Reactivation of Sustainable Tourism Sector in the Eastern Caribbean

Health Considerations & Opportunities for Re-opening a Sustainable Tourism Sector

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"We have mortgaged the health of our future generations to realize economic gains and development"

- Dr. Sandeep Maharaj

Ultimate Goal is Human Security

"Health security is one of the instruments and pathways to achieving human security." (Sir George Alleyne)

The COVID-19 contagion has forced a dual focus on health and tourism and ultimately economics

Pandemics & Tourism:
Island paradises can become disease incubators without proper controls

- Tourism can indirectly contribute to pandemics: food waste, habitat interference & environmental vs. climate change

- Frequency and scale of travel → accelerates international spread

- Interactions of travelers → victims, sentinels, couriers, and transmitters for microbial pathogens

Learning from History
Tourism industry has quickly rebounded from disasters, pandemics, & epidemics

- Pandemics have been increasing since the 1980's - the next one could be deadlier

- Important theme of resilience:
  - Crisis management tools/strategies
  - Adaptation to new environments and circumstances

- Strategies of Resilience:
  - Coordination
  - Novel management techniques
  - Integrated network
  - Recognizing risks and responsibilities
  - Timely and scalable intervention

Preparing for the Next pandemic:
Linking Disaster, Tourism & Health

- COVID-19 a case study in limited accessibility, overburdened health systems, inadequate access to healthcare, dis/mis-information, and unpreparedness

- Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) requires integration and multi-sectoral collaboration

- Mitigation of further harm after illness or injury paramount

- Health care, tourism and disaster reduction closely connected

- Disaster – situation requiring external support

- "Disaster risk" – potential for adverse outcomes
  - Causalities (death or injuries)
  - Infrastructure damage
  - Livelihood interruption
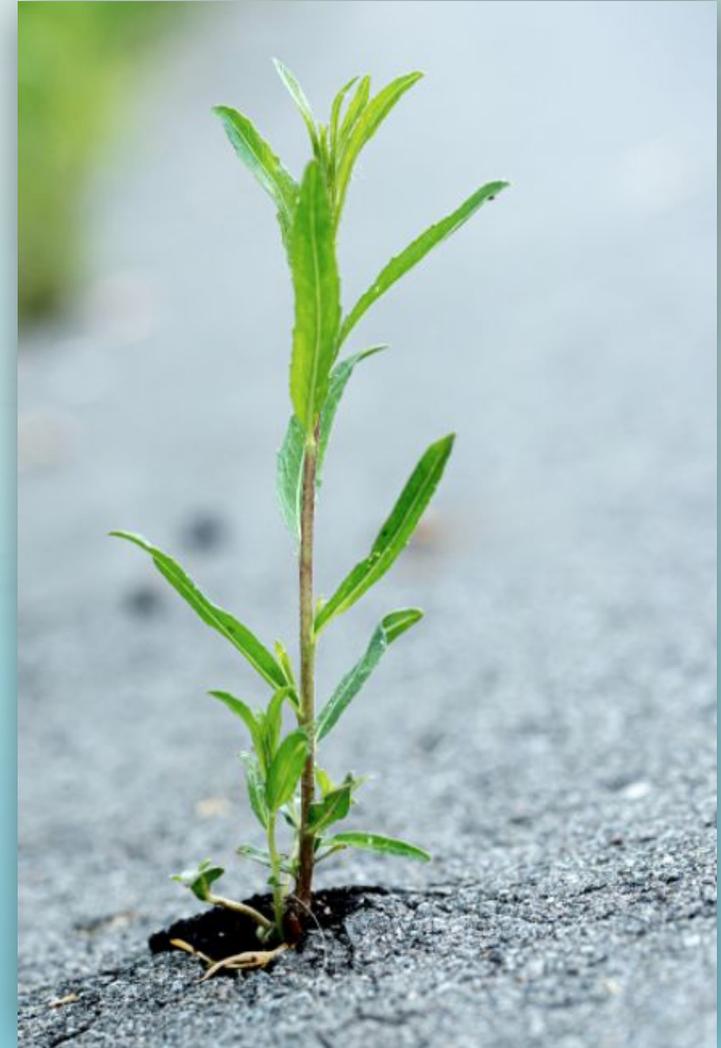 - Disruption of day-to-day activities

Framing a Response to COVID-19

- Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)- tackling the root causes of disasters and disaster risk

  - Vulnerabilities intersecting with hazards (disaster typically manifesting)
    - Examples : floods, earthquakes, wildfires, pandemics etc.
  - Disasters emerge from choices to create and allow vulnerabilities
    - Inequity of wealth
    - Discrimination against populations
    - Lack of provision of education
    - Marginalization
    - Limited accessibility

Resilience-based Framework
For Meaningful Transformation

- Technological Innovation

- Domestic Travel (Local And Regional Belongingness)

- Consumer And Employee Confidence

- Sustainable Tourism

- Well-being Of Society
  – Balancing economic growth with welfare of society
  – Meaningful Connections
  – Ecological Balance
  – Life, Health,Environment The New Focus

Resetting the Eastern Caribbean Tourism Button

- Restarting, Reorganizing, Assimilating the tourism industry according to latest standards and rules

- Opportunities For New Dispensation To Include:
  – Climate Change Mitigation
  – Sustainable Tourism
  – Local Communities
  – Whole-of-society Well Being

Tourism's Defining Moment

- Local communities as centres of transformation

- Community-centred tourism framework to fit the interests and aspirations of local communities

- Deeper understanding of remote communities' challenges

- Consideration of "proximity tourism" based on local thought and local acting perspectives

Re-imagining Health & Tourism Integration

- Tourism
  - Creating new business models
  - Governments, market stakeholders, local communities for resilience and sustainability

- Need for flexible thinking
  - AI, Internet of things (IoT), technologies related to location, navigation, drones, robotics etc.

- Health
  - Integrating:
    - agriculture, nutrition security and health
    - CSOs into the policy and planning networks
    - Private/public sector

- Flexible thinking for integration of health
  - Social networking, promoting the rural sector, sourcing more resources locally etc.

Opportunities – Tourism and Health Program (THP) & Crafting a Regional Response Effort
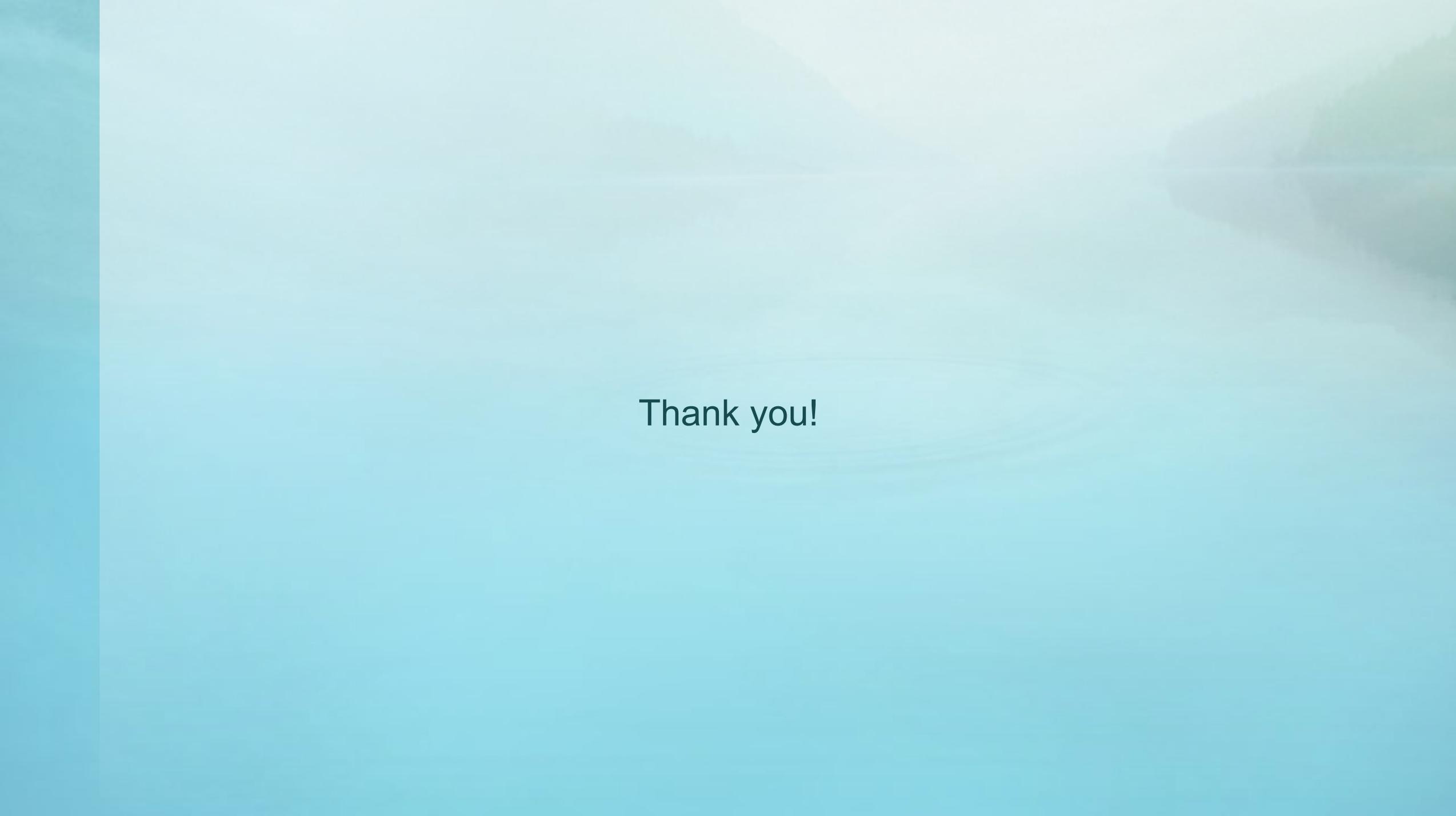
- Addressing health, safety and environmental sanitation threats to tourism via a multi-sectoral and multifaceted program

- Strengthen island states' capacity to prepare for and respond to public health threats

- Introduction of time early warning system and response tourism and health information system (THiS)

- Regional guidelines for response to traveler health issues
  - Accommodation and passenger ship settings
  - Food safety capacity
  - Hospital health safety and environmental standards

- Rapid and coordinated response to health threats

"All Hands On Deck"-- No room for Complacency

- It cannot be "business" as usual – investment now is critical

- Fundamental social change demanded

- Governance Structure is Critical

- Integration

- Building relationships

- Integrated multidisciplinary health

- Examining co-benefits

- Inter-professional collaboration

Thank you!