

### **Other Organisations at Regional Level**

In 2016, the **Tanintharyi Tourism Development Committee** (TTDC) was formed to focus on the increasing need for tourism infrastructure and destination marketing. The aim of the TTDC, therefore, is to support the rapid development of the tourism sector in the region, particularly in the Myeik Archipelago, while preserving its environment and culture. Responsibilities of the TTDC include:

- Promoting the Myeik Archipelago as a well-known destination both locally and globally;
- Attracting local and foreign investment to develop an international standard destination;
- Improving basic infrastructure in order to develop sustainable tourism and business.

The Destination Management Organisation of Kawthaung District should maintain a synergetic collaboration with the **Tanintharyi Tourism Development Committee** (as explained in section 4.3. of this DMP).

### 3. TOURISM IN MYANMAR

Myanmar has experienced a rapid growth in visitor numbers in the last two decades. As shown in Table 1, the figures have doubled since 2013 to over 4 million visitors in 2019. Such increase indicates that Myanmar is positioning itself in the regional and wider international tourism market. Accordingly, tourist expenditure also had a significant increase in relation to the previous year (70%). However, the average length of stay and average expenditure per day both decreased in 2019<sup>14</sup>.

TABLE 1. MYANMAR TOURISM STATISTICS (2013-2019)

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Tourist arrivals</b>	2,044,207	3,081,412	4,681,020	2,907,207	3,443,133	3,551,428	4,364,101
<b>Total expenditure (US\$)</b>	926 M	1789 M	2122 M	2197 M	1969 M	1651 M	2818 M
<b>Average expenditure per day (US \$)</b>	145	170	171	154	153	122	108
<b>Average length of stay (nights)</b>	7	9	9	11	9	9	6

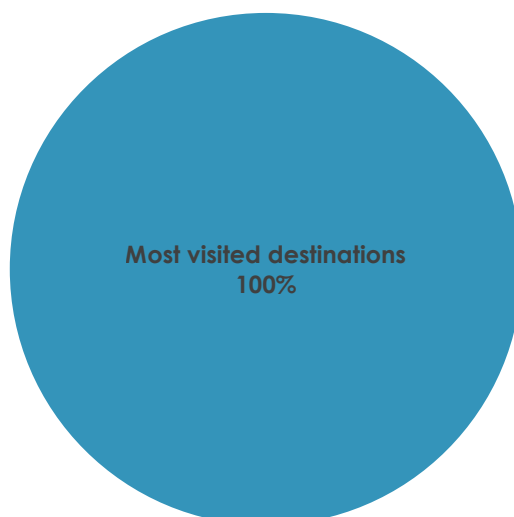
<sup>14</sup> **Myanmar Tourism Statistics 2010**. MoHT, 2011. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2010.pdf>; **Myanmar Tourism Statistics 2013**. MoHT, 2014. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/myanmar-tourism-statistics-2013.pdf>; **Myanmar Tourism Statistics 2017**. MoHT, 2018. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/MTS-2017.pdf>; **Myanmar Tourism Statistics 2019**. MoHT, 2020. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Myanmar-Tourism-Statistics-2019-1.pdf>

Visitors in Myanmar are predominantly from Asia (59% – mainly from China, Thailand, South Korea and Japan), traveling for holidays and leisure (72%), with family and friends (47%), and are aged between 30-39 (26%). Europeans make up the second largest group of tourists, mostly from France, UK, Germany and Italy. Moreover, Myanmar receives a great number of American and Australian visitors<sup>15</sup>.

Most tourists (54%) travel on their own, and their largest expenditures are in transportation (42%), hospitality (35%), recreation and entertainment (15%) and shopping (7%). Finally, most tourists in 2019 (67%) were travelling to Myanmar for the first time<sup>16</sup>.

The most visited destinations in Myanmar in 2019 are presented in Figure 3. Yangon is the main entry point for the country, both by air and sea (cruise), whereas Mandalay and Kawthaung are the second most important gateways for Myanmar by air and by sea, respectively<sup>17</sup>.

### Most Visited Destinations



**FIGURE 3. MAIN TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN MYANMAR (2019)<sup>18</sup>**

Despite being an important entry point by sea, Kawthaung District and Lampi Marine National Park are registered within “Others” in Figure 3. It is one of the objectives of this DMP to improve this scenario and establish Kawthaung District as one of the main tourism destinations of the country.

<sup>15</sup> I **Myanmar Tourism Statistics 2019**. Ministry of Hotels & Tourism, 2020. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Myanmar-Tourism-Statistics-2019-1.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> **Myanmar Tourism Statistics 2019**. Ministry of Hotels & Tourism, 2020. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Myanmar-Tourism-Statistics-2019-1.pdf>

## 4. KAWTHAUNG DISTRICT DESTINATION

Having presented an overview of Kawthaung District and the Myanmar tourism sector, in this section, the key factors within Kawthaung District as a tourism destination are discussed. These include the tourism vision for the region, organisations involved in the tourism industry, travel access and restrictions, tourism assets, and current tourism offer, infrastructure, challenges and opportunities. Firstly, nevertheless, some tourism statistics of the district are presented.

### 4.1. TOURISM STATISTICS

Tourism in Kawthaung District relies mostly on its natural assets: the coasts, islands, beaches, mangroves, sea caves and coral reefs. Given the current high demand for nature-based activities and pristine environments, the tourism industry in Kawthaung District benefits greatly from these assets. Nevertheless, cultural aspects, such as traditional architecture, customs and festivals, also contribute to tourism in the district.

Despite these natural and cultural resources, **visitor arrivals** have been growing slowly in the Kawthaung District (see Figure 4), mainly due to issues related to travel restrictions, high costs and environmental degradation. Moreover, most trips to the city of Kawthaung are motivated by visa renewals, casino visits and as an entry point to visit the islands, thus visitors' **length of stay** is usually only one day or one overnight.

Hence, although Kawthaung city receives the largest number of foreign visitors in the Tanintharyi region (mostly Thai nationals), there is a need to retain visitors in the city and surroundings, as will be discussed further.



FIGURE 4. VISITOR ARRIVALS BY SEA IN KAWTHAUNG (2015-2018) <sup>19</sup>

### 4.2. DESTINATION VISION

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Hotels & Tourism, 2019.

Following the official Kawthaung DMO inception meeting on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018, organised by Istituto Oikos and the follow-up stakeholder meetings, a shared tourism vision for the Kawthaung District was envisioned, stating that:

We wish to use tourism to make Kawthaung a better place to live in, to provide employment and business opportunities for all our people, and to contribute to the conservation of our natural and cultural heritage. We are aiming for a sustainable future, where healthy and clean ecosystems support, and are supported by, thriving local communities and a vibrant tourism economy. We warmly welcome those who appreciate our nature and our heritage, our way of life, and who visit us with respect.

This shared vision characterises this DMP and all strategies and actions.

### 4.3. KEY ORGANISATIONS AT MICRO LEVEL

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At the District level it is essential to introduce the recently formed **Kawthaung Destination Management Organisation (DMO)**. The DMO played a key role in the development of this DMP and will play a likewise main role in facilitating the implementation of the delineated strategies and action programs.

#### **Kawthaung Destination Management Organisation (DMO)**

Following a number of stakeholders meeting and facilitating workshops, a **Destination Management Organisation (DMO)** has been formed for the Kawthaung District. The DMO is composed by members of the **government, private sector and civil society organisations**. A DMO can be defined as an organisation responsible for the coordination and promotion of a destination and its stakeholders, thus enabling it to provide tourists with an enjoyable and memorable experience.

Because competition between the different destinations in the Tanintharyi region will continue to intensify, the new Kawthaung DMO will have to evaluate existing tourism offers in their region and explore new opportunities to better position Kawthaung District in the highly competitive tourism market. However, such effort should align with the **Covid-19 recovery plan**, which is likely to dramatically affect activities such as tourism product development, marketing and safety and health measures at the destination.

Moreover, tourism development will pose pressures on some areas due to the expected increase in resource consumption and land fragmentation, while sustainable tourism policy may only progress slowly. Hence, finding the right balance between the economic development of tourism destinations, the conservation of resources and the well-being of the local population will be a challenging task. In response to the above, the DMO's main tasks include:

- **Strengthening** the development and usage of reliable statistical databases to facilitate the understanding of the full social and economic dimension of tourism, thus guiding tourism policy;

- **Supporting** product development, diversification and quality in order to increase the competitiveness of Kawthaung District’s tourism industry;
- **Marketing and promoting** the destination, focusing on the quality and quantity of tourism products, the diversity of domestic, regional and international source markets, image and positioning, branding, quality and distribution of promotional materials;
- **Strengthening** the public-private partnerships regarding tourism management and planning;
- **Ensuring** that safety and health measures are in place at the destination level in case of outbreaks and natural disasters;
- **Following**, where needed, guidelines from the Regional Tourism Committee;
- **Reporting** regularly to the Regional Tourism Committee on the activities of the Destination Management Organisation.

### Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

International NGOs and Civil Society Organisations play a relevant role in promoting sustainable tourism management, especially when working with local communities to develop community-based tourism and ecotourism. These organisations are also a channel for promoting environmental awareness programmes among communities and tourism operators.

## 4.4. CURRENT STATE, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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A number of key challenges and opportunities are faced by the Kawthaung District towards the development of sustainable tourism. These challenges must be addressed by the delineated actions in this DMP and by capitalising on the opportunities.

### 4.4.1. KAWTHAUNG DESTINATION AND COVID-19

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Similarly to most destinations worldwide, at the time of writing, the **Covid-19 pandemic** impacts dramatically the Myanmar tourism industry with severe and unprecedented consequences on both demand and supply sides of the tourism sector. In fact, the Covid-19 outbreak, in addition to having “stopped” tourist arrivals, is also changing the way individuals travel and consume tourism products. As a result, the tourism sector in the Kawthaung District should envision a “**new normality**” supported by the national **Covid-19 Tourism Relief Roadmap**<sup>20</sup>.

In order to embrace this “new normality”, the destination should work harder than ever to reassure visitors’ safety and to develop a destination that goes in-line with the new demand.

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<sup>20</sup> **Myanmar Covid-19 Tourism Relief Plan**. Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2020. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/covid-19-tourism-relief-plan/>

This is likely to be characterised, mostly, by domestic, regional and small-scale destinations and innovative products. Additionally, it is also expected that “**travel bubbles**” will form the preliminary opening strategies to international markets. These travel bubbles are partnerships formed between two or more countries on the basis of demonstrated effective management of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Inevitably, Kawthaung District’s marketing strategies should align with such changes in the supply and demand sides, along with an increasing focus on digital solutions, in marketing and beyond.

Therefore, in line with the **Covid-19 Tourism Relief Roadmap**, in this DMP it is understood the need for the tourism sector to promote trust among visitors, adopt mitigating marketing strategies, and prepare the tourism supply to adopt safer but also innovative ways of doing business. More resilience needs to be built to afford potential similar events. Yet, the Covid-19 can represent an opportunity to re-think the destination’s model, which is more resilient and more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

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#### 4.4.2. MAIN TOURISM ASSETS OF KAWTHAUNG DISTRICT

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The Kawthaung District holds great tourism potential, with **nature-based attractions**, such as the islands and Lampi Marine National Park; **cultural assets**, such as the local Moken culture; and **semi-adventure activities**, such as snorkelling and kayaking. A work-in-progress mapping of tourism assets conducted by Istituto Oikos has already identified additional potential both on the islands and on mainland (see **Appendix 3** for map identifying the tourism potential of Kawthaung District). The rainforest, the rich avifauna and the local culture all open the door to tourism experiences such as trekking, birdwatching, cycling tourism, community-based tourism (CBT) and related activities as traditional cooking and weaving classes.

The work-in-progress mapping of tourism assets has shown the potential of developing these tourism activities with a high emphasis on **ecotourism** and **CBT**. In particular, it was identified a strong ecotourism and CBT potential in **Lampi Marine National Park** and the **Parchan River**, located, respectively, in the west and east coasts of the mainland district.

Moreover, the rich Myanmar culture strengthens the potential role of the **intangible heritage** that could be mapped out and valorised through responsible tourism products and services. Yet, despite such rich tourism potential arising from the natural and cultural local heritage, the current tourism offer is limited to a few forms of tourism that struggle to provide direct benefits to local communities and a long-term vision of a sustainable tourism sector.

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#### 4.4.3. CURRENT TOURISM OFFER AND MARKET

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Despite the high tourism potential of Kawthaung District outlined above, the tourism market in the district relies mainly on boat trips to the islands, cruise tourism and visa run trips from Thailand. However, this DMP envisions the need to capitalise on this existing tourism corridor. The three main current tourism offers are summarised in the following subsections:



#### 4.4.3.1. BOAT TRIPS TO THE ISLANDS

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The current tourism offer in the Kawthaung District appears to be narrow and mostly confined to **expensive liveboard boat trips**. Yachting companies offer trips ranging from 5 days to 14 nights. Itineraries include diving sites such as the Black Rock and the Burma Banks. Moreover, various islands are included in the itineraries, including Islands 115, Bo-Cho, Ma-Kyon Galet in LMPN, and Wa A-Le, Kyun Pila (Great Swinton), Kayin-gwa (Fork), Zadetkalay, Nyaung-Wee, Bo-net-kyaw; Hlaing-gu (Cavern Island); Nyaung-oo-pee; Taung-taw-win; Myauk-taw-win; Nga-mann (Shark); Sunge-barline village; and Aung-baung village.

Liveboard tours in the Myeik Archipelago must pay a number of government related fees. These include:

- Operator's licence fee;
- Excursion fee per person for each trip;
- A tour guide fee (each liveboard tour must be accompanied by a MoHT tour guide);
- A tour guide salary;
- A royalty fee per tourist day spent in the archipelago.

Since 1997, the number of yachting tours has slowly increased in the Myeik Archipelago. This slow pace may be due to access issues, as Tanintharyi was officially off limits for tourists until 2012. During the consultations and interviews, visitors' restrictions and fees were seen as arbitrary and with a lack of transparency on where these funds go. Moreover, long travel permit processes are believed to challenge the development of a more fruitful tourism industry.

Boat trips are also conducted from Kawthaung as a day tour activity, which usually costs 110-120 USD per person and includes diving, kayaking, snorkelling and visiting the island communities for lunch, beach, swimming as well as purchase of souvenirs. Many of the day trips visit the south, including the Horseshow Island (Myin-kwa-gyun), Cocks Comb (Emerald Heart) Island, followed by a beach lunch on Dunkin Island (Say-tan-gyun), and snorkelling at Zadetkyi/St Matthews Island. An alternative route includes Nyaung Oo Phee (Mackenzie) Island, where Victoria Cliff Resort offers overnight tented accommodation.

During the consultation, it was shared that the sustainability of these boat day trips is challenged by the lack of **clear guidelines that regulate these activities**. For instance, a **limit on the number of speedboats allowed** to enter sensitive areas in a given time is needed in order to avoid the already visible impacts associated to anchoring, pollution and noise. Moreover, it was discussed that the regulations should include the establishment of a **zoning scheme** in islands that are currently not located within the boundaries of the LMPN (where zoning exists, although in need of enforcement).

The guidelines, therefore, should ensure that boat activities are regulated in and outside zoned areas. Additionally, the lack of **active and direct economic benefits** from boat trips to local communities seems to inhibit the overall sustainability of this tourism subsector.

#### 4.4.3.2. CRUISE TOURISM

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Cruise tourism contributes to a portion of the district's tourism market. Cruises are mainly from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong. Ships are moored in deep waters and passengers are permitted to access the beach. For the cruise passengers, leisure facilities available include kayaking, swimming and scuba diving. Some cultural experiences are offered, such as local dances and cooking classes. Yet, the **economic linkages** that the cruise sector should create with the local communities are challenged by the lack of **local involvement** in the provision of services. For instance, food and drinks are usually transported from the ship to the island, with the ship's waiters providing the service. Local people are usually employed to clean the public areas, and most of the jobs available are low skilled. In addition, Japanese, Chinese, Thai and Korean languages are essential for these employees, thus limiting the opportunities for locals.

The cruise industry appears to create pressures especially on the **handling of waste**. The main products of cruise tourism are often pristine environments; therefore, if waste is discarded on the islands and surroundings, this will have an impact on the market itself. In this sense, improving **waste management facilities** in Kawthaung is a priority.

In the future, funds generated from cruise tourism should benefit the local communities living in the Kawthaung District. In fact, such benefits should be promoted by a controlled development of cruise tourism in the area, through mooring fees, head taxes, increased local spending, and by involving as much as possible the local tourism providers in the cruise tourism, for instance, by promoting the provision of expertise services.

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#### 4.4.3.3. DAY VISITORS IN KAWTHAUNG

Being a border town, the main tourism market in Kawthaung is characterised by one-overnight visits from Thailand, usually due to visa run reasons. However, the lack of product and service diversification limits the local economic linkages. This means that these visitors from Thailand could stay longer in Kawthaung and in the district if the local tourism offer would be more diversified, promoted and accessible for this market. This is especially important during the post-Covid-19 recover, when the regional market needs to be prioritised.

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#### 4.4.3.4. FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

While section 4.4.2. has outlined **rich tourism assets** of the Kawthaung District to be capitalised, the Kawthaung Destination, as seen above, is mainly based on a **narrow number of tourism services**. Moving from prioritising cruise tourism, which has well-known sustainability issues, the Kawthaung District retains the opportunity to build on its assets and further spread the economic benefits of tourism across communities. This is also needed to increase the length of stay, improve visitors' experience and mitigate the effects of seasonality.

The **development of CBTs particularly stands out**, as the Myanmar Government is actively promoting village-based tourist visits, where tourists learn and participate in the local customs. At the time of writing this DMP, the LMPN and the Parchan River are suggested as key areas for developing CBTs and ecotourism products and services. Moreover, and further motivated by the Covid-19 pandemic, domestic and regional market can provide an opportunity to develop **educational and school tourism market**. In fact, the district retains **natural and multi-ethnic tangible and intangible cultural heritage** (e.g., Moken) that could be the

source of rich learning for young generations, while valorising and preserving such heritage. Additionally, being a biodiversity hotspot, the district and especially the islands can be promoted regionally and internationally for **biodiversity-related responsible and participative tourism activities**.

Finally, tourism products and services can be developed in **Kawthaung city** and its **immediate surroundings** to provide more leisure options to short-stay visitors. These opportunities have been identified by an on-going mapping exercise, and are discussed in later sections of this DMP, but a comprehensive overview is needed in the near future in order to plan strategically.

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#### 4.4.4. ACCESSIBILITY AND TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

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Tourists can access the Kawthaung District domestically via air with daily flights from Yangon. These connections are, however, less frequent and reliable during the monsoon season. The airport of Kawthaung has a runway of 6,000 feet long and 100 feet wide and its expansion and conversion to the status of an international airport has been identified as a priority for the regional tourism. Such expansion would allow tourists to travel directly from main hubs such as Bangkok and Singapore. However, in the short-medium term, the current state of the airport seems **not to pose relevant challenges** to the local tourism sector, whereby the current situation of **land access**, which is provided by bus services from Myeik, remains uncertain.

In fact, **permissions to travel via land** for foreigner travellers between the two locations are unclear. Additionally, the current **Myeik-Kawthaung road corridor** may need to be improved to facilitate land connections. As a consequence, most foreigner travellers tend to enter the destination via the **sea border of Kawthaung-Ranong**. Here, there are regular daily boat departures and arrivals from the Thailand border of Ranong, a journey that takes 20 minutes. The main arrival-departure jetty of Kawthaung is located in the town centre. While boat access seems to be affordable and more frequent (given also the well-connected airport of Ranong), there remains the need to improve the jetty facilities in the upcoming years.

In terms of the archipelago, there may be an opportunity to open **new gateways** which would facilitate shorter trips to the islands. Diversifying entry points to the island destinations would increase their accessibility and competitiveness, besides **creating job opportunities** (new jetties, boat drivers etc.). Yet, this is currently challenged by the often-long permit procedures and land-based travel restrictions that should be underlined in this DMP.

**Travel restrictions** represent a barrier to tourism development in the whole region. For instance, the restriction to visit the surrounding areas of Bokpyin Township makes it practically illegal for foreigner tourists to travel via land from Kawthaung to Myeik. Moreover, it is currently not permitted to travel independently to the islands, and staying overnight is only permitted for some resorts. The special permit to visit the Myeik Archipelago on multi-day liveaboard tours can be obtained as part of the boat package through one of the boat operators. While processing is straightforward, it takes up to 2 weeks to complete the paperwork.

The current travel restrictions described above pose a number of direct challenges that should be mitigated in the upcoming years:

- **Firstly**, if tourism is to be developed, it would be beneficial to soften travel restrictions and capitalise on some of the tourism assets that are currently located in restricted areas. This would also help the post-Covid-19 recover through product diversification.
- **Secondly**, long-term processing permit concessions challenge the promotion of shorter trips to the islands;
- **Thirdly**, it seems that it is currently unclear what are the restricted areas and how these are communicated to the tourists and tour operators.

There is, therefore, an opportunity to find a **balance between the current regulations and the potential tourism offer** by opening-up and facilitating access to areas with tourism potential. Identified as a main barrier to tourism development during the consultation, there remains the need to go through a **mapping process and decision making** on what areas can be eased. Most importantly, these must be communicated to visitors, avoiding issues on safety and, ultimately, on the destination image.

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#### 4.4.5. HARD INFRASTRUCTURES

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The current state of **hard infrastructure** tends to challenge the development of the tourism industry in many ways. A number of accommodations exist in the islands and mainland areas. Yet, during the consultation, it was raised that the **accommodation supply is too low** for the current and projected demand. Also, a concern toward **unregulated hotel development** was shared. For instance, in certain areas, there remains the need to reinforce the implementation of EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) and Carrying Capacity procedures, as well as more clarity on licensing, regulations and permitting processes.

The risk of unregulated hotel development is present in all destinations. This can cause visual pollution, as they are often built in a style incongruent with traditional and local architecture, along with environmental and social negative impacts. Negative impacts can be the consequence of land grabbing, pollution affecting the wellbeing of local communities, deforestation, coastal erosion, wildlife disturbance, and disruption of lives of local people. The Kawthaung District is not exempt from such risks.

Moreover, it was also noted during the consultations and field research that there is a lack of **sea piers**. Some of the existing ones show degraded conditions. It is important to act towards better sea pier infrastructures in order to minimise the risk of environmental impacts such as coral and sea floor damage, calling for an evaluation on where to install new piers and buoys. Road infrastructures have also been raised as a main issue. As improvements are needed, the upcoming years should see a detailed evaluation of **roads** to be improved.

During the consultations, it was also noted that some of the resources, especially **electricity**, tend to be too expensive for local businesses. This is because the region is off-grid, and electricity is supplied by the private sector. In the island and rural areas, communities rely on generators and solar power. Solutions to find more **cost-effective solutions** thus seem to be a priority for the district, including smart and renewable options. A lack of green solutions is likely to have an impact on the overall sustainability of the sector and on the final market prices.

Finally, **mobility** is also challenging in the destination. In fact, transportation options within the district are limited, and new and innovative services such as e-bikes are a priority. There is an opportunity to create novel businesses and provide new job opportunities while giving more choices to visitors.

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#### 4.4.6. SOFT INFRASTRUCTURES

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In terms of **soft infrastructure**, there is a need to improve **health and emergency services and procedures**, especially in the islands and more remote areas of the mainland district. These new procedures should create direct links with existing clinics in Kawthaung and, when needed, Ranong. In particular, a specific action plan or **Contingency Plan** for the destination that deals with Covid-19 may be required – for instance, how and where to act in case of Covid-19 cases within the destination.

Furthermore, although broadband services are improving, with recent coverage in parts of the LMNP, further expansion is needed if safety is to be promoted.

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#### 4.4.7. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

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A solid **waste management system** is currently in place in Kawthaung. Yet, improvements seem to be needed. One of the issues shared by local stakeholders is related to the fact that waste is often dispersed in the environment, polluting the terrestrial and water ecosystems. Such issues may be addressed by providing awareness and more supervision, also at the community level.

Waste management infrastructures should be reviewed as tourism increases in the upcoming years in order to cope with the expected pressure. This is vital for environmental, social and economic reasons. Moreover, an effective waste management system should be envisioned **also in the islands**, where the capacity of sorting, transporting and properly disposal of waste is more challenging than in the mainland areas.

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#### 4.4.8. DETRIMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

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During the consultations and stakeholder interviews, concerns were raised on the impacts that environmental detrimental activities have on the local tourism industry. In the Kawthaung District, these detrimental activities are often associated to **dynamite fishing, overfishing, deforestation and pollution**. These directly challenge a fruitful and sustainable tourism industry. In fact, they tend to decrease the attractiveness of certain areas and directly degrade the assets needed for specific tourism activities, such as the coral reef for snorkelling.

There is the opportunity to capitalise on **Payment for Ecosystem Services** methods to develop sustainable economic activities, such as ecotourism, in order to stimulate environmental protection and supervision by the local communities.

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#### 4.4.9. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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**Community involvement** should be envisioned as a key element of a sustainable tourism path for the Kawthaung District destination. This would ensure their participation in decision-making and planning processes. Opportunities that arise in the district are related to the development of tourism products and services that are community-owned and managed through incentives. Moreover, the DMO has the opportunity to create an active dialogue with communities.

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#### 4.4.10. HUMAN RESOURCES

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During the DMP planning process, the current state of human resources has emerged as a potential challenge to the development of a sustainable tourism industry in the district. This is due to limitations posed by the **lack of professional skills**, representing a barrier to local people's involvement in the skilled job market. If a programme that stimulates the development of specialised services is not launched, it is likely that product diversification will be challenged as well as the economic benefits that the industry should provide to local communities.

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#### 4.4.11. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

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A prosperous tourism industry needs **innovative business development**. This is especially important when seeking to recover from Covid-19. These business models should draw upon the specialised skills discussed above, but also through incentives and **stimulus packages for the local young people**.

Currently these are not provided, causing a **“brain drain”** and lack of innovative services and products that could enrich the tourism offer in the district.

This DMP should therefore envision major involvement of young people in the development of a successful tourism industry.

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#### 4.4.12. TOURISM MONITORING SYSTEM

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The current tourism monitoring system uses non-digital methods, thus not being sufficiently reliable. Data on visitor arrivals, expenditures and length of stay throughout the months and years are either unavailable or inconsistent. A successful tourism destination builds upon precise and transparent data, which is digitally collected and safely stored. Although an **application was developed**, it is still not widely used. There remains the opportunity, therefore, to promote the use of this monitoring application so that all tourism businesses and organisations are able to make decisions and plan strategies based on reliable data and on the current tourism demand.

#### 4.4.13. BRANDING AND MARKETING

Currently, the Kawthaung District lacks a **destination branding** which would increase its competitiveness within the wider market. The main objective of the destination branding is to attract more visitors and position the district as a main destination in Myanmar and Southeast Asia. Moreover, a destination website should be developed, managed and updated regularly.

#### 4.5. SWOT ANALYSIS

Section 4.4. has highlighted some of the issues faced by the Kawthaung District towards the development of a sustainable tourism industry. The SWOT analysis summarised below brings together the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that have emerged during the consultation and research phase of this DMP.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Post Covid-19 Tourism Relief Plan</li> <li>- Strategic geographical location / easy access from Thailand</li> <li>- Islands' natural assets and Lampi Marine National Park</li> <li>- Tangible and intangible cultural heritage (e.g., Moken)</li> <li>- High potential for product diversification</li> <li>- CBT and ecotourism development potential, and macro policies supporting both</li> <li>- Significant tourism corridor</li> <li>- Strong regional market (ASEAN) to capitalise on post Covid-19</li> <li>- Establishment of Payment of Ecosystems Service programs by the new Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law (2018)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Less established tourism industry within ASEAN</li> <li>- Visa restrictions and long permit process</li> <li>- Limited entry points</li> <li>- Low competitive power in prices and permits</li> <li>- Unclear travel restrictions</li> <li>- Unreliable and inconsistent tourism monitoring</li> <li>- Low diversification of tourism services</li> <li>- High accessibility costs via air</li> <li>- Lack of high skilled workforce</li> <li>- "Brain drain"</li> <li>- Lack of branding and effective marketing</li> <li>- High seasonality nature of the sector</li> <li>- Detrimental environmental activities</li> <li>- High costs of resources</li> <li>- Lack of direct contribution to conservation</li> <li>- Lack of benefits to minority groups</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opening new mainland attractions</li> <li>- Identifying and developing new CBT and ecotourism destinations</li> <li>- Developing a green destination brand</li> <li>- Reinforcing Kawthaung-Ranong and Kawthaung-Myeik corridors</li> <li>- Capitalising on domestic and regional markets for post Covid-19</li> <li>- Stimulating innovative products/services</li> <li>- Capitalising on local youth for specialised services</li> <li>- Opening strategic gateways to islands</li> <li>- Establishing a tourism centre in Kawthaung</li> <li>- Establishing regional collaboration across the Tanintharyi destinations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental impacts from unsustainable tourism activities</li> <li>- Long-term economic leakages</li> <li>- Fail to compete with nearby destinations</li> <li>- Micro barriers provoked by macro unsupporting policies</li> <li>- Future instability due to Covid-19</li> <li>- Social-cultural impacts due to increase in unsustainable visitors' behaviours</li> <li>- Over and unregulated development of infrastructure</li> </ul>
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FIGURE 5. SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARISED

#### 4.6. STRATEGIC TOURISM DIRECTIONS

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As a response to the challenges and opportunities discussed above and in line with the national tourism-related policies and strategies, responsible tourism development in the Kawthaung District should:

- Be planned and managed **within the defined environmental limits** with a priority in regard to the long-term use of natural and human resources;
- Be based on **integrated sustainable** tourism planning, development and operations;
- Become a **priority** in Kawthaung government's development strategies;
- Promote **different forms of tourism development** and in different areas, focusing on quality and high value for money;
- Support a **wide range of local economic activities**, taking into account costs and benefits;
- Encourage the **active participation of local communities** in planning, development and control of tourism with the support of the government;
- Pay particular **attention to indigenous peoples**, such as the Moken, women and minority groups to ensure the equitable distributions of tourism-derived benefits;
- Ensure the **respect for local cultures, environmental and political** structures;



- **Raise awareness** among all stakeholders on the need to develop sustainable forms of tourism;
- Improve **responsible and accurate marketing** and branding;
- Stimulate **monitoring of ongoing impacts** and develop solutions to allow local people to respond to challenges;
- **Promote collaborations**, avoiding potential conflicts and optimise sustainable tourism development through collective and coordinated actions.

It is suggested in this DMP that the Kawthaung District destination is developed in line with internationally recognised destination sustainability criteria provided by the GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council). These are holistic standards that can provide a framework in planning and decision making (see **Appendix 4**).

## 5. PROPOSED STRATEGIES

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With the challenges and opportunities in mind, as well as the strategic direction outlined above, a total of 12 strategies are proposed in this DMP, which are articulated below.

### STRATEGY 1 - Post Covid-19 By Building a Resilient Destination

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**Objective of the strategy:** Re-launch Kawthaung district as a safe destination by building resiliency and safe business.

#### Action 1.1.

*Stimulate participation of grass-roots tourism professionals to Safety for Businesses short programs as part of the Myanmar’s post Covid-19 Road Map*

As part of the Covid-19 Myanmar Tourism Strategic Road Map<sup>21</sup>, promote the participation, during the first year of the plan, in trainings that will be provided for grass-roots tourism professionals such as tuk tuk drivers, boat drivers, vendors etc. Trainings will include issues regarding achieving safe business in the district. These training programs will provide resilience to tourism businesses.

#### Action 1.2.

*Liaise with tour operators to develop holiday programs for domestic and nearby markets along with special discount packages to visit the district*

As part of the Covid-19 Myanmar Tourism Strategic Road Map, by liaising with local tour operators, the district should aim, during the first year, at the development of holiday packages for the domestic market and “travel bubble/s” where this will be the case.

This would strengthen the domestic over the international market. Moreover, constructing a stronger domestic market for the district would build resilience to potential international tourism crises.

Two key strategies to consider during the re-launch of the local tourism sector:

- Encourage domestic tourism by marketing with a focus on the Myanmar and ASEAN market (especially Thailand and any “travel bubbles”).
- Encourage tourism arrivals by promoting special discount tour packages and work towards innovative tourism products (see Strategy 2).

The new face of the tourism industry will inevitably have an impact on the demand market, pricing and marketing strategies. During the adaptation phase, participation to post Covid-19 marketing-related training provided as part of the Covid-19 Myanmar Tourism Strategic Road Map should be promoted.

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<sup>21</sup> Myanmar Covid-19 Tourism Relief Plan (2020). Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/covid-19-tourism-relief-plan/>

## Strategy 2 - Visitor Experience and Product Diversification

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**Objective of the strategy:** Diversify the tourism offer in the district of Kawthaung by improving visitor experience and developing new, authentic and interpreted tourism activities

### Action 2.1.

#### *Conduct a detailed mapping of cultural and natural assets with tourism potential*

A detailed mapping of the cultural and natural assets of tourism potential should be conducted in order to identify all potential tangible and intangible attractions to diversify the local tourism offer. The mapping exercise should focus on both natural and cultural heritage. This would include, for instance, the identification of:

- historical sites;
- local goods markets;
- events and festivities;
- religious sites;
- villages of potential interest;
- waterfalls;
- viewpoints etc.

The resulting mapping should inform the strategic development of new tourism products and services in order to diversify the offer across the district (See Action 2.3). The mapping should be conducted by expert/s in the field of tourism planning and product development and the process is likely to involve local communities who retain higher territorial knowledges and express their views on potential development of tourism activities in their area.

### Action 2.2.

#### *Develop tourism services in the city of Kawthaung*

The city of Kawthaung is the main arrival point for tourists visiting the district and often is the only visited place. Building upon Action 2.1, the tourism offer in Kawthaung can be improved through the development of novel tourism services. It is clearly stated in the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012)<sup>22</sup> that the Myanmar tourism industry should work towards becoming more competitive through product richness, diversity and quality.

Thus, the development of new tourism products/services in the city and Kawthaung and beyond would help achieve this broad aim, ultimately improving visitors experience in the city, extend the average length of stay, generating higher economic linkages and promoting return tourism, especially for domestic and nearby markets.

Some suggestions of services to be developed/improved in Kawthaung area:

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<sup>22</sup> Myanmar Tourism Policy (2012). Available at: [https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015\\_Myanmar\\_Tourism\\_English.pdf](https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015_Myanmar_Tourism_English.pdf)

- Kawthaung city tours/viewpoints;
- sunset tours at viewpoints;
- specific heritage tours (tea houses tour, market tours, food tours, history tours);
- city bike tours;
- city cultural museum;
- traditional cooking classes etc.

Opportunities shall be investigated by experts in tourism product development, and any development of cultural and/or nature-based tourism activities should comply with broad tourism development guidelines provided at a national level, such as the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012).

### **Action 2.3.**

#### ***Develop alternative forms of tourism beyond Kawthaung***

In addition to developing new tourism products and services in the city of Kawthaung (Action 2.2.), in order to improve the overall tourism offer, new activities should be developed beyond the city. This, similar to Action 2.2, would help extend the length of stay and generate economic linkages between tourism and communities across the district. To this extent, Action 2.3 should build upon Action 2.1, and initial suggestions are articulated in the following sub-actions:

##### **Sub-Action 2.3.1 – Develop cycling tourism services**

A potential for cycling tourism has been identified, and its development is advised. Cycling tourism routes should be defined and relevant point of interest identified (as part of Action 2.1.), e.g., waterfalls, sites for traditional lunch, visits to local workshops etc. Cycling tourism can be developed as part of organising tours as well as promoted as an activity that can be taken independently. However, the nature of this activity depends on the type of route that is open to tourism activities. Safety issues should be well taken into consideration during its development. Thus, risk assessment should be conducted, and risks mitigated.

##### **Sub-Action 2.3.2 – Develop Community-Based Tourism (CBT)**

In line with the Myanmar Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism (2013)<sup>23</sup>, there is potential for developing community-based tourism (CBT) destinations across the district, where there are willingness and cooperation from the local community. According to the Myanmar Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism (2013), the establishment of this form of tourism would generate great benefits for the local communities and heritage; therefore, it is proposed as a high priority in the development of Kawthaung as a destination. Benefits include:

- direct/indirect financial benefits;
- increasing locals and visitors' awareness towards conservation and biodiversity;

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<sup>23</sup> Myanmar Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism (2013). Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Community-Involvement-Tourism-in-Myanmar.pdf>

- minimising negative impacts on the natural and socio-cultural environment;
- facilitating sharing of cultural knowledge;
- preserving archaeological sites and historic building;
- stimulating community beautification (e.g., waste management and heritage restoration);
- supporting organisational development of the community;
- guaranteeing local control over community homelands; and
- building community pride.

Particular attention should be paid to the development of CBT in the Parchan River, which has the potential of diversifying the overall tourism offer in the mainland area.

Some suggestions on potential tourism experiences to be investigated in the Parchan River include:

- village tours;
- storytelling;
- mangrove experience;
- birdwatching;
- traditional lunch with family;
- traditional cooking classes.

### **Sub-Action 2.3.3 – Develop nature-based tourism**

In addition to supporting nature-based tourism activities in the islands, the possibility of developing nature-based tourism activities in the mainland should be investigated. This would build upon the potential assets identified in Action 2.1 and should focus on providing specialised tourism experiences that can capitalise on them. For instance, activities that can be developed include hiking, trekking, birdwatching, rafting, biking or mountain biking etc.

Moreover, it is essential that the development of nature-based activities, especially within protected areas, complies with the guiding principles and requirements articulated in the Myanmar Ecotourism Policy and Strategy (2015)<sup>24</sup> as well as the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012)<sup>25</sup>.

### **Sub-Action 2.3.4 – Develop cultural and historical heritage tourism**

Action 2.1 should also inform potential historical, cultural and heritage sites of interest, such as:

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<sup>24</sup> Myanmar Ecotourism Policy and Management Strategy for Protected Areas (2015). Available at: [https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MYANMA\\_1-min.pdf](https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MYANMA_1-min.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012). Available at: [https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015\\_Myanmar\\_Tourism\\_English.pdf](https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015_Myanmar_Tourism_English.pdf)

- archaeological sites;
- historical buildings;
- religious sites;
- traditional food/craft workshops.

These sites should be developed to tourism standards (e.g., ticket office where applicable, safety standards, interpretation panels in relevant languages etc.). Where entry fee is applicable, a *Kawthaung Heritage Fund* could be established for financing renovation and management work of the heritage sites. Particular attention should be paid to Maliwan, a site that seems to belong to the Maritime Silk Road, thus with heritage tourism potential.

By developing a cultural and heritage tourism offer, the Kawthaung District has the potential of positioning itself within the tourism market, not only as an ecotourism, but also as a cultural destination.

The advantages of this include:

- mitigating seasonality by offering cultural and heritage sites of tourism interests. In fact, it is noted that nature tourism activities throughout the district tend to be highly affected by raining season; hence, alternatives are required to further extend the tourism season;
- potentially generating tourism revenue for the conservation of heritage sites and buildings, thus preserving this form of local heritage;
- diversifying the overall tourism offer and improving visitors experience in the district.

In the case of heritage and historical buildings, the management of tourism activities (e.g., visitors' management, financial management etc.) should be articulated in a clear Site Management Plan (see Action 4.2.) – this would ensure the adherence to sustainable principles along with retaining site's authenticity and minimising unethical practices, especially in religious sites. The last two points are highly emphasised in the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012) under *Action Point 3* “Maintain Cultural Diversity and Authenticity” (p. 13) and *Action Point 9* “Minimising Unethical Practices” (p. 19)<sup>26</sup>.

### **Sub-Action 2.3.5 – Develop school tourism services**

Generational gap and migration towards urban areas can have a negative impact on the preservation of cultural heritage as well as knowledge on local/national natural landscapes. To mitigate such risk while diversifying the tourism offer, School Tourism can be promoted. Such strategy would involve liaising with schools, especially at regional/national level. In addition to representing a potential growing market in

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<sup>26</sup> Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012). Available at: [https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015\\_Myanmar\\_Tourism\\_English.pdf](https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015_Myanmar_Tourism_English.pdf)

Myanmar, School Tourism in natural and cultural destinations/sites would encourage heritage preservation by bridging generations and promoting the great cultural diversity of Myanmar.

This means that children who learn about and appreciate a site are more likely to care for its preservation. School Tourism, therefore, can be promoted as environmental and cultural study tours. Safety issues of destinations dedicated to School Tourism should be well addressed and specific guidelines (where appropriate) should be developed.

At the time of writing, four key destinations are suggested with School Tourism potential; however, this does not exclude the potential of involving additional attractions:

- Lampi Marine National Park (and Moken culture);
- Parchan River;
- archaeological and historical sites;
- 1199 Mountains.

Thus, School Tourism should be seen as an overreaching beneficial form of tourism, at the financial, cultural and formative levels.

#### **Action 2.4.**

##### ***Develop more affordable one-day tours to the archipelago***

It is noted that the current length of stay in the district is often 1 day. This is due to the fact that Kawthaung is often visited for visa run. Such flux of short-stay visitors represents a great potential for the district to build upon an existing market but can also represent a missed opportunity. Given that the islands are a main tourism attraction, in order to extend the length of stay of visitors in the district, more affordable day trips to the islands should be promoted.

For this, liaising with tours operators will be essential. This would involve moving away from only offering luxury and highly priced tours to include also mediumly priced excursions to the islands. Such approach would also improve the district's competitiveness with other island-based tourism destinations in nearby regions.

Yet, it must be noted that such strategy should go in line with Action 3.4. (on Destination Accessibility).

#### **Action 2.5.**

##### ***Ease the restrictions on homestays in the district***

Homestays are a popular form of hospitality and lodging whereby visitors share a residence with a local family. This enhances visitors' experience while bringing benefits at the community level. In order to expand the tourism offer in the district, it is suggested that homestay restrictions are eased. Easing the restrictions on homestays would facilitate opening-up of sites of tourism interest that may not be accessible on day trips and where accommodation facilities are currently inexistent.

Yet, such action should strongly be aligned with the latest Myanmar Tourism Law (Law NO. 26/2018, 2018 – Chapter VII)<sup>27</sup>, especially in terms of permit processes.

### **Action 2.6.**

#### ***Ease current restrictions in areas of medium-high tourism potential***

Building upon Action 2.1, in which sites of interest are identified through a mapping process, it would be beneficial to ease restrictions on certain areas that are currently unavailable to tourists in order to expand the tourism offer. This would help the destination's overall competitiveness as well as extending tourism benefits. One way to ease restrictions gradually is to start allowing only visits that are part of local tours, for instance. This action should be fully informed by Action 2.1, in accordance to local willingness and relevant laws.

### **Action 2.7.**

#### ***Develop a holistic Interpretation Plan for the district***

It has been heavily emphasised in national tourism policies, such as the Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism (2013)<sup>28</sup> and the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012)<sup>29</sup>, the importance of ensuring interpretation across tourism sites. Site interpretation ensures overreaching benefits that are mainly twofold:

- bridging heritage-related knowledge to younger generations;
- improve the overall visitors' experience.

The great cultural and natural diversity of the Kawthaung district calls for the development of an Interpretation Plan that unfolds and communicates such diversity to the visitors as well as retains the use and customs and other forms of heritage of the local communities.

The development of an Interpretation Plan for the district would involve the investigation of local heritage with the aim of integrating them into interpretation channels. This action would involve two stages:

- 1) In the first stage, **research**, information about local culture, sites of interest, traditional festivals, stories etc. would be collected by expert/s in heritage interpretation through community interviews.
- 2) The second stage, **communication**, would involve sharing the collected material in two ways:

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<sup>27</sup> **The Myanmar Tourism Law (2018)**. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/jp/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Myanmar-Tourism-Law-English-Version.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> **Myanmar Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism (2013)**. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Community-Involvement-Tourism-in-Myanmar.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> **Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012)**. Available at: [https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015\\_Myanmar\\_Tourism\\_English.pdf](https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015_Myanmar_Tourism_English.pdf)



- verbally, through tour guides who will explain and provide information to tourists;
- non-verbally, such as digitally (website and social media, as seen in Action 3.3), interpretation panels, leaflets, building/sites name plates etc.

Interpretation panels can be installed in points of interest (e.g. village market, viewpoints, heritage building etc.) and at the Tourism and Heritage Centre (see Action 2.8). Moreover, informative handouts about protected areas can be created using the collected information. Also, particular importance should be paid to the collection of legends and stories. These can be preserved through the interpretation planning and passed to younger generations, and, at the same time, they also increase visitors' satisfaction in highly experiential tourism products, such as storytelling, especially in CBT destinations.

### **Action 2.8.**

#### ***Develop a Tourism and Heritage Centre in Kawthaung***

The quality of visitors' experience is a key priority for The Republic of the Union of Myanmar as articulated in the Myanmar Tourism Master Plan (2015-2020)<sup>30</sup>. Visitors centres play a key part in the quality of the destination's tourism services as they often provide the main reference and first stop for visitors.

As Kawthaung is the main arrival point, a Tourism and Heritage Centre – ideally in an accessible and convenient area, such as the pier – is important for providing information to visitors as well as services such as hotel bookings, tour bookings, and transportation services.

In the Tourism and Heritage Centre, various types of interpretation materials would be available:

- maps (of both the city and the area) in leaflets so visitors can take with them;
- flyers with information on tours, accommodation and entertainment options;
- flyers with advertisements from restaurants, shops, tour agencies etc.;
- interpretation boards with information about the area, such as maps, brief history, general facts, curiosities, photographs;
- dos and don'ts for tourists.

The maps, leaflets and other interpretation resources that visitors take away should be available in Burmese, Chinese, English and other relevant languages. This should be a place where visitors feel welcome and 'taken care of'. There would be one or two English-speaking hosts to answer visitors' questions, recommend activities, tours and restaurants, give them directions to their accommodation, and, overall, offer assistance on anything they might need during their stay.

### **Action 2.9.**

#### ***Develop a visitors' information booth at Kawthaung Airport***

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<sup>30</sup> Myanmar Tourism Master Plan (2015-2020). Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/myanmar-tourism-master-plan-english-version-min.pdf>

It is suggested the development of a visitors' information booth at Kawthaung Airport. The booth would act as a smaller and more concise version of the Tourism and Heritage Centre in the city, described in Action 2.8 above. The information booth would be a small stand in an easily visible and accessible area of the Arrivals hall of the airport.

Also, there would be signs across the airport guiding to the information booth. There, similarly to the Tourism and Heritage Centre, maps and flyers would be available in different languages for visitors to choose from and take with them.

As tourists arrive at the airport, if it is their first visit to Kawthaung, they will probably have questions regarding how to get to their accommodation, how/where to change currency or withdraw money, where to eat, what activities are available in the city and area etc. The host at the information booth, therefore, should be prepared to answer such questions, and it is important that he/she has a basic level of English. The information booth could operate only during high season.

### **Action 2.10.**

#### ***Develop a tourist map for the city of Kawthaung***

City maps or tourist maps are a key information medium for visitors at the destination. Thus, building upon Action 2.1 – mapping cultural and natural assets –, a map of the city of Kawthaung would be developed and distributed to visitors at Kawthaung Airport's information booth, the Tourism and Heritage Centre as well as hotels and guest houses. The map would include:

- points of interest, such as temples, pagodas, museum, markets etc.;
- tourist services, such as hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, bike rentals, the Tourism and Heritage Centre etc.;
- important services visitors might need, such as cashpoints, convenience stores, clinics, pharmacies, police station, petrol stations etc.
- emergency contacts;
- suggested walking paths;
- suggested biking paths.

The map, ideally, would be designed by a local graphic designer and be very colourful, visual and simple to read. It would also be foldable and resistant to rain.

## **STRATEGY 3 - Destination Accessibility**

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**Objective of the strategy:** Position Kawthaung district as an accessible destination to a wider market, both domestic and international

### **Action 3.1.**

#### ***Develop information materials for tourists communicating accessible/ restricted areas***

Some areas throughout the district are currently restricted to visitors, and this should be well clarified and communicated. Therefore, a key step in destination accessibility is concerned with the communication of restricted/accessible areas to tourists, which is not happening at the moment.

This information, when developed, can be integrated in the destination's website, as well as in paper format. It would be ideal to develop this material before the development of the Tourism and Heritage Centre in Kawthaung and to distribute it at the airport's information booth, the immigration pier as well as in hotels and guest houses. This material should be regularly updated as appropriate.

### **Action 3.2.**

#### ***Promote and improve Kawthaung-Myeik corridor***

In terms of accessibility, there is the potential of developing the Kawthaung-Myeik corridor, where tourists are free to travel between the two destinations. However, in addition to the need of easing restrictions between these destinations, the road requires some improvement, and regional bike and moto tourism development should be supported. An assessment of attractions in-between the two destinations would be beneficial for identifying potential stops across the area.

### **Action 3.3.**

#### ***Open additional and strategic access points to the archipelago***

Accessibility concerns also the archipelago. Currently, limited access points are provided, especially that could facilitate day trips from Kawthaung to the islands. Particular attention should be paid to the village of Aung Bar as a potential access point. This entry point to the archipelago would provide significant advantages to improve the day-tour market for the islands.

Yet, other potential and strategic entry points should be investigated. It is vital to equip the access and/or improve the new access points with safe piers.

### **Action 3.4.**

#### ***Develop a more rapid, clear and transparent system for travel permit to the archipelago***

Clear, easy and guided applications for visiting permits are important for the development of Kawthaung as a competitive destination. In the district, the permit application to visit the islands seem to be long and unclear. If island tourism, and especially short trips, are envisioned as a key strategy, it will be inevitable to investigate an easier permit application system. This can still be based on a daily quota, but it is crucial to have a clearly communicated application process to potential visitors.

Moreover, the development of the destination's website (sub-action 11.3.1) would be an interesting pathway to explore the possibility of establishing a digital application system, which is fast and transparent. It is important that this system clearly states the application's steps and length, and where goes the benefit.

Allowing a more rapid permit application process would ensure a denser, but still sustainable tourism market for the archipelago. Also, the permit fees should be competitive with other island destinations in the region.

### **Action 3.5.**

#### ***Improve and promote Ranong-Kawthaung travel corridor***

Improving connections with Ranong is of high priority for the development of Kawthaung as a destination. Ranong's airport has affordable and regular domestic and international connections. Moreover, Ranong is well connected with other key destinations of Southern Thailand with the potential to open a tourism corridor between Kawthaung and beyond Ranong.

This would be beneficial for:

- establishing and/or improving partnerships between Kawthaung and Ranong tour operators in order to create market collaborations between the two destinations;
- improving arrival facilities in Kawthaung such as immigration services in order to enhance the arrival experience of visitors to Kawthaung.

For this action it will be essential to create collaborations with tourism stakeholders in Ranong. Moreover, it would be beneficial if Kawthaung as a destination, promotes Ranong as a key entry point, in addition to Yangon.

## **STRATEGY 4 - Destination Sustainability**

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**Objective of the strategy:** Envisage and work towards a sustainable Kawthaung destination

### **Action 4.1.**

#### ***Develop a district level Hotel Development Plan***

Unregulated hotel development is a high risk in tourism destinations. In fact, uncontrolled development of accommodation facilities can negatively impact the destination through unsustainable design, environmental impacts, and even create too many hotels in proportion to the demand. Therefore, it is essential that the destination lays out a district's Hotel Development Plan with the support of experts in the field.

The development of a Hotel Development Plan would help establish, but not limited to:

- clear guidelines on hotel design;
- operational guidelines;
- restricted or available locations for development;
- procedures for environmental protection; and
- a potential maximum density (max number of hotels across the district).

The plan should include the guidelines and regulations to be reinforced. Moreover, it is important that the plan is updated over time and that it takes into consideration the diversity of the district (e.g., urban areas, islands etc.). In fact, hotel development and operational guidelines may vary from urban to more natural areas. To this extent, it may be advised a clear development of two broad sections in the Hotel Development Plan: one for urban areas and one for natural areas with a specific section on protected areas.

In terms of protected areas, the Guidelines for Developing Ecolodges in Myanmar (2017)<sup>31</sup> have been developed to emphasise the key requirements for developing and managing accommodation facilities in protected areas. It is proposed that these guidelines are envisioned as a fundamental guiding document to develop the Hotel Development Plan's section on protected areas.

#### **Action 4.2.**

##### ***Develop Site Management Plans across the district***

The operational activities of each site/attraction need to maximise tourism benefits while minimising the negative impacts. The opening of natural/cultural/historical attractions will inevitably generate a number of challenges in their management. For this reason, in order to ensure their sustainable management and long-term sustainability, it will be crucial for each attraction/site to develop a Site Management Plan that includes all aspects of management to ensure environmental, socio-cultural and economic sustainability.

The Site Management Plan should consist of elements such as:

- site vision and objectives;
- management structure;
- resource management;
- financial management;
- health and safety;
- visitor management;
- sustainable management; and
- Local inclusion.

This plan is particularly important for historical sites, protected areas and nature reserves.

#### **Action 4.3.**

##### ***Develop a Waste Management Plan for Kawthaung***

Waste is a key issue in many destinations. Impacts from waste range from waste dispersal, harm to community health and wellbeing, to dramatic impacts on wildlife. A Waste Management Plan is the starting point for an effective management of waste flow. For this reason, it is suggested the development of a plan that articulates roles and responsibilities, strategies for businesses, citizens and council. The plan should also define a collection and disposal system (see Action 8.7).

It is suggested that the Waste Management Plan covers the following broad topics:

- who is responsible for resource management?
- what type of waste and waste flows are generated?
- how is waste managed and disposed? Reused? Recycled? etc.
- which contractor or public-private partnership is used to ensure that waste is correctly collected, disposed and/or recycled responsibly?
- how waste generation is measured?

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<sup>31</sup> **Guidelines for Developing Ecolodges in Myanmar (2017)**. Available at: <https://lib.icimod.org/record/32856>

- a step-plan and strategies to improve the sustainability of waste management system.

The initial phase of plan development would include a research component undertaken by experts in which the flow of waste is understood, and specific strategies are developed to mitigate impacts.

The research phase of the Waste Management Plan would include, but not limited to:

- an investigation of current waste management situation;
- an investigation of measures to improve waste management systems;
- the type, quantity and source of waste generated within the territory, and a clear mapping of waste streams;
- an articulation of the waste collection schemes and disposal infrastructure, including an understanding of how hazardous waste is treated (e.g. waste oils);
- an assessment of what is needed to improve collection and management waste schemes.

The investigation should inform the development of the Kawthaung Waste Management Plan. It is suggested that the Waste Management Plan, in order to promote waste minimisation and valorisation, develops around the key principles of the Waste Hierarchy (reduce, reuse, repair, recycle, recover and disposal), proposing clear and concrete strategic solutions to minimise impacts from waste across the district.

#### **Action 4.4.**

##### ***Provide awareness sessions to tourism businesses on waste and resources***

A key part in ensuring the sustainability of destinations is raising awareness among businesses on the impacts of waste and the excess use of resources – as well as on benefits in adopting sustainable practices. These sessions would be theoretical, followed by practical sessions (Action 4.5).

Some topics to include, but not limited to, may be:

- impacts from solid waste dispersion on nature and community wellbeing;
- impacts from the excess use of water;
- impacts from wastewater dispersion;
- impacts from food waste;
- overall impacts on the tourism economy; and
- benefits for businesses in minimising waste and use of resources.

Awareness sessions should involve, ideally, a wide range of tourism stakeholders: vendors, restaurants, rickshaw drivers, hotels, tour guides etc., and it is suggested to include clear and concrete examples and similar case studies while stimulating discussions.

Moreover, as mentioned in the suggested topics, awareness sessions should clearly communicate concrete (especially financial) benefits at the business level when minimising the generation of waste and utilisation of resources. Sessions should be provided by experts in each of the field of focus.

**Action 4.5.*****Promote participative and practical workshops on waste reduction and sustainable and creative use of resources***

Theoretical and awareness sessions should be enriched by practical hand-on workshops. Thus, following the awareness sessions articulated in Action 4.4, it would be beneficial to promote fully practical workshops, possibly under the form of Training of Trainers (ToT), that deliver creative and strategic ways to reduce and reuse waste.

Examples include, but not limited to:

- training on composting;
- training on reusing plastic (e.g., from plastic to souvenirs/crafts: see for instance ChuChu artisans in Yangon);
- food surplus redistributions solutions (e.g., informally and/or by exploring user-friendly digital tools such as OLIO app.) in line with health and safety;
- alternatives to plastic and other detrimental materials.

It should be investigated the possibility of delivering training on reusing waste to create products of market value, e.g., exploring the possibility of waste-to-souvenir crafts. Such initiatives should be supported in order to facilitate circularity of resources in the local economy.

**Action 4.6.*****Create a supporting auditing service for SMEs on green and tailored measures***

Often SMEs lack technical skills as well as clear information on how to make their enterprises more sustainable. A free auditing service would help SMEs understand their needs and produce tailored solutions for their businesses. A way to motivate businesses in adopting sustainable strategies is the clear visualisation of long-term economic benefits that the business can gain from the adoption of sustainable practices.

In line with this, the auditing service would ideally provide:

- a report estimating business saving based on the adoption of sustainable practices related to water, waste and energy resources;
- a tailored strategy for the business (e.g., ideal technologies to adopt).

Such approach would possibly ensure a higher adoption of sustainable practices among SMEs and the provision of a tailored technical support to small businesses that are often struggling with access to technical services.

**Action 4.7.*****Establish a direct financial support system and incentivise SMEs towards low-carbon equipment and technologies***

Building upon Action 4.6, it would be beneficial if the destination establishes direct financial support system that incentivise SMEs in the adoption of green technologies and equipment.

This would include, for instance, financial access to solar panels, composting equipment, water saving facilities etc. A list of green and smart technologies and equipment to be supported and the criteria used need to be articulated by the appropriate entities.

#### **Action 4.8.**

##### ***Develop a local Green Tourism Business certification***

The conservation and enhancement of the environment are a key priority for the development of responsible tourism in Myanmar, as according to the guiding principles of the Myanmar Tourism Master Plan (2013)<sup>32</sup>. Responsible business practices can greatly help to achieve a sustainable tourism sector. In this sense, sustainable tourism certifications retain a great potential in promoting sustainable tourism; however, it is often challenging, especially for SMEs, to comply with international standards (e.g. Travelife). It is suggested, then, the creation of a local certification system in a participative manner (by involving stakeholders).

The tailored certification programs would certainly facilitate higher adherence to sustainable practices, firstly because the guidelines would be developed in participation, and secondly because they are tailored by a limited number of criteria to be met, that cover essential factors of the business sustainability transition.

The local green tourism business certification can be marked with a specific logo (e.g. Green Business Kawthaung, Sustainable Tourism Kawthaung) supplied to these businesses adhering to an agreed minimum number of criteria.

It is important that the process of business adherence to a certification program is facilitated with information on the market and financial benefits from adopting a sustainable brand. Moreover, green businesses have a market advantage because they are increasingly in demand by tour operators. For this reason, the establishment of partnerships between tour operators and businesses with green credentials should be supported and facilitated.

It is suggested that greater importance is given to locally owned businesses (e.g., SMEs hotels, restaurants, tour operators). In addition, it may be beneficial to create the local certification tailored to the specific sub-sector, including at least:

- local tour operators;
- restaurants;
- accommodation facilities.

Key points to be included in the certification program may be, but not limited to:

- waste management;
- low use of resources (water, energy etc.);
- locally sourced food and other supplies;
- responsible employment.

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<sup>32</sup> **Myanmar Tourism Master Plan (2013)**. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/myanmar-tourism-master-plan-english-version-min.pdf>



These points may be developed differently among the key tourism sub-sectors but can be within the same framework of enhancing the environmental, economic and socio-cultural sustainability of the tourism sector in the district of Kawthaung.

#### **Action 4.9.**

##### ***Support businesses towards international sustainable tourism certification***

International certifications can be a further achievement for local businesses. To this extent, building upon Action 4.8, support should be provided to businesses that adhere to local green tourism certification and that are willing to go the extra mile by applying for international certifications. Particular attention should be paid to international certifications such as Travelife, which is recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

Support can be given throughout the:

- familiarisation process with the certification's criteria;
- application process seeking to meet sufficient criteria;
- any monitoring and updating requirement; and
- marketing and promotion of the achievement.

#### **Action 4.10.**

##### ***Develop code of practices for cultural and nature-based tourism activities***

A code of practices is a set of rules or guidelines to be followed by both tour guides and visitors during a tourism activity. In this sense, every nature/culturally based activity (hiking, biking, birdwatching, village tours etc.) would have its own code of practices with specific guidelines. For example, the code of practices for birdwatching would include guidelines such as "Observe birds from a safe distance" and "Do not feed birds", whereas for biking, other practices should be emphasized, such as "Bike within demarcated trails".

Businesses and tour operators, then, should be encouraged to create these codes of practices.

#### **Action 4.11.**

##### ***Ensure the distributions of dos and don'ts and investigate the production of a regional version***

The national booklet of do's and don'ts (2017)<sup>33</sup> could be distributed to tourists in the information booth at the airport, the Tourism and Heritage Centre and hotels/guest houses. This booklet is important to raise visitors' awareness towards local peoples' customs, traditions, beliefs and religions, so that visitors know how to respect these cultural aspects. This helps ensure a good relationship between hosts and guests and the long-term social sustainability of tourism in Kawthaung area.

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<sup>33</sup> Myanmar Dos and Don'ts 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2017). Available at: [https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DND\\_2\\_English\\_MOHT\\_18122018\\_compressed.pdf](https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DND_2_English_MOHT_18122018_compressed.pdf)

Given Myanmar's great cultural and environmental diversity, the development of a regional booklet of do's and don'ts could include customs of specific local ethnic groups (e.g., Moken) as well as specific guidelines for respecting and protecting local resources, flora and fauna (e.g., do not feed the birds).

Given the recent Covid-19 pandemic, the do's and don'ts should include a section with guidelines available for visitors on ideal behaviour, emergency contacts etc. Such guidelines should also be present as communication poster in each tourism premises.

#### **Action 4.12.**

##### ***Establish a hotline service to report environmentally detrimental activities***

Creating a hotline service for environmental protection is important for preventing and controlling detrimental activities in the area. This would involve, then, a phone number to which any individual – local or visitor – could call to report any environmentally harmful activity, such as littering, logging, fishing in protected areas etc.

The management, role and responsibilities of the hotline should be investigated. Such strategy, should however, be supported by the relevant authorities.

## **STRATEGY 5 - Community Empowerment and Benefits**

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**Objective of the strategy:** Promote the active participation of host communities in tourism planning and decision-making while ensuring that tourism benefits reach local communities

#### **Action 5.1.**

##### ***Provide introductory awareness sessions to communities on tourism-related benefits and potential impacts along with principles of ecotourism and sustainability***

Spreading the benefits from tourism activities at the community level is clearly advocated in Action 2 of the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy "Broad based local social-economic development"<sup>34</sup>. On this line, it is suggested that Kawthaung District advocates active community involvement in the development of the local tourism sector. Community empowerment is key for this to occur.

Community empowerment means that all its members are actively involved in the processes of planning and development of tourism. For this to be achieved, the communities should be made aware of:

- What tourism development in their region would involve:
  - Positive outcomes: economic benefits, job creation, increased revenue; and

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<sup>34</sup> Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012). Available at: [https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015\\_Myanmar\\_Tourism\\_English.pdf](https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015_Myanmar_Tourism_English.pdf)

- Possible negative impacts: environmental (e.g., increased pollution); socio-cultural (e.g., interferences in the local customs from foreign visitors); economic (e.g., rise in prices).
- Concepts of ecotourism and sustainability:
  - Ecotourism: a sustainable form of tourism that includes nature-based activities and interaction with local communities as part of the tourism experience;
  - Sustainability: meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations.
- Sustainable practices:
  - Environmental: waste management, renewable energy, recycling, water saving strategies;
  - Socio-cultural: involvement in decision-making, preservation of local traditions;
  - Economic: equal distribution of benefits, quality jobs, career development.

It is suggested, thus, that these awareness sessions are provided to all community members, because tourism development it is likely to affect, directly and/or indirectly, the entire community.

### **Action 5.2.**

#### ***Investigate the development of community-based tourism in the district***

Community-based tourism (CBT), discussed also in sub-action 2.3.2, is a sustainable and responsible form of tourism, which is mainly or entirely developed, owned and managed by the community where it takes place. The difference between CBT and other types of tourism lies on direct control as well as ownership, with the common goal of community development.

The community members may be involved, for example, in guiding tours, creating homestays and catering facilities, providing workshops (cooking, local crafts or language classes), selling local goods, among many other opportunities that both enhance local pride and ownership as well as create high quality experiences to tourists. Therefore, the ethnic identity of communities become an essential part of tourism, and they decide which aspects of heritage to include – or not – in the tourism product, thus in a bottom-up approach. This guarantees that tourism in the community is culturally sensitive, i.e., that it reflects residents' values, and is well integrated with existing industries. In CBT, profits are ideally shared among all members of the community, who usually work in rotation systems.

In Myanmar, CBT, referred as Community Involvement in Tourism (2013)<sup>35</sup>, is a key priority sector which finds great potential across the country and within the district of Kawthaung, due to its rich cultural and natural heritage and its great sense of community belonging. The establishment of CBT in small villages, then, could bring many benefits and should be supported by investigating, in participative ways, **new potential CBT destinations** (in addition of Parchan River and LMNP) that could further enrich the tourism offer while spreading tourism benefits across the district.

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<sup>35</sup> **Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism (2013)**. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Community-Involvement-Tourism-in-Myanmar.pdf>

**Action 5.3.*****Establish a regular dialogue between the Destination Management Organisation and the local communities***

The Destination Management Organisation (DMO) plays a key role in the development of Kawthaung as a competitive and sustainable destination. The DMO should also ensure a regular dialogue with the local communities, so that the decision-making processes considers the voice of communities across the district. Dialogue tools should be investigated.

**Action 5.4.*****Maximise local value chain and seek value added products***

Economic leakages (economic benefits that leak away from the community or region) are a common negative impact in tourism destinations. In order to mitigate such downside in the Myanmar tourism sector, *Action 2* of Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy “Broad based local social-economic development”<sup>36</sup> supports the need of maximising the local value chain.

Value chain refers to the full range of activities that are required to bring a product or service to the final customer (tourist). This process of straightening the value chain would involve conducting an analysis of opportunities across the district for the creation of linkages between producers and supporting inter-business collaboration.

With time, maximising local value chain would reinforce economic benefits from tourism to local communities as well as diversifying the economy as a whole.

## **STRATEGY 6 - Human Resource Development**

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**Objective of the strategy:** Boost local employment in tourism with high emphasis on specialised and management positions for the local communities

**Action 6.1.*****Develop and promote trainings/workshops and encourage participation*****Sub-Action 6.1.1– Safety: training on risk assessments and incident planning**

The health, safety and wellbeing of visitors are of key concern to the Myanmar Government (*Action 6* of the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy, 2012)<sup>37</sup>. This also ensures a competitive and sustainable destination as discussed in Action 8.11. In fact, while Action 8.11 articulates the importance of having well-functioning and available health and safety infrastructure, there is a strong need to provide training on the topic of risk assessment and incident planning.

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<sup>36</sup> Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012). Available at: [https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015\\_Myanmar\\_Tourism\\_English.pdf](https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015_Myanmar_Tourism_English.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012). Available at: [https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015\\_Myanmar\\_Tourism\\_English.pdf](https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015_Myanmar_Tourism_English.pdf)

- **Risk assessment** is the process of analysing activities to evaluate what could go wrong, how severe it could be and how to mitigate such risk.
- **Incident planning** is the preparation for when things do go wrong, e.g., injuries. Planning for such situations helps reduce risks and allows for a smooth and rapid response to incidents.

Every business should be able to conduct a risk assessment; therefore, training should help businesses identify where things can go wrong and how to act effectively. Also, local authorities should know what to do in case of accidents. In this sense, a programme should be developed for the private sector and one for the public sector, especially police and emergency services.

It is suggested that particular attention is paid to potential risks and challenges of implementing procedures on islands (especially the most remote ones). The trainings need to be delivered by experts and could be provided in ToT format. The suggested key topics to cover during training to the private sector include:

- identification of potential hazards;
- understanding and mitigating risks;
- first aid and in-field emergency medical training;
- planning for incidents;
- communication systems.
- maintaining an accident book to record accidents and near accidents.

The suggested key topics to cover during training to the emergency service and police include:

- medical stabilisation and evacuation procedures;
- time calculation to regional hospitals;
- evacuation from remote locations (especially islands);
- dealing with multiple accidents.

### **Sub-Action 6.1.2 - Marketing: trainings on digital marketing communication technologies for businesses**

Knowledge in marketing and advertising is fundamental for the success of any business and any destination. As mentioned in Action 11.3, websites and social media are powerful platforms (especially in post-Covid-19) for promoting products/services, providing information and engaging with customers.

Digital marketing trainings for local businesses would cover topics such as:

- SEO (Search Engine Optimization);
- content marketing;
- copywriting;
- social media marketing;
- social media management;
- website design.

The trainings would allow businesses to become more competitive in the market and attract not only visitors but also local customers. The trainings can be on a ToT format. Digital marketing tools are becoming increasingly essential whereby travel fairs and other mass events are avoided due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Sub-Action 6.1.3 – Professional Services: Training on Professional Services**

In order to diversify the tourism offer across the district, as articulated in Strategy 2, it has emerged the need to improve local professional services. This would ensure the development of professional skills at local level and improve economic linkages with local communities. According to the nature of the destination, there is the need to develop specific services with some key suggestions:

- trekking/biking guides;
- scuba divers;
- nature guides;
- cultural guides.

In addition, it is suggested to investigate other professional trainings based on the nature of the local tourism market as well as the demand from local individuals who would like to take part in the trainings. Trainings would be provided by experts in the field with practical experience.

### **Sub-Action 6.1.4 – Professional Skills: Training on Professional Skills**

In addition to professional services mentioned in sub-section 6.1.3, it is suggested that experts provide trainings that enhance professional skills, for example:

- hospitality and customer service;
- language skills (especially English);
- safety and hygiene;
- food preparation.

Some of the trainings, such as customer services and safety and hygiene, could be delivered in ToT format; however, it must be noted that other trainings, such as languages, may be less appropriate for ToT.

Skills development trainings would contribute to the national effort of promoting “a well-trained and rewarded workforce” (*Action 8* of the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy)<sup>38</sup>.

## **STRATEGY 7-Business Development/Support to Young Entrepreneurs**

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<sup>38</sup> Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012). Available at: [https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015\\_Myanmar\\_Tourism\\_English.pdf](https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015_Myanmar_Tourism_English.pdf)

**Objective of the strategy:** Promote the development of specialised businesses in sustainable tourism by capitalising on innovative ideas as well as traditional skills

### **Action 7.1.**

***Incentivise young entrepreneurs’ small and medium enterprises as well as supporting the improvement of existing businesses***

#### **Sub-Action 7.1.1 – Provide financial incentives programmes for young entrepreneurs towards specialised services**

Promoting local entrepreneurship through micro and small enterprises is key to the sustainability of a destination where small businesses directly benefit from the tourism sector. In Myanmar, such priority is strongly advocated in Action 2 of the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012). To this extent, it is suggested that financial incentives programmes are developed and provided for young entrepreneurs.

Such programmes should promote the development of specialised areas in the local tourism industry to help diversify the offer (Strategy 2). Moreover, it will help retain younger generations in the district, bringing innovation and creativity in tourism development (minimising “brain drain”). Bike rentals, specialised excursions, and other specialised initiatives proposed by young entrepreneurs could be supported under the initiative.

#### **Sub-Action 7.1.2 – Provide financial incentives programmes for local production of goods and crafts for tourist and local businesses**

In addition to sub-section 7.1.1, it would be beneficial to develop financial incentive programmes directly aimed at boosting local production of goods and services for business and local tourism businesses. This would include local crafts, souvenirs, local food etc. The main aim is to support existing workshops in improving their productions of local crafts.

Therefore, while sub-action 7.1.1. aims at supporting young entrepreneurs, the beneficiaries of Action 7.1.2 would be a wider public within the framework of local production of goods and crafts, bridging economic benefits and preservation and valorisation of local heritage.

For Sub-Actions 7.1.1. and 7.1.2. particular attention should be paid to gender empowerment by involving women in the incentive’s programs for specialised services as well as the development of handicrafts.

### **Action 7.2.**

***Create technical supporting programmes for young entrepreneurs and specialised services***

Technical supporting programs are suggested to boost the development of business ideas for start-ups as well as to expand and improve existing businesses. Such strategy would go in line with the incentive programs and it would concern the professional advancement of entrepreneurs in the tourism sector.

Some suggested trainings are:

- support in market access;
- business start-up support;
- support in business planning;
- investment advice;
- financial management.

## **STRATEGY 8 - Infrastructure Development**

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**Objective of the strategy:** Sustainably develop tourism-related infrastructures to provide an improved service to communities, businesses and visitors

### **HARD INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### **Action 8.1.**

***Sea Access: improve existing and install new piers in strategic locations***

Quality, strategic and maintained infrastructures are key to the destination. In terms of sea access, it would be beneficial for the Kawthaung district to improve the piers – especially the main arrival pier in Kawthaung – and to install piers that facilitate mooring by the visited islands. These can be as simple as installing buoys to minimise impact on sea floor and coral reef caused by anchoring practices.

An assessment of strategic location on where to install buoys and piers should be made and in line with the strategic zoning of Lampi Marine National Park and expected zoning for other islands (see Actions 10.2/3).

#### **Action 8.2.**

***Roads: conduct an assessment study on road conditions and destination access, developing a road-improvement plan***

Quality of road is associated with visitors' experience and satisfaction as well as with the degree of attractions that can be accessible, both independently and as part of a tour. Therefore, it is important to conduct a preliminary assessment on the current conditions of roads and the degree of destinations' accessibility. Such assessment would supply the basis for the layout of a road improvement plan.

#### **Action 8.3.**

***Accommodation: improve accommodation offer in the district within the guidelines articulated in the Hotel Development Plan***

Currently, the accommodation offer in Kawthaung is limited to a small number of facilities. Yet, while the number of current facilities sufficiently matches the demand, with the increase in tourism arrivals (in line with the strategic plan), more accommodation should be created. However, if sustainability is at the core of such development, the development of new hotels should prioritise the recycle of existing building and comply with regulations articulated in



the Hotel Development Plan (Action 4.1), especially in terms of architectural design, and maximum density of facilities needed and allowed in order to protect the urban geography of Kawthaung and the district.

#### **Action 8.4.**

##### ***Electricity: development of renewable energy options***

High cost of electricity has been noted as a main issue by local stakeholders. Thus, it is strongly suggested that alternative energy-related options are investigated. These alternatives should be explored at the council, island and business levels. Main suggestions are wind, wave and solar energy. Moreover, smart technologies should be explored and adopted where appropriate and feasible in order to minimise energy consumptions (e.g., sensory switchers and key-cards for hotels).

#### **Action 8.5.**

##### ***Water: development of water saving and treatment systems at council, island and business levels***

Excessive water consumption is a widespread issue in the tourism industry, and its sustainable usage is a foremost concern. Smart water consumption requires the adoption of water saving and treatment systems at council, island and business levels.

At the council level, water recycling infrastructure can be investigated; at the island level, there is the potential of installing desalination infrastructures; and at the business level, water saving and reusing equipment can be promoted, such as low consumption toilet flush and grey water filtering systems.

Technical experts in the field should provide introduction to smart technologies in water consumption.

#### **Action 8.6.**

##### ***Plastic Bottles Reduction: introduce and maintain a network of refilling stations in Kawthaung***

Water refilling stations are a key strategy to reduce the purchase and disposal of plastic water bottles. These refilling stations would be available in strategic points throughout Kawthaung, such as in hotels, restaurants, shops, markets and the Tourism and Heritage Centre. The refilling stations should be regularly managed and cleaned, and they should have labels in Burmese, Chinese, English and other relevant languages to ensure the maximum adoption by both visitors and locals.

The visitors would be encouraged – by hotel staff and tour guides, for example – to use these stations and to purchase reusable water bottles, which can be locally produced and sold as a ‘souvenir’ (e.g., with the Kawthaung logo and slogan, local designs/drawings etc.). Another related product that could be sold to tourists are water bottle shoulder straps, also locally made and in local designs and fabrics. Sustainable initiatives add value to destinations and are very well perceived and appreciated by tourists.

**Action 8.7.*****Waste Collection System and Treatment: improve the waste collection and management system in Kawthaung and surroundings***

The management of solid waste has been identified as a key issue in the district, and an increase in tourism arrivals would put more pressure in the waste management system. In line with this, it is suggested that the current waste collection and treatment systems is improved. This would imply a systematic collection of solid waste, and improvement in the utilised equipment, including safety equipment. Although a recycling centre exists in Kawthaung, where waste is sorted, it would be beneficial to investigate the possibility of introducing an incinerator.

Moreover, small waste-related infrastructure such as dustbins are currently present in Kawthaung; however, it is suggested to identify where these should be improved or introduced. The collection system should regularly manage public dustbins to avoid overflow, as this would lead to waste dispersion, loss of attractiveness and potential impact on wildlife, especially birds.

The improvement of waste management and treatment system should be informed by the Waste Management Plan (Action 4.3.).

**Action 8.8.*****Mobility: introduction of bike, e-bikes and scooter rental services in Kawthaung***

Transportation and mobility are a key part of the tourism experience. Although taxis and tuk tuks are fundamental for tourism in Kawthaung, visitors would also enjoy having independent forms of mobility, such as bikes, e-bikes and scooters. Rental services would create new business opportunities, increase the destination appeal as well as diversify the activities in the city and area. As suggested in Action 2.10, the local map for visitors could include possible biking paths, with places of interest on the way as well as petrol stations, which shows visitors the preparedness of the destination.

**Action 8.9.*****Access for All: where possible/required upgrade infrastructure to promote access for all***

Accessibility is a crucial aspect to be taken into consideration in any tourism infrastructure. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that 15% of the world's population live with some form of physical, sensory or cognitive disability, thus it is important that destinations seek to be as accessible as possible to all visitors, regardless of their age, disabilities or physical limitations.

UNWTO (2018) provides some recommendations for accessibility in tourism:

- using ramps instead of stairs wherever possible;
- building accessible toilets in hotels, restaurants, airports etc.;
- making sure, whenever possible, that corridors in hotels, restaurants, shops etc. have enough width to allow the passage of wheelchairs.

## **SOFT INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Action 8.10.**

#### ***Health and Safety: develop and/or upgrade health infrastructure and emergency procedures in mainland and islands as part of safe tourism***

Ensuring health, safety and security of visitors is a key priority for the development of a responsible tourism industry in Myanmar (Action 6 of the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy, 2012)<sup>39</sup>. Standards of health and safety are also key factors in visitors' decision towards their holiday destination. Tourism destinations should provide safe and high-quality products and services in which tourists can trust.

This ensures visitors' satisfaction and high propensity to return and to recommend the destination to others. Moreover, destinations should be prepared for adverse situations, such as accidents and medical emergencies.

For these reasons, it is fundamental that health infrastructure for tourists are developed/upgraded in the city of Kawthaung and, most importantly, in the islands. English-speaking medical staff is also important for ensuring communication with visitors who are in need of medical care. Clinics should be built, and emergency transportation methods should be available in case of accidents and emergencies.

As most of tourism activities in the area are nature-based, the probability of accidents is high as well as of mosquito/snake bites. The clinics, thus, should be prepared for such situations. Also, first-aid kits should be available throughout Kawthaung and the islands, such as in hotels, restaurants, attractions and other public spaces.

Each tourism activity should provide the appropriate equipment to both visitors and tour guides. For examples, in kayaking, canoeing and boat activities, all individuals would be required to wear life vests. In biking and riding e-bikes or scooters, the use of helmets should be demanded; for trekking and hiking, the use of appropriate shoes, and so on.

Given the recent Covid-19 outbreak it is highly advised the development of a contingency plan specifically focusing on Covid-19 or similar events. For this, collaboration with the nearby Thailand city of Ranong may need to be investigated and established. Moreover, the contingency plan may be coupled with a visitor tracking system through digital means (e.g. check-in and check-outs from premises such as cafes, hotels, attractions). This digital system should operate within the data privacy regulations and expectations.

### **Action 8.11.**

#### ***Communication: improvement of broadband coverage especially on islands***

In the same line of Action 8.11, broadband coverage is key to allow communication in the case of accidents or emergencies. It is, first of all, a matter of safety for locals and tourists.

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<sup>39</sup> Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy (2012). Available at: [https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015\\_Myanmar\\_Tourism\\_English.pdf](https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Berichte/121015_Myanmar_Tourism_English.pdf)

This is especially important for the islands, as they are more isolated and there are more chances of accidents happening.

In addition, high-quality internet is also important for increasing visitors' satisfaction. As tourists depend on the internet for researching about their trip, making accommodation/transportation bookings and communicating with their relatives and friends back home, a high-quality broadband service definitely improves their experience. Also, it increases visitors' feeling of safety, especially while taking part in nature-based activities in more isolated areas.

## **STRATEGY 9 - Tourism Statistics**

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**Objective of the strategy:** Allow policy decision-making, tourism development and marketing and promotional strategies to build upon reliable and updated tourism data

### **Action 9.1.**

#### ***Adopt a digital application to collect and update tourism-related data***

Tourism statistics are crucial for informing policy and marketing/promotional strategies of the destinations. In the district, a digital application has been developed and its usage is strongly suggested to improve the collection, storage and analysis of tourism data.

#### **Sub-Action 9.1.1 – Develop introductory sessions on app utilisation and its benefits**

It is suggested that the developed digital application is introduced to relevant potential users, such as hotels. These introductory sessions should clearly communicate the benefits for businesses and destinations as a whole in utilising the application, along with practical sessions on how to use it. Usage manual should be provided to all users.

#### **Sub-Action 9.1.2 – Follow up with maintenance and updates**

Inevitably, the digital application will require regular maintenance and updates. It is suggested that dedicated individuals (ideally from the local authority) are selected and trained on how to maintain the app over time.

#### **Sub-Action 9.1.3 – Data reporting, interpretation and seasonal planning strategies**

Data interpretation and reporting are key regular tasks. It is proposed that the data collected is summarised and analysed seasonally. A dedicated team (ideally the same individuals selected in sub-action 9.1.2) would be in charge of reporting the data to other stakeholders. Data should form the base for discussion and planning strategies.

## **STRATEGY 10 - Sustainable Cruise, Boat and Island Tourism**

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**Objective of the strategy:** Sustainably develop cruise, boat and island tourism, ensuring resiliency, transparency, and environmental, social and economic sustainability

## **ISLAND TOURISM**

### **Action 10.1.**

*Reinforce the efficacy, transparency and sustainability of the leasing process*

#### **Sub-Action 10.1.1 – Reinforce the requirement of carrying capacity and EIA report for island-based developments**

The Myanmar Environmental Impact Assessment Procedures (EIA) (MOECAF Notification 616 of 29 December 2015)<sup>40</sup> should be emphasised in every proposed development that require compliance with these national procedures. The objective of the EIA is to:

- identify, predict and evaluate the economic, environmental and social impacts of development activities;
- provide information on the environmental consequences for decision making; and
- promote environmentally sound and sustainable development through the identification of appropriate alternatives and mitigating measures.

Moreover, carrying capacity procedures can be seen as an integral part of the EIA process, in order to ensure that the development of facilities on fragile ecosystems, such as islands, complies with sustainability standards. This should be done in relation to the proposed development and the expected consumption and degradation of resources. Also, it should consider potential impacts, not only from an environmental perspective, but also from a socio-cultural one.

Reinforcing the need for carrying capacity and EIA during the leasing process would ensure that development is promoted in balance with the islands' ecosystems.

#### **Sub-Action 10.1.2 – Establish an Environmental Trust Fund for local conservation**

Lack of tourism contribution to conservation is a concern in the district. It is suggested that a portion of leasing fees to be channelled towards an environmental trust fund, locally managed, with the aim of promoting conservation work. Its establishment and management should be investigated.

### **Action 10.2.**

*Reinforce the alignment of tourism developments and/or activities with zoning and carrying capacity of Lampi Marine National Park*

It is suggested that every tourism activity occurring within Lampi Marine National Park complies with the updated zoning scheme of the park. The zoning scheme delineates the allowed activities in each area in accordance to the fragility of the ecosystem. In order to ensure the preservation of the park for local communities and for the ecotourism industry,

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<sup>40</sup> Myanmar Environmental Impact Assessment Procedures (2015). Available at: <https://www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/resources/environmental-impact-assessment-procedures.html>

current tourism activities should be well aware of the zoning. Information tools clearly communicating the zoning of the park might be needed.

### **Action 10.3.**

#### ***Develop a zoning system for all islands within the district with tourism activities***

While in Lampi Marine National Park the zoning scheme is well defined, other islands are still lacking this highly useful strategy. It is suggested that, in order to preserve the natural environment and the community wellbeing on other islands outside the park, new zoning strategies should be developed throughout the five-years plan. This would ensure a regulated spread of tourism activities with minimum negative impacts.

## **BOAT TOURISM**

### **Action 10.4.**

#### ***Develop clear guidelines for boat tours from Kawthaung***

Guidelines for boat tours to the archipelago are lacking. These guidelines would include the respect of the zoning scheme mentioned in Actions 11.2/3, but also other aspects of the tour. In fact, guidelines can include issues on passenger safety, requirements for long-tailed boats (2 engines, lifejackets, cover, first aid box, bench, boat capacity etc. It is suggested that the guidelines are investigated and discussed in a participatory manner with the relevant stakeholders

### **Action 10.5.**

#### ***Improve economic linkages between boat tours and local communities***

Economic linkages between boat tours and local communities on islands are crucial. Therefore, liaising with tour operators is vital in order to stimulate the inclusion of community-based tourism services into package boat tours, for instance, the inclusion of village tour guides, local food etc. This would lead to greater economy benefits to local communities as well as an increase in visitors' experience and satisfaction.

## **CRUISE TOURISM**

### **Action 10.6.**

#### ***Define clear regulations for cruise tourism with a particular focus on on-land activities***

It is suggested that cruise tourism with a particular focus on on-land activities is regulated. Cruises often have a large number of passengers, thus a zoning system (in time and space) for on-land tourism activities should be investigated. This would include defining a maximum number of cruise passengers on a beach at a time, creating designed areas where tourism activities can take place etc. Such system should be informed by experts in the local ecosystem and according to the carrying capacity of each site.

Moreover, it is suggested that local communities inhabiting the islands are consulted, giving voice to their views on redirecting cruise activities in specific areas. In addition, particular attention should be paid to waste generation from cruise passenger on-land.

#### **Action 10.7.**

##### ***Promote awareness sessions on impact of cruise tourism***

Cruise tourism, although very successful in many destinations around the world, poses various challenges – especially environmental – to these destinations. For this reason, it is important to create awareness sessions in the communities about the impacts of cruise tourism, for instance:

- water pollution;
- air pollution;
- pressure on solid waste management;
- environmentally sustainable anchorage area
- overcrowding on specific times of the day;
- limited economic benefits for the communities (visitors do not spend on accommodation and restaurants, as these services are provided by the cruise);
- economic leakages.

## **STRATEGY 11 - Destination Marketing, Promotion and Competitiveness**

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**Objective of the strategy:** Position Kawthaung district as a distinct and competitive destination within Myanmar and regional (South East Asia) markets.

#### **Action 11.1.**

##### ***Develop a Kawthaung destination brand***

In order to improve the destination's competitiveness, it would be essential to develop a strong destination brand. The brand would reflect the local cultural and natural heritage and would have the potential to position the Kawthaung district as a unique ecotourism and CBT destination. A destination logo and slogan should be designed, drawing upon the local cultural and natural diversity. A marketing specialist and a graphic designer would be required for this action.

#### **Action 11.2.**

##### ***Develop a marketing plan for the district***

A marketing plan should be developed in order to create a recognisable image of the destination targeting the key market segments. A destination marketing strategy should accomplish the key objective of attracting more visitors to the destination by defining the market position and producing targeted marketing strategies and contents for the identified market segment. This action would need the support of destination marketing specialist/s. It will be pivotal to consider the impact of Covid-19 on market (type, travel bubbles etc.) and the subsequent marketing strategies.

### **Action 11.3.**

#### ***Develop and manage digital marketing communication channels***

##### **Sub-Action 11.3.1 – Develop a Kawthaung destination website**

A website for Kawthaung as a tourism destination is important because it adds credibility to the city and its tourism board. The website would be developed by local web designers and programmers, and it would be updated regularly.

The website would provide information on:

- news about the region relevant to tourists, such as updates on situations like Covid-19, weather conditions etc.
- general facts, for example: description of climate, size of population, ethnic groups, religions, cultural aspects (local cuisine, festivals), maps of the city and region;
- activities visitors can participate in;
- attractions and places of interest;
- calendar with festivals and holidays throughout the year;
- accommodation booking system;
- tours booking system.

Moreover, it would be beneficial ensuring an improved articulation of the Kawthaung webpage within the Ministry of Hotels & Tourism website<sup>41</sup>. This would ensure more visibility at national and international level.

##### **Sub-Action 11.3.2 – Establish social media presence**

As with the website, social media would also increase destination image and credibility, as they work to promote the destination brand. However, whereas the website's function is to provide information as a reliable and official source, social media's focus is marketing and engagement with visitors. Facebook and Instagram, for example, are great platforms for sharing pictures, videos and news about the destination as well as answering queries of potential visitors and receiving feedback from previous visitors.

##### **Sub-Action 11.3.3 – Provide trainings on destination digital marketing**

Sub-actions 11.3.1 and 11.3.2 require that digital marketing at destination level is regularly managed; therefore, appropriate trainings should be provided to a dedicated marketing team (e.g., members of the DMO) to manage and regularly update the website and social media. Training should be conducted by experts but delivered in a practical manner. It is important that the website is developed in a user-friendly way in order to facilitate its management by dedicated individuals without expertise in marketing and computing.

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<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Hotels & Tourism Website: <https://tourism.gov.mm/kaw-thaung/>



**Action 11.4.*****Establish a regular presence on regional and international tourism events as part of Myanmar marketing activities***

Currently, the district of Kawthaung is little and often not represented in the national tourism marketing campaigns. It would be beneficial to liaise with national marketing entities in order to discuss potential inclusion of the district of Kawthaung in these campaigns. The inclusion, however, would need to reflect sustainable forms of tourism, such as ecotourism and CBT. Through national strategies, the image of Kawthaung as a destination could easily reach the international public, expanding the market towards alternative forms of tourism. Yet, such events may occur, again, in later stages of this DMP and a major focus should be placed on digital solutions given the situation at the time of writing.

**STRATEGY 12 - Regional Collaboration**

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**Objective of the strategy:** Establish collaboration to facilitate the exchange of practices and the creation of sector-based associations

**Action 12.1.*****Create collaboration with other destinations in the Tanintharyi region***

Collaborations with other destinations within the regions such as Dawei and Myeik are suggested, as these can motivate exchange of practices and market-wise collaboration. In addition to knowledge sharing, cross-collaboration would facilitate collective cooperation on projects such as the Kawthaung-Myeik market corridor. Collaboration would include regular meetings, study tours etc.

**Action 12.2.*****Support the creation of category associations in tourism***

The development of category association can bring several advantages to the destination's tourism sub-sectors, such as:

- developing a shared vision;
- networking opportunities;
- knowledge sharing;
- improving business climate;
- collective decision-making opportunities;
- sector empowerment.

In addition, the creation of category associations would facilitate not only the sector, but also cross-sectoral, and cross-regional collaboration. A priority would be given to the creation of a

Hospitality Association or Hotel and Restaurant Association. Moreover, the recently funded Tour Operators Association in Kawthaung would be supported in its continuation.



### 3. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**TABLE 2. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

ACTIONS	Priority	Approximate Timeline (Years: 2021 - 2025)				
		1	2	3	4	5
<b>STRATEGY 1 - POST COVID-19 BY BUILDING A RESILIENT DESTINATION</b>						
<b>Action 1.1.</b> Stimulate participation of grass-roots tourism professionals to Safety for Businesses short programs as part of the Myanmar's post Covid-19 Road Map	<b>HIGH</b>	X				
<b>Action 1.2.</b> Liaise with tour operators to develop holiday programs for domestic and nearby markets along with special discount packages to visit the district	<b>HIGH</b>	X				
<b>STRATEGY 2 – VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION</b>						
<b>Action 2.1.</b> Conduct a detailed mapping of the cultural and natural assets of tourism potential	<b>HIGH</b>	X				
<b>Action 2.2.</b> Develop tourism services in the city of Kawthaung	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X			
<b>Action 2.3.</b> Develop alternative forms of tourism beyond Kawthaung, including:						
<b>Sub-action 2.3.1.</b> Develop cycling tourism services	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X			
<b>Sub-action 2.3.2.</b> Develop Community-Based Tourism	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X	X		
<b>Sub-action 2.3.3.</b> Develop nature-based tourism	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X	X		
<b>Sub-action 2.3.4.</b> Develop cultural and historical heritage tourism	<b>MEDIUM</b>		X	X		
<b>Sub-action 2.3.5.</b> Develop school tourism services	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X		
<b>Action 2.4.</b> Develop more affordable one-day tours to the archipelago	<b>MEDIUM</b>		X			
<b>Action 2.5.</b> Ease the restrictions on homestay in the district	<b>HIGH</b>		X			
<b>Action 2.6.</b> Ease current restrictions in areas of medium-high tourism potential	<b>HIGH</b>		X			
<b>Action 2.7.</b> Develop a holistic Interpretation Plan for the district	<b>MEDIUM</b>			X		
<b>Action 2.8.</b> Develop a Tourism and Heritage Centre in Kawthaung	<b>HIGH</b>			X		
<b>Action 2.9.</b> Develop a visitor information booth at Kawthaung Airport	<b>MEDIUM</b>				X	

<b>Action 2.10.</b> Develop a tourist map for the city of Kawthaung	<b>HIGH</b>	X				
<b>STRATEGY 3 - DESTINATION ACCESSIBILITY</b>						
<b>Action 3.1.</b> Develop information materials for tourists communicating accessible/ restricted areas	<b>HIGH</b>	X				
<b>Action 3.2.</b> Promote and improve Kawthaung-Myeik corridor	<b>HIGH</b>		X			
<b>Action 3.3.</b> Open additional and strategic access points to the archipelago	<b>MEDIUM</b>		X			
<b>Action 3.4.</b> Develop a more rapid, clear and transparent system for travel permit to the archipelago	<b>HIGH</b>		X			
<b>Action 3.5.</b> Improve and promote Ranong-Kawthaung travel corridor	<b>HIGH</b>	X				
<b>STRATEGY 4 - DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY</b>						
<b>Action 4.1.</b> Develop a district level Hotel Development Plan	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X			
<b>Action 4.2.</b> Develop Site Management Plans across the district	<b>HIGH</b>				X	X
<b>Action 4.3.</b> Develop a Waste Management Plan for Kawthaung	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X			
<b>Action 4.4.</b> Provide awareness sessions to tourism businesses on waste and resources	<b>HIGH</b>		X			
<b>Action 4.5.</b> Promote participative and practical workshops on waste reduction and sustainable and creative use of resources	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X		
<b>Action 4.6.</b> Create a supporting auditing service for SMEs on green and tailored measures	<b>HIGH</b>				X	
<b>Action 4.7.</b> Establish a direct financial support system and incentivise SMEs towards low-carbon equipment and technologies	<b>HIGH</b>				X	
<b>Action 4.8.</b> Develop a local Green Tourism Business certification	<b>MEDIUM</b>				X	X
<b>Action 4.9.</b> Support businesses towards international sustainable tourism certifications	<b>MEDIUM</b>					X
<b>Action 4.10.</b> Develop code of practices for cultural and nature tourism activities	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X		
<b>Action 4.11.</b> Ensure the distributions of dos and don'ts and investigate the production of a regional version	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X			
<b>Action 4.12.</b> Establish a hotline service on where to report environmentally detrimental activities	<b>MEDIUM</b>			X		
<b>STRATEGY 5 – COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND BENEFITS</b>						
<b>Action 5.1.</b> Provide introductory awareness sessions to communities on tourism-related benefits and potential impacts along with principles of ecotourism and sustainability	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X		

<b>Action 5.2.</b> Investigate the development of community-based tourism in the district	<b>HIGH</b>			X	X	X
<b>Action 5.3.</b> Establish a regular dialogue between the Destination Management Organisation and the local communities	<b>HIGH</b>	X				
<b>Action 5.4.</b> Maximise local value chain and seek value added products	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X	X	X	X
<b>STRATEGY 6 – HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT</b>						
<b>Action 6.1.</b> Develop and promote trainings, workshops encourage the participation						
<b>Sub-action 6.1.1.</b> Safety: training on risk assessments and incident planning	<b>HIGH</b>		X			
<b>Sub-action 6.1.2.</b> Marketing: trainings on digital marketing and communication technologies for businesses	<b>HIGH</b>		X			
<b>Sub-action 6.1.3.</b> Professional services: training on professional service	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X	X	
<b>Sub-action 6.1.4.</b> Professional skills: training on professional skills	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X	X	
<b>STRATEGY 7 – BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT TO YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS</b>						
<b>Action 7.1.</b> Incentivise young entrepreneurs’ small and medium enterprises as well as support the improvement of existing businesses:						
<b>Sub-action 7.1.1.</b> Provide financial incentives programs for young entrepreneurs towards specialised services	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X			
<b>Sub-action 7.1.2.</b> Provide financial incentives programmes for local production of goods and crafts for tourism and local businesses	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X			
<b>Action 7.2.</b> Create technical supporting programmes for young entrepreneurs and specialised services	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X	X	X	
<b>STRATEGY 8 – INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT</b>						
<b>Action 8.1.</b> Sea access: improve existing and install new piers in strategic locations	<b>HIGH</b>			X	X	
<b>Action 8.2.</b> Roads: conduct an assessment study on road conditions and destination access, developing a road-improvement plan	<b>HIGH</b>				X	X
<b>Action 8.3.</b> Accommodation: improve accommodation offer in the district within the guidelines articulated in the Hotel Development Plan	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X	X	X
<b>Action 8.4.</b> Electricity: development of renewable energy options	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X	X	
<b>Action 8.5.</b> Water: development of water saving and treatment systems at council, island and business levels	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X	X	
<b>Action 8.6.</b> Plastic bottles reductions: introduce and maintain a network of refilling stations in Kawthaung for tourists	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X			

<b>Action 8.7.</b> Waste collection system and treatment: improve the waste collection and management system in Kawthaung and surroundings	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X	X		
<b>Action 8.8.</b> Mobility: introduction of bike, e-bikes and scooter rental services in Kawthaung	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X	X			
<b>Action 8.9.</b> Access for all: where possible/required, upgrade infrastructure to promote access for all	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Action 8.10.</b> Health and safety: develop and/or upgrade health infrastructure and emergency procedures in mainland and islands as part of safe tourism	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Action 8.11.</b> Communication: improvement of broadband coverage especially on islands	<b>LOW</b>						X
<b>STRATEGY 9 – TOURISM STATISTICS</b>							
<b>Action 9.1.</b> Adopt a digital application to collect and update tourism-related data							
<b>Sub-action 9.1.1.</b> Develop introductory sessions on app utilisation and its benefits	<b>HIGH</b>	X					
<b>Sub-action 9.1.2.</b> Follow up with maintenance and updates	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X	X	X	
<b>Sub-action 9.1.3.</b> Data reporting, interpretation and seasonal planning strategies	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>STRATEGY 10 – SUSTAINABLE CRUISE, BOAT AND ISLAND TOURISM</b>							
<b>Action 10.1.</b> Reinforce the efficacy, transparency and sustainability of the leasing process							
<b>Sub-action 10.1.1.</b> Reinforce the requirement of carrying capacity and EIA report for island-based developments	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Sub-action 10.1.2.</b> Establish an Environmental Trust Fund for local conservation	<b>MEDIUM</b>		X	X			
<b>Action 10.2.</b> Reinforce the alignment of tourism developments and/or activities with zoning and capacity of Lampi Marine National Park	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Action 10.3.</b> Develop a zoning system for all islands within the district with tourism activities	<b>HIGH</b>				X	X	
<b>Action 10.4.</b> Develop clear guidelines for boat tours from Kawthaung	<b>HIGH</b>	X					
<b>Action 10.5.</b> Improve economic linkages between boat tours and local communities	<b>HIGH</b>	X	X				
<b>Action 10.6.</b> Define clear regulations for cruise tourism with a particular focus on on-land activities	<b>HIGH</b>		X	X			
<b>Action 10.7.</b> Promote awareness sessions on impact of cruise tourism	<b>HIGH</b>		X				
<b>STRATEGY 11: DESTINATION MARKETING, PROMOTION AND COMPETITIVENESS</b>							
<b>Action 11.1.</b> Develop a Kawthaung destination brand	<b>HIGH</b>					X	X

<b>Action 11.2.</b> Develop a marketing plan for the district	<b>HIGH</b>			X	X	X
<b>Action 11.3.</b> Develop and regularly manage digital marketing communication channels						
<b>Sub-action 11.3.1.</b> Develop a Kawthaung destination website	<b>HIGH</b>				X	X
<b>Sub-action 11.3.2.</b> Establish social media presence	<b>MEDIUM</b>			X	X	X
<b>Sub-action 11.3.3</b> Provide trainings on destination digital marketing	<b>HIGH</b>				X	X
<b>Action 11.4.</b> Establish a regular presence on regional and international tourism events as part of the Myanmar marketing activities	<b>HIGH</b>				X	X
<b>STRATEGY 12 – REGIONAL COLLABORATION</b>						
<b>Action 12.1.</b> Create collaboration with other destinations in the Tanintharyi region	<b>MEDIUM</b>		X	X	X	
<b>Action 12.2.</b> Support the creation of category associations in tourism	<b>MEDIUM</b>				X	X



## 4. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 - LEGAL AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

**TABLE 3. LEGAL AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

Strategy – Policy – Law	Objectives / Principles
<p><b>The Myanmar Tourism Master Plan (2013-2020)</b></p>	<p>The plan seeks to maximise tourism’s contribution to the national employment and income generation to ensure the equal distribution of social and economic benefits of tourism. Six are the objectives of the master plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Strengthen the institutional environment;</li> <li>2) Build human resources capacity and promote service quality;</li> <li>3) Strengthen safeguards and procedures for destination planning and management;</li> <li>4) Develop quality products and services;</li> <li>5) Improve connectivity and tourism related infrastructures;</li> <li>6) Build the image, position, and brand of tourism in Myanmar.</li> </ol>
<p><b>National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) (2015-2020)</b></p>	<p>The revised NBSAP (2015-2020) provides a strategic framework for the conservation of Myanmar's biodiversity to address new and emerging challenges arising from political, economic and social reform in Myanmar, as well as to take into account new opportunities, and align targets and actions with the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.</p>
<p><b>EIA Regulations (2015)</b></p>	<p>Recently adopted as a framework, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations complement existing Myanmar laws concerning the protection of natural and cultural heritage. The EIA is the main instrument for assessing the potential impacts of developments. Under this framework, the MONREC should approve the proposed EIA by a company and issue an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC). The EIA procedure is of high interest in the Kawthaung District as Article 25 states that “an EIA is required in all cases where the Project will be located in or will have foreseeable adverse effects on any legally protected national, regional or state area”.</p>

<p><b>Myanmar Investment Law 2016 and Rules 2017</b></p>	<p>The law's primary objective is to ensure that business's investments do not cause harm to the natural and social environments for the interest of the Union and its citizens. In this light, the law seeks to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Protect their investment business in accordance to the law;</li> <li>2) Create job opportunities for the people;</li> <li>3) Develop human resources;</li> <li>4) Develop high functioning production, service, and trading sectors;</li> <li>5) Develop technology, agriculture, livestock and industrial sectors;</li> <li>6) Develop various professional fields including infrastructure around the Union;</li> <li>7) Enable the citizens to work alongside with the international community;</li> <li>8) Develop businesses and investment businesses that meet international standards.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Myanmar Environmental Conservation Laws (2012)</b></p>	<p>The law seeks to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Enable the implementation of the Myanmar National Environmental Policy;</li> <li>2) Give guidance for systematic integration of the matters of environmental conservation in the sustainable development process;</li> <li>3) Enable a healthy and clean environment and conserve natural and cultural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations;</li> <li>4) Reclaim ecosystems, when possible, which are starting to degenerate and disappear;</li> <li>5) Enable the management of decreasing natural resources and for enabling their sustainable use;</li> <li>6) Enable the promotion of public awareness and cooperation in educational programmes;</li> <li>7) Enable international, regional and bilateral cooperation in the matters of environmental conservation;</li> <li>8) Enable the cooperation among government departments, government organisations, international organisations, non-government organisations and individuals in matters of environmental conservation.</li> </ol>

## APPENDIX 2 - MYANMAR TOURISM FEDERATION

**TABLE 4. MEMBERS OF THE MYANMAR TOURISM FEDERATION**

Member	Abbreviation
Myanmar Hotelier Association	MHA
Union of Myanmar Travel Association	UMTA
Myanmar Tourism Marketing	MTM

Myanmar Hospitality Professional Association	MHPA
Myanmar Restaurants Association	MRA
Myanmar Tourism Transportation Association	MTTA
Myanmar Souvenir Entrepreneurs Association	MSEA
Domestic Pilgrimage & Tour Operators Association	DPTOA
Myanmar Tourist Health Care and General Services Association	MTHCGSA
Myanmar Tourist Guides Association	MTGA
Myanmar Tourism Human Resources Development Association	MTHRDA

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### **APPENDIX 3 - MAP OF TOURISM POTENTIAL OF THE DISTRICT**

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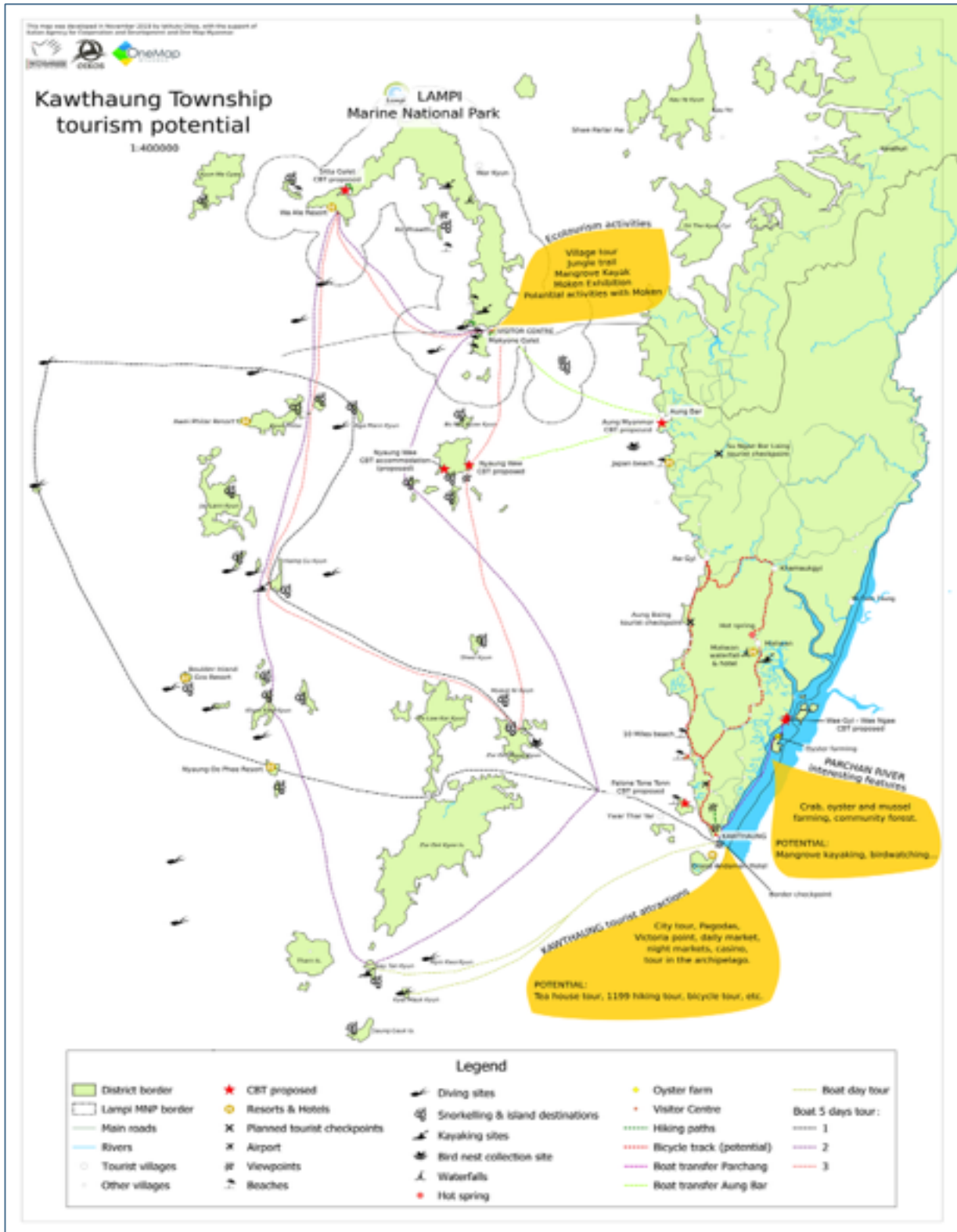


FIGURE 6. MAP OF TOURISM POTENTIAL OF KAWTHAUNG DISTRICT

APPENDIX 4 - GSTC DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

**TABLE 5. GSTC DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)**

CRITERIA (follow reference link for performance indicators)
<b>A) SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT</b>
<b>Management Structures and Frameworks</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Destination management responsibility</li> <li>■ Destination management strategy and plan</li> <li>■ Monitoring and reporting</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholder engagement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enterprise engagement and sustainability standards</li> <li>■ Resident engagement and feedback</li> <li>■ Visitor engagement and feedback</li> <li>■ Promotion and information</li> </ul>
<b>Managing pressures and change</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Managing visitor volumes and activities</li> <li>■ Planning regulations and development control</li> <li>■ Climate change adaptation</li> <li>■ Risk and crisis management</li> </ul>
<b>B) SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY</b>
<b>Delivering local economic benefits</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Measuring the economic contribution of tourism</li> <li>■ Decent work and career opportunities</li> <li>■ Supporting local entrepreneurs and fair trade</li> </ul>
<b>Social well-being and impacts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Support for community</li> <li>■ Preventing exploitation and discrimination</li> <li>■ Property and user rights</li> <li>■ Safety and security</li> <li>■ Access for all</li> </ul>
<b>C) CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY</b>
<b>Protecting cultural heritage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Protection of cultural assets</li> <li>■ Cultural artefacts</li> <li>■ Intangible heritage</li> <li>■ Traditional access</li> <li>■ Intellectual property</li> </ul>
<b>Visiting cultural sites</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Visitor management at cultural sites</li> <li>■ Site interpretation</li> </ul>
<b>D) ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY</b>
<b>Conservation of natural heritage</b>

- Protection of sensitive environments
- Visitor management at natural sites
- Wildlife interaction
- Species exploitation and animal welfare

#### **Resource management**

- Energy conservation
- Water stewardship
- Water quality

#### **Management of waste and emissions**

- Wastewater
- Solid waste
- GHG emissions and climate change mitigation
- Low-impact transportation
- Light and noise pollution

