



PROJECT AND BENEFICIARIES

Name of Project	:	Agritourism Research, Education, Advocacy, and Training Center
Implementers	:	Danilo E. Abayon Aklan State University
Beneficiaries	:	People of Western Visayas

About the Project

The Aklan State University (ASU), a Center of Development (COD) in agriculture and National University for Agriculture in Western Visayas, is within the growth area for tourism identified by our government. It is in Aklan where the world famous Boracay is found. Other places of interest in Western Visayas region comprising the provinces of Iloilo, Capiz, Antique, Guimaras, Aklan, and Negros Occidental, has unique tourism product which put ASU at greater leverage for sustainable tourism graduate education practice and other emerging models for tourism development.

The development of the tourism industry goes hand in hand with available manpower usually provided by the academe as they produce graduates of hotel and restaurant and tourism courses. These graduates are equipped with entry level professional skills. Leadership to the industry requires further more managerial level skills. More pressing to this is academic institutions should have qualified faculty members with graduate level degrees.

Innate to the industry are other important key players who provide the necessary manpower to propel the activities of this sector e.g. the agri-sector which provide food, institutes for skills enhancement and others. Surely, the academe has produced the needed manpower but somewhere along the many years of our tourism business, many cannot participate or cannot be employed by the prime movers of the industry. There could be some skills mismatch which created the bottleneck for the key players and businesses to hire them. There are questions like “why is there minimal local HEIs graduates participation in the leadership and management of local tourism enterprises; why are they in the lower level of the job hierarchy.

In many areas, the locals benefitted less the booming tourism businesses. They even supply less to the food needs of tourists and much more to the hiring priorities of hotels and resorts. The tourism industry and the academe with its stakeholders have to identify the causes of mismatch and lingering business disparity and problem of inclusive development of the locals to align with “inclusive growth” program of our government.

The academe has to look at the advancing nature of the tourism industry and keep tract on professional leadership and management. Innovative approaches must be in place to broaden base of knowledge of the faculty who deliver the “goods” for a relevant and quality curriculum. SUCs must provide professionals equipped with qualities for leadership while also producing highly skilled graduates for the various jobs. Anent to this an innovative resource sharing MPA/MM major in tourism delivered “Erasmus



mundos” (consortium model) provide emersion facilities for students and may identify resource faculty from the other SUCs and government institutions with experts to serve as members of the faculty or pool of experts. A convener group of institutions must be supported and identified as facility center for this initiative.

Components of the program

1. Establishment of tourism center and upgrading of support facilities.
2. Tourism graduate program alignment to 5 KRA and priority growth areas.
3. Innovative social and technical protocols for tourism research.
4. Social enterprises in host community.