



Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation

# FIJI CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TOURISM SERVICE PROVIDERS



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## FOREWORD

Maintaining high ethical standards for tourism service providers and relationships with customers, suppliers, authorities and the public in general is important. It helps maintain business reputation and that of Fiji as a tourist destination.

The establishment of this Code of Conduct for Tourism Service Providers is a strategy in the Fijian Tourism Development Plan, Fijian Tourism 2021, owing to the need to provide minimum parameters in terms of behaviour and conduct that will guide tourism service providers.

The Fiji Code of Conduct for Tourism Service Providers is developed in accordance with the principles of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the UNWTO International Code for the Protection of Tourists, which is a set of minimum international standards for the protection of tourists in emergency situations and consumer rights of tourists.

Its central objective is to ensure that tourism activities are undertaken based on internationally recognised principles of openness and transparency, consensus based decision making and the highest standard of professionalism and integrity.

## INTRODUCTION

As part of our goal to leverage the burgeoning global travel and tourism industry and in keeping with the Fiji Government's goal of strategically positioning Fiji, the Code of Conduct has been developed to guide tourism service providers in carrying out their operations and activities.

As the global tourism industry evolves – so do visitor expectations. Therefore, industry players have a vested interest in adopting exemplary practices that add to Fiji brand preposition.

In developing the Fiji Code of Conduct for Tourism Service Providers, the Fiji Government is mindful of the need for a consultative process noting the cross-cutting nature of the tourism industry. This is to ensure stakeholder and industry buy-in which is critical for adoption and implementation in the short and long-term; as well as allows for due consideration to be given to our natural, environmental and cultural resources which encapsulates our Fijian identity and unique selling points as a nation.

The Fiji Code of Conduct for Tourism Service Providers draws inspiration from UNWTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) and the UNWTO International Code for the Protection of Tourists (ICPT). The UNWTO member countries have always been encouraged to adopt internationally recognized standards and best practices aligning to the overall Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Finally, the Code of Conduct echoes the need for tourism service providers to promote sustainable tourism practices and activities that are positive for communities and respect the rights of individuals especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

The Code of Conduct consists of the following parts:

Part 1: Scope

Part 2: Terms and Definitions

Part 3: General Requirements

Part 4: Training and Awareness

Part 5: Implementation and Review

## 1.0 SCOPE

This document provides the framework of conduct for tourism service providers of travel and tourism related services, particularly the following identified groups:

- Inbound operators
- Attraction/Activities/Tour guide operators
- Transport operators
- Traders
- Travel agency
- Accommodation providers other than for residential purposes
- Community-based enterprises

## 2.0 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply:

**“Attraction/Activities/Tour guide operator”** means any natural or legal person that principally provides travel and tourism related services to visitors in the language of their choice which may include interpretations of the cultural and natural heritage of an area; for the main purpose of gaining financially or in-kind from the provision of travel and tourism services.

**“Child”** means a person below the age of 18 years.

**“Child Protection”** means the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent and stop children being abused or neglected.

**“Child Safeguarding Focal Points”** means a designated staff member to receive Child Safeguarding concerns/complaints should be appropriated geographical/operational unit level by the CEO.

**“Client”** means members of the public, including visitors, receiving services offered by providers of travel and tourism related services.

**“Competitor”** means an industry operator offering similar products and services.

**“Emergency Situation”** means unusual, extraordinary or unforeseeable circumstances, whether natural or man-made, beyond the control of the host country, that have resulted in the need for assistance on a large scale. This includes, but is not limited to, natural disasters and pandemics.

**“Host community”** means those who live in the vicinity of the tourist attraction and are either directly or indirectly involved in, and/or affected by tourism activities. This can be a village, settlement or a local tourism destination.

**“Hotels”** include a boarding house, lodging house, guest house and any building, vessel, premises, structures, caravan or house on wheels, not being a public institution, some part of which is used or occupied for the business of receiving guests or travellers desirous of remaining or dwelling therein for any period of time and other than for residential purpose or to which persons are entitled to resort for accommodation for hire or reward of any kind.

**“Inbound Operator”** means any natural or legal person that provides local services, including airport welcome, ground transfers and booking services for tours in their country.

**“Organised Tour”** means a combination of a variety of travel and tourism related services for the purposes of the same trip, excursion or holiday. Commonly, they combine services such as transport, accommodation and meals, and in some cases, provision of a tour guide and/or leader.

**“Point of Contact”** means a designated person serving as the focal point of information concerning an organised activity or tour in the host community. E.g Turaga ni Koro, Mata ni Tikina, Village Committee Member, Church Elder, Advisory Officer, etc.

**“Tourism Service Provider”** means any locally based natural or legal person that principally provides travel and tourism related services to visitors, single or combined in a package, who is acting including through any other person acting in his/her name or on his/her behalf, for purposes relating to their business in relation to the provision of travel and tourism services.

**“Tour Operator”** means any natural or legal person that principally provides organised tours to members of the public, including visitors. For example, inbound tour operators, attraction/activity/tour guide operators and transport operators.

**“Trader”** means a person who buys and sells goods, currency, or shares in search of short-term profits.

**“Transport Operator”** means any natural or legal person that principally provides railway, road, water, air or space passenger transport services to the public, including visitors.

**“Visitor”** means any person who travels to a main destination outside his/her usual environment staying at least a night and for less than a year, for any main purpose other than having an employment contract with a resident entity in the country or place visited. This definition includes those people who are transiting to other destinations. A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise.

**“Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Groups”** includes, but is not limited to, visitors with reduced mobility, disabilities, specific access requirements, minors or seniors.

## 3.0 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The following addresses the expected conduct requirements of tourism service providers in their internal and external working environments.

### 3.1 Conduct during Emergency Situations

- 3.1.1 Tourism service providers should take responsibility for the safety of their staff and clients. They are to provide adequate care and assistance without undue delay to the clients and staff during emergency situations. This requires consideration for the specific needs of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.
- 3.1.2 Tourism service providers are to inform clients of dangers that may arise from an organised tour or any activity to be undertaken and of the rights they are entitled to in emergency situations.
- 3.1.3 Tourism service providers must adhere to Government advisories and protocols in emergency situations to ensure minimal risks when continuing businesses.
- 3.1.4 Tourism service providers should make all reasonable efforts to have in place contingency plans and procedures that include coordination mechanisms with due consideration to the particular needs of tourism service providers.
- 3.1.5 Tourism service providers must make available updated information to staff and guests, with clear communication channels, during an emergency situation. Such information and communication materials should be made available in accessible, easy to read, clear language through alternative formats and other accessible physical or electronic medium (e.g., Braille, subtitles, videos, etc.) in as many languages as possible, thus enabling any international visitor to receive adequate guidance.
- 3.1.6 Tourism service providers must support a national approach, including public-private partnership mechanisms, in facilitating safe and efficient repatriation of international visitors where necessary.
- 3.1.7 Tourism service providers should ensure that appropriate training is conducted to up-skill workers and to prepare them for crisis situations.
- 3.1.8 A risk management plan should be in place with mitigation measures. Tourism service providers should maintain appropriate insurance cover commensurate with its needs and nature of service.

## 3.2 Conduct with General Public and Visitors

- 3.2.1 Tourism service providers are to maintain honesty, integrity and professionalism in their interactions with the general public and visitors, particularly with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and shall comply with all relevant regulations and statutory requirements to govern their operations.
- 3.2.2 Tourism service providers are to utilise every effort to always act in accordance with good faith and fair dealing and to protect their clients against any fraud, misrepresentations or unethical practices.
- 3.2.3 Tourism service providers must protect and maintain the privacy of individuals and the confidentiality of information which they access and not to use it for personal gain or for that of third parties, except as required by law.
- 3.2.4 Tourism service providers have an obligation to provide visitors with objective and honest information on their places of destination and on the conditions of travel, hospitality and stays. They should ensure that the contractual clauses proposed to their customers are readily understandable as to the nature, price and quality of the services they commit themselves to providing and any financial compensation payable by them in the event of a unilateral breach of contract on their part.
- 3.2.5 Tourism service providers are to provide all aspects of services to their clients as stated in promotional and information materials including brochures, website and direct client correspondence, and are to communicate without undue delay any changes to their clients before the conclusion of the contract.
- 3.2.6 Tourism service providers are to inform their clients in a clear and comprehensible manner on the main features of the service to be provided, including but not limited to, cancellation policies, applicable travel requirements, final price inclusive of taxes and additional fees, optional or compulsory insurance schemes and complaint handling policies, before entering into a contract by and between them.
- 3.2.7 Tourism service providers are to promptly advise the agent or client of any substantial changes to services contracted, and of any possible solutions thereof, including the provision of alternative arrangements. If substantial changes are made that are within the control of the tourism service provider, the client should be allowed to terminate the contract without paying any termination fee or any other penalty and, if applicable, to receive appropriate compensation or to address any lack of conformity through appropriate redress mechanisms. This should be stated within the terms and conditions.



- 3.2.8 Tourism service providers are to respond promptly to client complaints upon receiving a report or as soon as practicably possible and to cooperate with the local relevant authorities.
- 3.2.9 Tourism service providers are to ensure that all staff offer true and accurate advice and services, by being fully informed about the products, destination and international travel they promote and sell.
- 3.2.10 At all time, tourism service providers must ensure their services are inclusive and non-discriminatory on the grounds of nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, physical or mental ability, religion or social origin.

### **3.3 Conduct with the Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Groups**

- 3.3.1 Tourism service providers must respect the equality of men and women, including the individual rights of the vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, children, the elderly and persons with reduced mobility and specific access requirements.
- 3.3.2 Tourism service providers need to obtain consent from the parent or guardian of a child before they are photographed or filmed. A child's image must not be used in any promotional material without explicit consent. An explanation of how the photograph or film will be used must be provided to the parent or guardian.



- 3.3.3 Tourism service providers must ensure all staff, partners and representatives are aware of the issue of abuse and sexual exploitation amongst the most vulnerable, including children.
- 3.3.4 Tourism service providers and communities should be made aware of the standards of behaviour they can expect from our representatives and how they can raise a concern or lodge a complaint with the relevant authorities or to a Child Safeguarding focal point for issues involving children

### **3.4 Conduct with Host Communities**

- 3.4.1 Tourism service providers are to respect the social, cultural, traditions and practices of all Fijians, recognising Fiji's unique diversity, and ensure that activities are planned in such a way as to allow traditional and cultural sustainability.
- 3.4.2 Tourism service providers are to ensure any due process such as cultural and village protocols are observed in their interactions with host communities.



- 3.4.3 The expected behaviour and protocols must be clearly communicated to clients before engaging with host communities. Proper reporting mechanism should be in place where grievances and feedback from the host community can be communicated and addressed.
- 3.4.4 Tourism service providers should coordinate with communities in advance of any visit so that the visit is welcomed, expected and not disruptive. There should be a Point of Contact in the hosting community to be in charge of the tours and proper distribution of gifts or cash from tourists. Host communities must be informed of the visitor numbers and planned activities to be undertaken.
- 3.4.5 If visitors intend to take photographs or videos, ensure the persons are made aware and permission is sought, especially in the case of women and children.
- 3.4.6 Tourism service providers are to ensure that host communities are actively engaged or participate through integration of local skills and prioritising labour and ensuring food sourced locally wherever practicable.
- 3.4.7 Tourism service providers should ensure that tourism benefits are equally shared and host communities are treated as equal partners in the decision making process when addressing tourism development especially within indigenous communities.



### **3.5 Conduct with Employees**

- 3.5.1 Tourism service providers should promote equal employment opportunities which include the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups so as to promote an inclusive workplace and industry.
- 3.5.2 Tourism service providers must continue to build staff capacity and knowledge in order to provide professional services to the general public, including visitors. This includes training such as the Care Fiji Commitment programme, digital training, crisis management, tour guiding services, anti-bullying, human trafficking, customer service, environment sustainability and child care, to name a few.
- 3.5.3 Tourism service providers have an obligation to provide employees with adequate job protection. The relationship between a worker and the employer will be expressed in writing through an employment contract which will be respected by both parties.

3.5.4 Tourism service providers shall make all reasonable efforts to create an environment that meets the basics of care for personal hygiene and cleanliness on the part of employees and the cleanliness of all working spaces.

### **3.6 Conduct with other Tourism Service Providers**

3.6.1 Tourism service providers are to conduct activities in accordance with the Fijian laws and regulations.

3.6.2 Tourism service providers are to maintain respect, honesty and professionalism in their interactions with one another and public authorities.

3.6.3 Tourism service providers conduct themselves within the principles of good faith with vendors and other suppliers and refrain from deceptive practices e.g. falsely represent a person's affiliation within their company.



3.6.4 Appropriate due diligence or screening should be conducted when engaging another tourism service provider.

3.6.5 Tourism service providers to adhere to the spirit and letter of verbal and written contractual relations.

3.6.6 Tourism service providers at all times refrain from anti-competitive or collusive behaviour. They must respect and support free and fair competition that promotes a competitive marketplace and adheres to trade practices.

### **3.7 Conduct with the Environment**

3.7.1 Tourism service providers should place special attention to the specific challenges of coastal areas and island territories and to vulnerable rural communities, for which tourism often represents an opportunity for development.

3.7.2 Tourism service providers are to be responsible and conscious of their impacts on the environment, wildlife and adopt sustainable practices as well as advocate for such behaviour to their clients through their actions and interactions with host communities in natural and built settings.

- 3.7.3 Tourism service providers should manage activities in a manner that does not conflict with conservation efforts. They must make all reasonable efforts to obtain permission before visiting nature reserves or areas where access is restricted. When visiting these areas, tourism service providers should ensure activities comply with the rules of the park or reserve. Consider the nature and any special vulnerability of the site when determining the number of clients to go with you.
- 3.7.4 Tourism service providers refrain from all trafficking in antiques, protected species and products and substances that are dangerous or prohibited by state law and regulations.
- 3.7.5 Tourism service providers shall reduce the pressure of investments on the environment by conducting environmental impact assessments as required by the Environment Management Act 2005 and abiding any stipulated actions, and implement additional measures where possible so as to enhance the beneficial impact of the tourism industry on the environment and the local economy.
- 3.7.6 Tourism service providers protect the natural heritage composed of ecosystems and biodiversity and preserve endangered species of wildlife or protected areas by adhering to environmental laws and regulations.



## 4.0 TRAINING AND AWARENESS

The Ministry, in partnership with key stakeholders involved in the preparation of the Fiji Code of Conduct for Tourism Service Providers, will provide training and awareness on this Code of Conduct for Tourism Service Providers, including downstream partners. Specific training will be organised with relevant agencies.

## 5.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The Fiji Code of Conduct for Tourism Service Providers is not a legally binding instrument, but a set of guidelines for tourism service providers to guide them in their day-to-day operations.

All child protection issues will need to be handled in confidence in consultation with key authorities for investigation and appropriate actions.

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed in five years in consultation with key industry stakeholders.

## 6.0 REFERENCE

1. Local Guide Training Course
2. ISO 20611:2018 - Adventure tourism — Good practices for sustainability — Requirements and recommendations
3. UNWTO Code of ethics for Responsible Tourism
4. UNWTO International Code for the Protection of Tourists
5. UNWTO Recommendations on Sustainable Development of Indigenous Tourism endorsed by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics and adopted by UNWTO General Assembly
6. COVID-19 Recovery Framework and Protocols
7. DFAT Child Protection Policy Review January 2018
8. Fijian Tourism Development Plan (Fijian Tourism 2021)