



Rapid Recovery Playbook for Tourism Destinations in SIDS After Hurricanes

(A step-by-step guide for destination recovery coordination, priority setting, and service restoration, focused on Small Island Developing States)

Introduction

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are highly vulnerable to hurricanes, cyclones, and typhoons, which can devastate communities and economies in moments. On average, SIDS face annual disaster losses around 2% of GDP, far above the 0.3% seen in larger countries. This is especially concerning because many SIDS depend heavily on tourism as a pillar of their economy—in parts of the Caribbean, tourism contributes over 25% of GDP (versus Approx: 10% globally), and in extreme cases like the British Virgin Islands, nearly 98.5% of GDP comes from tourism^{[s](#)}. The need for rapid recovery in the tourism sector after a disaster cannot be overstated: “It is therefore vital... that Travel & Tourism recovers as quickly as possible” to maintain economic stability. As Jamaica’s tourism minister Edmund Bartlett put it, true resilience means building capacity to recover in “nano time”—to anticipate disruptions, manage them, and bounce back almost immediately.

Purpose of this Playbook: This playbook provides a comprehensive, step-by-step roadmap for destination managers and tourism stakeholders in SIDS to coordinate recovery efforts in the first 0–90 days after a hurricane or similar disaster. It is designed to be regionally adaptable across SIDS (rather than country-specific), recognizing common challenges like small island geography, resource constraints, and tourism-dependent economies. By following this guide, destinations can prioritize actions, restore critical services, and set the foundation for long-term resilience. The playbook includes templates and checklists (editable for local use) and real-world case studies to illustrate best practices.

How to Navigate: The playbook is organized into phases corresponding to the post-disaster timeline, followed by targeted guidance for key tourism sub-sectors. Short, action-oriented sections and tables make it easy to scan and find relevant guidance:

- **Phase 1 (0–7 days):** Immediate Response and Coordination
- **Phase 2 (8–30 days):** Short-Term Recovery
- **Phase 3 (31–90 days):** Medium-Term Restoration and Relaunch

- **Sector-Specific Recovery Actions:** Accommodation, Ground Transport, Attractions, and Entrepreneurs
- **Tools & Templates:** Editable forms and charts for planning and communication
- **Real-World Examples:** Brief case studies from SIDS that illustrate successful recovery strategies

This structured approach ensures that critical priorities are addressed first (safety, assessments, basic services) and that the tourism industry’s revival proceeds in tandem with humanitarian relief, rather than as an afterthought. Swift recovery of tourism benefits not only business owners but the wider community by restoring jobs and income. The following sections detail what to do, when, and by whom, in order to get your destination back on its feet as quickly and safely as possible.

Playbook Scope and Focus

Focus on SIDS: The recommendations here are tailored to Small Island Developing States- e.g. small islands and coastal tourism hubs- which often have isolated communities, limited resources, and infrastructure that can be easily disrupted by storms. The playbook addresses island-specific issues like restoring port/airport access quickly and coordinating relief across multiple small communities (and even multiple islands in an archipelago). While the focus is on SIDS in the Caribbean and Pacific, the guidance is broadly applicable to any tourism-dependent destination hit by a major storm.

Regional Adaptability: Rather than being specific to one country, the playbook offers a framework that regional bodies or multi-island jurisdictions can adapt. For example, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) have emphasized sharing best practices region-wide, since neighboring islands often assist each other in crises. This playbook similarly encourages regional cooperation, such as mutual aid agreements between islands (for supplies, expertise, or even temporarily hosting each other’s tourists). Each destination should tailor the templates (e.g. inserting country-specific agencies and contacts) but the core steps remain consistent.

Time Frame- First 90 Days: The playbook concentrates on the 0–90 day post-impact period, covering both immediate response (first hours to week) and rapid recovery (up to three months). This is the critical window to stabilize the destination and prevent long-term loss of tourism business. Research shows that decisive action in the first few months can significantly shorten overall recovery time. For instance, after Nepal’s 2015 earthquake (not a hurricane but instructive), tourist arrivals initially dropped 42% in six months but bounced back quickly- by 2017 arrivals exceeded pre-disaster levels, achieving a 1-million visitor milestone years ahead of schedule. The goal is to replicate such swift recovery in island contexts, recognizing that full rebuilding of infrastructure may take longer, but tourism activity can often resume in some form within weeks or months if guided properly.

Included Tools: The document includes editable templates and forms that destinations can use to organize their recovery. These include, for example, a Damage Assessment Form for tourism facilities, a Stakeholder Contact Matrix, an Action Plan Checklist, and template press releases and situation report forms. (See the Tools & Templates section for details.) These tools are meant to

be customized with local data but provide a starting structure so that hard-hit destinations aren't creating plans from scratch under duress. Past Caribbean hurricane manuals have shown the value of checklists and standardized forms in ensuring no critical tasks are overlooked.

Key Recovery Domains: While many principles here apply broadly (e.g. restoring utilities helps everyone), the playbook devotes special attention to the tourism business sectors most vital to destination functioning: Accommodation (hotels, resorts, lodging), Ground Transportation (roads, airports, seaports, taxis, tour vehicles), Attractions & Tours (natural sites, cultural attractions, tours/excursions), and local Entrepreneurs (small tourism-dependent businesses, from tour guides and restaurants to craft vendors and adventure operators). Each of these domains faces unique challenges after a disaster, so we outline specific recovery steps and tips for each. For example, restoring a hotel's operations will involve different actions than getting a national park trail reopened or helping a dive-shop owner replace damaged equipment.

With scope and focus established, we now delve into the phase-by-phase actions. The following sections are organized chronologically, since timing is critical in disaster response. Later, we provide cross-cutting guidance by sector. Table 1 below gives an overview of the phases, objectives, and example actions:

Table 1. Recovery Phases Overview (0–90 Days)

Phase	Timeframe	Primary Objectives	Example Actions
Phase 1: Immediate Response	0–7 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure life safety • Rapid damage assessment • Coordinate emergency support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Activate Tourism Emergency Operations Center (EOC) – Account for tourists/visitors and staff safety – Conduct quick damage surveys of hotels, sites (using assessment forms) – Prioritize needs (water, power, road clearance in tourist areas)
Phase 2: Short-Term Recovery	8–30 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore essential services • Enable partial reopening • Strategic communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Restore power, water, communications in resort areas – Open airports/ports for commercial traffic as soon as safely possible – Provide emergency grants or loans to tourism SMEs for repairs – Launch “open for business” messaging for unaffected or recovered areas
Phase 3: Medium-Term Restoration	31–90 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuild and improve infrastructure • Resume tourism markets • Build back better (resilience) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Complete repairs to hotels and key attractions (or establish safe alternatives) – Ramp up destination marketing campaigns to regain visitor confidence – Host a symbolic reopening event (e.g.

Phase	Timeframe	Primary Objectives	Example Actions
			welcome first cruise ship) – Integrate resilience measures in rebuilding (stronger construction, backup systems)

Each phase and action area is detailed in the sections below, with checklists and examples.

Note: Always align these efforts with national emergency management and public safety directives. Tourism recovery should not outpace basic humanitarian needs; rather, it should complement and support them. Speed is important, but so is sensitivity- the community's well-being comes first, and the return of tourism must be managed in a way that locals welcome rather than resent.

Let's begin with the crucial first week after the hurricane.

Phase 1: Immediate Response and Coordination (0–7 Days Post-Impact)

Objectives: In the first days after impact, the priority is **human safety and rapid assessment**. Tourism authorities must work within the broader emergency response while kick-starting actions to protect visitors, staff, and tourism assets. Key goals include: accounting for all tourists and employees, addressing any life-threatening situations, assessing damages, and establishing a coordination mechanism to guide the recovery process. Speed is of the essence- immediate actions can save lives and also prevent secondary damage (e.g. securing a breached building before rain causes more harm). Minister Bartlett's approach to resilience emphasizes *managing the crisis when it arrives and recovering in real time*, which is exactly the mindset needed in this phase.

Step 1: Activate the Tourism Crisis Management Team- As soon as the storm passes (or even just before, if pre-warning allowed staging), activate an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or crisis coordination team for the tourism sector. Ideally this team is predefined in your disaster plan, comprising the tourism board/DMO, hotel and tourism association reps, major tour operators, local government officials, and emergency services liaisons. If no formal plan existed, quickly assemble a task force of available leaders from public and private sectors. This group will serve as the nerve center for tourism recovery, making decisions on priorities and communicating with stakeholders. Co-locate (or at least maintain contact) with the national disaster EOC to ensure alignment. *Example:* Jamaica's Global Tourism Resilience Centre was established to coordinate rapid responses exactly like this. Assign clear roles within the team (e.g. one person to handle info gathering, another for liaising with emergency agencies, another for communications, etc.).

Step 2: Ensure Visitor and Staff Safety- Work with hotels, cruise lines, and tour operators to **account for all tourists** currently in the destination. Set up a quick reporting system: have all accommodation providers report the status of their guests and staff (any injuries, anyone missing, current shelter location if evacuated). Assist any stranded or injured tourists: coordinate with embassies/consulates for foreign visitors, and with local authorities for medical help or evacuation.

If the airport and seaport are closed, plan for emergency evacuation as needed once transport is possible. Ensure basic needs (shelter, water, food, medical) of tourists are met while they remain in country- this might involve relocating them from damaged hotels to safer facilities or even private homes if hotels are full. *Remember:* Tourist safety *is* local safety; these individuals are part of your community in this moment and need the same compassion and care. Many SIDS have mutual aid protocols to host each other's visitors in emergencies- for example, after a hurricane in one island, nearby islands might receive diverted flights or cruise ships with displaced tourists. Secure all tourism properties as well- downed power lines, flooding, or debris can create hazards at hotels or attractions; coordinate with utility companies and public works to neutralize immediate dangers (e.g. turn off electricity if wires are exposed, barricade unsafe structures).

Step 3: Rapid Damage Assessment of Tourism Assets - Within the first 24-48 hours, start gathering data on how the tourism infrastructure fared. Use a standardized Damage Assessment Form to collect information from each hotel, attraction, airport, etc. (See Tools section for a template.) The assessment should note structural damages, functional status (open/closed), estimated repair needs, and any urgent requirements (e.g. "Resort X has 200 guests and needs generator fuel" or "Road to Y beach is blocked by fallen trees"). Wherever possible, deploy teams *on the ground* to verify conditions- "windshield surveys" (driving through key areas) or aerial drone assessments can help where access is tough. *Tip:* Integrate with official assessments- often government or Red Cross teams are doing general damage surveys; try to include a tourism representative or at least piggyback on their findings. Document everything: photos, notes, and reports will be essential for both operational planning and for insurance/relief funding later. *Example:* In a hotel industry guide, hoteliers are advised to deploy staff teams for damage assessment immediately after the storm, using a checklist or form to ensure nothing is overlooked. On a destination scale, the tourism recovery team should compile these individual reports into a master situation report for the sector by the end of the week.

Step 4: Priority Setting- Identify Critical Needs- With initial data in hand, the tourism crisis team should convene (in person or by teleconference if travel remains difficult) to **set clear priorities for the next few weeks**. This is essentially triage: determine what **must** be done first to stabilize tourism and prevent further losses. Common priorities in the first week often include:

- **Restoring access and communications:** e.g. reopening the airport/seaport for relief flights, clearing main roads to resort areas, re-establishing phone/internet service. (After Fiji's Cyclone Winston, the main international airport reopened just 2 days after the storm to allow relief flights and let tourists depart safely. Similarly, telecom companies restored phone service to main islands within 48 hours - these kinds of actions are crucial early on.)
- **Emergency repairs to critical infrastructure:** if a key bridge to the airport is out or the hospital in a tourist zone is damaged, those are top priorities. If major hotels or attractions are serving as shelters, ensure they get priority for generators and supplies.
- **Supporting the broader emergency response:** Identify how the tourism sector can help in general recovery (hotels housing relief workers or displaced residents, tour operators offering vehicles for aid distribution, kitchens preparing meals, etc.). This not only is the right thing to do, but also helps keep some tourism staff employed in the short term and shows the industry's value to the community.

- **Visitor communications:** Decide on the immediate public messaging (more on that below) to address cancellations, reassure future travelers, and counter any misinformation about the situation.

Document these priorities in an initial Tourism Recovery Action Plan (even if it's a brief one-pager at first) and share it with government officials so they understand the sector's needs. Coordination is key- tourism may not get attention unless you clearly articulate what's needed to save the sector.

Step 5: Communication and Public Information- In parallel with operational response, manage the narrative from Day 1. If you fail to communicate, others (media, speculation) will fill the void- possibly harming the destination's image. Craft messages for two audiences:

- **Local stakeholders:** Provide daily or frequent updates to tourism business owners and workers about what is being done and what they should do. Use SMS broadcast lists, radio, or community WhatsApp groups if internet is down. Reassure staff of rebuilding plans to reduce panic and "brain drain" (people leaving the island). Encourage "all hands on deck"- e.g. hoteliers might pool their security staff to guard multiple properties, or employees can volunteer in cleanup crews.
- **Travelers and markets:** Issue an initial press release or bulletin describing the situation honestly and factually. If parts of the destination escaped serious damage, emphasize that *not everything is closed*. For example, after Hurricane Dorian hit the northern Bahamas in 2019, officials quickly stressed that "most of the country's islands are open to visitors" and that tourists are needed to sustain the economy. They clarified that only two islands (Abaco and Grand Bahama) were badly hit, while 14 other islands including Nassau/Paradise Island and Exuma were unaffected and operating. This helped correct the "wrong impression" that the entire Bahamas was destroyed. Tailor your message similarly: acknowledge the impact but highlight any unaffected areas and the resilience of the community. Avoid general statements like "Destination X is devastated"- be specific (e.g. "the south coast experienced damage, but the north coast resorts are largely intact"). In the first week, also communicate to future visitors about flexible cancellation or postponement policies- encourage them to reschedule later rather than cancel outright, if possible, by waiving fees or offering credits.

Step 6: Security and Safety Measures: Unfortunately, disasters can lead to security issues (looting, unsafe areas). Work with police and perhaps private security firms to secure tourism zones and properties. Establish access control to damaged hotels to prevent theft of assets. Also, enforce safety: if a historic site or beach has hidden dangers (unstable structures, contamination), make sure it's closed off and a notice issued. Tourist curiosity can be high; you don't want adventurous travelers wandering into unsafe wreckage. This is also the time to start thinking about health precautions- standing water may breed mosquitoes (risk of dengue, etc.), debris could cause injuries, and COVID-19 or other disease considerations may complicate shelter conditions. Coordinate with health authorities to monitor and address these in areas where tourists or tourism workers are concentrated.

By the end of Phase 1 (day 5–7), aim to have:

- A clear picture of damages in the tourism sector (even if rough).
- All tourists and employees accounted for, with plans to evacuate or support them.
- Immediate needs addressed (temporary power, water, communications at least in critical sites).
- A communications plan in motion (regular briefings, press releases).
- An active recovery task force ready to transition into the next phase.

Real-World Example- Immediate Phase: On September 6, 2017, Hurricane Irma made a direct hit on Barbuda, destroying an estimated 90–95% of the island’s infrastructure. In an extreme response, the entire population of Barbuda was evacuated to Antigua for safety. While this is a rare scenario, it underscores the importance of having contingency plans: Antiguan authorities had to accommodate Barbudan residents (including those in tourism) and later strategize how to rebuild Barbuda’s tourism from zero. This case emphasizes that sometimes Phase 1 is about relocating and safeguarding people first and foremost. Once lives are safe, attention can turn to rebuilding the physical destination.

Phase 2: Short-Term Recovery (8–30 Days Post-Impact)

Objectives: The second phase focuses on restoring core services and starting the reboot of tourism activities in a limited but significant way. By days 8–30, the general emergency response is often transitioning from relief to recovery, and for tourism this means shifting from “stop the bleeding” to “restart the heartbeat” of the local visitor economy. The key objectives include: getting utilities and transportation infrastructure operational, helping tourism businesses to make repairs and reopen partially, providing targeted financial and technical support, and continuing proactive communication to rebuild traveler confidence. It’s during this period that the destination lays the groundwork for welcoming visitors back, even if at a reduced scale. The mantra is “open sooner, but not before you’re ready”- balance urgency with safety and quality.

Step 1: Restore Essential Services and Infrastructure- Collaborate with utility companies and public works to fast-track restoration of electricity, water, and communications, especially in tourism zones. Tourism stakeholders should clearly communicate priority areas to government (e.g. “the main resort strip and hospital need power first”). In many SIDS, tourism facilities might have their own generators or desalination plants; use those to bridge gaps if public utilities are slow, and possibly share surplus capacity with nearby community facilities (earning goodwill). Transportation: Work aggressively to reopen the destination to travel. If the airport was closed or damaged, push for at least limited service resumption. For example, Royal Caribbean Cruise Line coordinated with San Juan and St. Thomas to resume cruise calls within Approx: 6–8 weeks after the 2017 hurricanes, which injected much-needed revenue. In the Bahamas after Dorian, the main international airport in Nassau was undamaged, so flights continued, allowing tourists to keep coming to unaffected areas. Ensure roads are cleared to major hotels and attractions- mobilize tourism industry volunteers or contractors if government crews are stretched thin (with proper safety gear and oversight). If key ports or marinas are used by tour boats or cruise tenders, have them inspected and cleared of debris. Short-term fixes (temporary bridges, generators, water tanks, satellite phones) are the order of the day- anything to get the system up and running. Remember that every day tourism is down is lost income, so even partial restoration (one runway open, one section of a resort usable, etc.) helps.

Step 2: Support Hotels and Accommodation to Reopen- The accommodation sector is often the linchpin of tourism recovery. Hotels not only host tourists but can also house relief workers and displaced locals, as seen after many Caribbean hurricanes. In this phase:

- **Damage Repairs:** Encourage and assist hotels to make quick repairs where feasible. This might involve organizing teams of construction workers or contractors, possibly from outside the region if local capacity is insufficient. (Governments can help by easing entry/work permit rules for specialized labor, allowing skilled workers to come rebuild faster) Clear any bureaucratic hurdles for building permits or insurance adjuster visits.
- **Safety Inspections:** Work with engineering teams to inspect hotel buildings and certify them safe for occupancy, at least in parts. Perhaps a hotel had one wing severely damaged but another wing mostly fine- with engineering approval, that intact part could reopen to guests while the damaged section is cordoned off for repairs.
- **Financial Aid:** Provide immediate financial relief to lodging businesses. This could be in the form of emergency grants or zero-interest loans for repairs, deferment of taxes/fees, or even subsidies for retaining staff during closure. After the 2017 hurricanes, experts recommended increasing access to capital for tourism SMEs and reducing taxes as ways to speed recovery. For example, a small guesthouse might need a \$20,000 loan to fix its roof- fast access to that money means it can reopen in weeks instead of many months.
- **Mutual Aid:** Implement any “hotel mutual aid” agreements- many destinations have plans where hotels support each other post-disaster. This can mean a lightly damaged hotel lends its generator to a heavily damaged sister property, or hotels share labor (one kitchen cooking for multiple properties). The Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association’s hurricane manual even suggests inter-hotel aid to ensure service continuity. If such agreements exist, activate them; if not, informally facilitate larger hotel companies helping smaller ones, etc.
- **Managing Guests and Bookings:** For hotels that *can* operate partially, coordinate how to handle incoming guests. Perhaps consolidate bookings into a few open hotels (so that each has decent occupancy rather than many half-operational properties). Work with tour operators and OTAs to rebook or refund guests for closed properties. Keeping travelers informed is key- no one should arrive to find their hotel is closed without prior notice and alternatives arranged.
- **Example:** One year after Hurricane Maria, Dominica had many hotels still rebuilding, but two new luxury hotels were able to open within that first year, signaling recovery. In the short term, even a few reopenings send a positive signal.

Step 3: Jumpstart Ground Transportation and Tours- Transportation operators (airlines, ferries, taxis, car rentals, tour buses) are the next critical piece. Ensure the airport and airlines are aligned with your reopening plans: hold meetings with civil aviation and airline station managers to confirm when commercial flights can resume at scale and to which routes. Some airlines may be eager to resume service (to generate revenue) if they know infrastructure is ready and demand exists. Others may hesitate, so providing them with clear info on hotel availability and infrastructure status will help. For local ground transport:

- Work with government to clear and repair roads leading to tourism sites first. If certain remote areas will take longer, decide if you’ll temporarily close those to tours and focus on areas that are accessible.

- **Fuel supply:** Ensure that gas stations in tourist zones have fuel and backup generators (no point clearing roads if vehicles can't refuel). Possibly arrange priority fuel deliveries for tour operators and taxis, especially if fuel is rationed.
- **Vehicle fleets:** Some tour vehicles or taxis might have been damaged by flooding or debris. Identify how many are out of service and coordinate with rental agencies or even neighboring islands to bring in extra vehicles if needed for the interim. In one instance after a Pacific cyclone, local bus companies loaned buses from an unaffected island to the disaster-hit island to maintain tour operations.
- **Harbors and Marine Tours:** If your destination relies on dive boats, fishing charters, etc., inspect harbors for debris (sunken vessels, etc.) and clear navigation channels. Maritime authorities should certify when waters are safe again. In Fiji, dive operators were back in business relatively quickly post-cyclone by checking reefs and ensuring safe conditions, then actively telling the world "we're open for diving".
- **Tour Guides and Drivers:** Reassemble your workforce. By week 2-3, start calling back taxi drivers, tour guides, etc., at least on an on-call basis. They may have dispersed or be handling personal rebuilding, so entice them with maybe a stipend or assurance of work as tourism resumes. Also, brief them on new routes or any safety precautions (e.g. "Don't take tourists to XYZ waterfall until it's repaired").
- **Phased Resumption:** Perhaps begin with domestic or regional tourism if international is slow- for example, encourage residents or people from nearby islands to visit on day-trips or weekends, utilizing local transport services to test out systems and inject some income.

Step 4: Reopen Attractions & Activities (Safely)- Tourists need things to do, so restoring attractions is essential for giving visitors a reason to return. Evaluate each major attraction/site for damage:

- **Natural attractions (beaches, parks, trails):** Clear debris, check for erosion or safety issues. For instance, after a hurricane, hiking trails might have fallen trees or unstable ground- mobilize volunteer groups, park rangers, even visitors (if present) to help clean up. Many SIDS have community clean-up traditions (e.g. in Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam, villagers banded together to clear tourist sites). Ensure lifeguards return to beaches once waters are deemed safe. If an attraction is too damaged (say, a famous waterfall access was washed out), consider *alternative experiences* you can promote (another smaller waterfall, or panoramic viewpoint) in the short term, rather than just having nothing to offer.
- **Cultural/historic sites:** If museums, historic forts, or heritage sites were hit, secure any artifacts or structures to prevent further deterioration (cover roofs with tarps, etc.). Set up barriers if needed to keep tourists out of dangerous ruins. However, try to reopen portions that are intact. For example, if only one wing of a museum is damaged, open the other exhibits and perhaps offer a discounted entry until fully restored. Visitors are often understanding as long as you communicate what's available.
- **Tours and excursions:** Evaluate each tour product for viability. If the reef is fine but the jetty is gone, can you launch the dive tour from a beach instead? If one zipline is down, maybe the operator can offer guided nature hikes for now. Innovate temporary offerings. This not only provides some cash flow to operators but signals that tourism life goes on. Always, safety first- don't run an excursion if there's any doubt about safety.

- **Entrepreneur inclusion:** Many attractions in SIDS involve local entrepreneurs (craft markets, food stalls at sites). Invite them to return as soon as visitor numbers justify it, and help them with cleanup of their stalls or replacement of lost stock (more on entrepreneurs in the next section).
- **Case Example:** In Dominica, one year post-Hurricane Maria, most major tourist sites and attractions were open to the public again, even as some maintenance works continued. This was achieved by focusing early on clearing nature sites and repairing roads to those sites in the months after the storm. It demonstrated to travelers that Dominica's famed natural beauty was *largely accessible* again, aiding the recovery of its ecotourism brand.

Step 5: Financial and Technical Support for Small Businesses (Entrepreneurs)- Small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTes) often suffer the worst in disasters- they have fewer reserves and less capacity to recover. In this 8–30 day window, roll out support programs for these businesses:

- **Micro-Grants or Emergency Funds:** Where possible, set up a *Tourism Recovery Fund* (with government or donor support) to give small grants (even \$5k-\$10k) to tour guides, souvenir shop owners, small attractions, etc., to replace damaged equipment or facilities. If grants aren't possible, arrange simplified low-interest loans. Governments and banks after the 2017 hurricanes in the Caribbean, for instance, explored special credit lines for tourism SMEs.
- **Tax/Fee Relief:** Waive or defer any tourism-related fees (business license renewals, park permit fees, etc.) for a few months to lighten the load on these businesses. Also consider import duty waivers for equipment/materials needed for repairs (a recommendation after 2017 was to increase duty-free exemptions on building materials for recovery)
- **Business Counseling:** Provide technical assistance- perhaps a team of volunteer business mentors or NGOs can help entrepreneurs navigate insurance claims, apply for aid, or adapt their business plans. Sometimes simply helping a business calculate how to survive 3 months with no profit (via bridging loans or alternative income) can prevent permanent closures.
- **Workforce Support:** Many tourism workers (bartenders, cleaners, guides) may be out of work temporarily. Implement programs to support them- e.g. a cash-for-work program that hires displaced tourism workers for cleanup and rebuilding jobs (paying them a basic wage to tide them over *and* speed recovery). Also, follow WTTC's advice to use downtime for training: offer quick courses to upskill workers (possibly online if available), so that when tourism picks up, the workforce is even more prepared. This keeps them engaged and less likely to leave the industry.
- **Community Inclusion:** Ensure that local community members who rely on tourism (like artisans, entertainers, taxi owners) are looped into recovery discussions. Host community meetings or forums around week 3 or 4 to update everyone and encourage feedback- sometimes grassroots ideas emerge for events or marketing that top-down planners might miss.

Step 6: Marketing and Communications- “Open for Business” Messaging- By the end of month 1, it's time to more actively court visitors (if the situation allows). Craft a destination marketing

campaign focusing on positive recovery news and inviting tourists back *in appropriate ways*. Key elements:

- **Targeted Messaging:** Be specific about what is open. For example, The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism after Dorian (2019) released updates listing exactly which islands, hotels, airports, and cruise ports were operational, while being transparent that the hardest-hit areas would *take years to rebuild*. This balanced approach- acknowledging the disaster impact but also highlighting the **many places ready to receive visitors**- is crucial. As one expert noted, communications must “strike a balance: address recovery and local needs, but make clear that parts of the country are open for vacationers”.
- **Media and Influencer Visits:** Consider organizing, in the 2nd or 3rd month, a press trip or influencer visit to showcase the recovery progress. Journalists can help counter external misperceptions. For instance, after Nepal’s earthquake, inviting celebrities and media to see restoration efforts firsthand was a strategy to rebuild the country’s image. In a hurricane scenario, you might invite a popular travel vlogger to tour the undamaged parts of your island and report that “Island X is still beautiful and welcoming.”
- **Promotions:** To kick-start demand, you might coordinate a regional marketing campaign or specials- e.g. airlines offering discounted fares, hotels offering a “Recovery Special” rate, etc., for travelers who come in the next 3-6 months. Emphasize that by visiting, tourists are actively contributing to the destination’s recovery (this appeals to conscientious travelers). After a disaster, some tourists are actually eager to help by spending their money where it’s needed- harness that sentiment with a slogan like “Visit us, help us rebuild”.
- **Use of Digital Channels:** If the destination has an official tourism website and social media, keep them updated with recovery milestones (e.g. “X beach has reopened, first post-storm cruise ship arrived,” etc.). Visual proof is powerful: share photos of reopened attractions or happy visitors on a tour. The Bahamas used hashtags like #BahamasStrong and tweeted that 14 islands were ready for visitors, which helped educate the public (“having to teach geography” as one expert quipped, to show not all islands were affected)
- **Booking Channels:** Work with tour operators, cruise lines, and booking websites to adjust travel advisories. By late in the first month, if you determine it’s appropriate, ask these partners to remove any blanket “destination closed” notices and replace with nuanced advice (like “Travelers are welcome in Area A, while Area B remains off-limits during rebuilding”). Make sure front-line sales agents know what to tell clients. The worst outcome is to lose an entire season’s bookings because consumers think you’re completely out of operation when you’re not.

Step 7: Ongoing Coordination and Monitoring: The recovery task force should meet regularly (at least weekly during this first month) to monitor progress and solve new problems. Keep updating your action plan and timelines as things evolve. It’s likely some goals will be achieved faster, while others face delays- adjust priorities accordingly. Also, keep engaging with regional support networks: other SIDS and international agencies often pitch in during this period. For example, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) might offer expertise or promote a #CaribbeanIsOpen campaign (which they did after 2017), and organizations like the UNWTO or CTO may provide technical advisors. Leverage all help available. Don’t be shy about advocating for tourism’s needs in national recovery meetings- remind leaders that tourism recovery is

economic recovery. As one Caribbean report noted, if tourism recovery is delayed by years, the region stands to lose billions in revenue, so speeding it up is in everyone's interest.

By Day 30, ideally:

- Power and water are largely restored in tourist zones (even if outages remain elsewhere).
- Major transport links (airport, main roads, ports) are functioning for at least limited tourist use.
- A subset of hotels and attractions have reopened, and more are on track to reopen soon.
- Tourists have started to trickle back (perhaps domestic/regional or niche segments first).
- Clear communication is out in the world: your destination is recovering, and visitors will have things to do and places to stay if they come.
- Support mechanisms are in place for those businesses and workers still in need.

Real-World Example - Short-Term: After Hurricane Dorian (2019), The Bahamas launched a robust effort within weeks to salvage the upcoming winter tourist season. They quickly publicized that Nassau, Paradise Island, and other islands which account for Approx: 80% of tourism were unharmed. Ads and PR campaigns encouraged travelers to visit those islands to “help the Bahamas recover”. Deputy Director General Ellison Thompson emphasized that tourism revenue from the open areas was essential to fund reconstruction in the devastated areas. This strategy worked to an extent- many travelers shifted their trips to the unaffected islands, mitigating the overall economic blow. The lesson: segmentation and targeted marketing can maintain tourism inflows to parts of a country even while other parts rebuild. Similarly, in the US Virgin Islands in 2017, by early November (less than 2 months after Irma/Maria), 25 cruise ships were scheduled to call at St. Thomas that month. The USVI government worked with FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers to rapidly prepare the port for these ships- a move that Commissioner of Tourism Beverly Nicholson-Doty said was critical to “generate employment and stimulate recovery efforts” Those early cruise visits brought back jobs for tour guides, shop owners, and taxi drivers even while many hotels remained closed, demonstrating the value of a phased tourism return.

Phase 3: Medium-Term Restoration and Relaunch (31–90 Days Post-Impact)

Objectives: In the third phase, roughly one to three months after the disaster, the focus shifts to scaling up operations and moving from interim fixes to more permanent solutions. This is the time to fully reopen the destination to the world with a message of resilience and improvement. Key objectives include: completing more robust repairs, reopening the majority of tourism businesses, ramping up marketing to drive bookings, and integrating “build back better” principles to strengthen the destination against future crises. By the 90-day mark, the destination should aim to be substantially back in business, even if not 100% rebuilt, and to have a clear plan for any longer-term reconstruction that's still ongoing.

Step 1: Complete Infrastructure Rehabilitation- Use the 1–3 month period to finish restoring infrastructure to operational status:

- **Utilities:** Any remaining pockets without electricity, water, or communications (especially in tourist areas) should be addressed. The temporary measures (generators, etc.) from Phase 2 can be replaced with stable service. E.g., if a power substation was destroyed and a generator farm was supplying a resort area, by 2-3 months perhaps a new substation or rerouted grid can take over. Continue working closely with utility companies- maybe even offer incentives or public recognition for speedy restoration in tourist zones.
- **Transportation:** By now, full commercial flight schedules should ideally be back, and cruise ships should be regularly calling if relevant. If the disaster occurred in the off-season, this 90-day mark might coincide with the start of peak season- everything possible must be done to be ready for that. For example, after the 2017 hurricanes, some Caribbean islands prioritized getting ready for the critical Christmas tourism season three months later, even if it meant fast-tracking some projects. Ensure any remaining debris or temporary road fixes are cleaned up or stabilized so they don't impede visitor movement. If any key access point is still down (say a smaller airport or secondary road), put out clear alternate arrangements (like shuttles from the main airport, etc.) so that it doesn't hinder overall tourism.
- **Public Spaces:** Repair any damage to public areas that tourists use- sidewalks, signage, beach facilities, etc. This affects the visitor experience. A tourist might forgive a few missing palm trees or a under-construction building, but basic cleanliness and navigability of public areas is important by this stage.
- **"Build Back Better":** Importantly, as infrastructure is rebuilt, incorporate resilience. Use improved building codes for repairs, elevate structures if flooding was an issue, add flood drains or seawalls where needed, bury power lines if possible, etc. This is where lessons learned from the disaster should start translating into concrete actions so that next time, the recovery can be even faster. Don't just restore the status quo- aim for a stronger foundation. (For instance, if a small island's only bridge to the airport washed out, when rebuilding, consider a design that can withstand stronger forces, or build a second alternative route.)

Step 2: Full Reopening of Tourism Businesses- By the 2-3 month mark, the majority of hotels, attractions, and tours should be at least partially open, barring those that were completely destroyed and need long-term rebuilding. Actions to facilitate this:

- **Hotels & Accommodation:** Support any remaining closed hotels to reopen. If some properties require longer reconstruction (say a heavily damaged large resort), that's fine, but ensure smaller properties or those with moderate damage are not left behind. This might involve more intensive financing or technical aid. At 90 days, tourism lodging capacity should be as high as possible. If certain properties will clearly be out of action for a year or more, adjust marketing to fill the gap (promote those that are open, possibly encourage new temporary accommodations like glamping sites or cruise ship stayovers as interim solutions).
- **Attractions & Tours:** Aim for a full slate of tourism activities (with the caveat that some may be modified). National parks, museums, dive shops, etc., should all be back in operation if feasible. If any major attraction is still closed for repairs, communicate an expected timeline and promote alternatives in the meantime.
- **Entrepreneurs and SMEs:** Ideally, by 3 months, *all* tourism SMEs that survived the storm are back to doing business in some form. Continue to monitor their recovery and provide

any follow-up support (maybe a second round of micro-grants if needed, or marketing help to bring customers to them). Celebrate the “little victories”- e.g. a family-run restaurant that rebuilt and reopened- as these stories inspire others and are great content for marketing (tourists love supporting local heroes).

- **Workforce Re-engagement:** At this stage, the goal is to rehire or replace the bulk of the tourism workforce. If many employees were laid off or left, host job fairs or rehiring drives. Some destinations launch “back to work” initiatives around 2-3 months post-disaster to ensure staffing won’t be a bottleneck as visitor numbers increase.

Step 3: Major Marketing Relaunch- With much of the product (hotels, tours) restored, the destination can more confidently broadcast “We’re back!” to global markets:

- **Campaign Launch:** Unveil a coordinated marketing campaign with a positive, hopeful theme. Often destinations choose slogans around resilience. For example, after a disaster one might see campaigns like “*Discover [Destination]- Stronger Than Ever*” or “*Rebuilt and Ready to Welcome You*”. Leverage emotional appeal by showing how visiting supports communities to recover, but also emphasize that visitors will still have a great time (beautiful beaches, adventures await, etc.).
- **Media Strategy:** Engage travel media outlets to run stories on the recovery. Success stories- e.g. “3 months after the hurricane, [Destination] is welcoming tourists again, with new improvements”- can counter lingering negative perceptions. The Destination Stewardship Report notes that effective post-disaster tourism recovery often involves **destination marketing playing a critical role** in reshaping the narrative. For instance, Nepal’s tourism board actively worked to restore the country’s image after the quake, clarifying that many key tourist sites were unaffected and open. SIDS should do likewise: correct any misconceptions (e.g. “Our coral reefs are still thriving” or “Only one part of the island was hit and it’s under repair, all other areas are open”).
- **Trade Outreach:** Reconnect with tour operators, travel agents, and cruise lines at the corporate level. Provide them updated brochures, fact sheets, and perhaps incentive deals to start selling packages again. Host webinars or briefings to walk them through the post-disaster improvements. Consider attending trade shows (if timing aligns) to loudly announce your comeback.
- **Events:** Plan and execute a symbolic “**reopening event**” or **series of events**. **This could be a ceremony to welcome the first cruise ship back (like St. Thomas did- they had a big welcome when the Seabourn Odyssey arrived, marking the return of leisure cruises, or a ribbon-cutting for a renovated hotel, or a concert/festival dedicated to recovery.** Such events generate media coverage and signal confidence. They also boost local morale- celebrating how far the community has come in 3 months.
- **Visitor Experience Management:** As you invite tourists back en masse, ensure that the on-ground experience is ready for them. Nothing would undermine your messaging more than a traveler arriving and finding chaos. So coordinate hospitality training refreshers, ensure signage is accurate if some things moved, and perhaps have volunteers or tourism ambassadors at gateways to greet visitors, help them navigate any changes, and show gratitude for their visit.

Step 4: Monitoring and Feedback Loop- Even as you celebrate reopening, keep a tight feedback loop. Monitor tourism indicators (arrivals, occupancy, visitor satisfaction) closely in this period. If certain segments are not returning as expected (maybe families are wary, but adventure travelers are coming), adjust marketing focus accordingly. Also, solicit feedback from the first waves of returning tourists: are they encountering any problems? (e.g. “The hotel was fine but the tour schedules were confusing” or “We wish we had known X site was still closed.”) Use that to fine-tune information and operations. Additionally, monitor the community sentiment- sometimes a surge of tourists can feel jarring to locals still rebuilding their lives. Make sure the community is on board and sees tangible benefits from tourism’s return (perhaps hold community tourism forums, highlight local hiring, etc., to keep residents supportive).

Build Back Better and Resilience Planning: As the 90-day mark passes and immediate recovery segues into longer-term reconstruction, take the opportunity to update or create a **Tourism Disaster Management Plan** for the future, if one didn’t exist or proved insufficient. Incorporate lessons learned: what worked, what didn’t, how to improve coordination, etc. This document, ideally, becomes the blueprint (much like this playbook) for any future events, thereby continuously increasing the “nano time” recovery capacity Bartlett spoke of. Encourage each tourism business to also refine their own emergency plans (many will do so naturally after going through this).

By Day 90, a successful recovery playbook implementation means:

- The destination has *substantially recovered* its tourism functionality, even if physical rebuilding continues in parts.
- Tourists are returning in noticeable numbers, revenue is flowing, and jobs are coming back.
- The world’s perception is that the destination has bounced back heroically (so maintain that positive PR).
- Both the local community and external visitors feel safe and satisfied with the progress.
- Plans are underway for any longer projects (like rebuilding a totally destroyed resort or infrastructure) with funding hopefully secured through insurance or aid.

Real-World Example- Medium Term: Three months after Cyclone Winston (2016), Fiji had impressively restored much of its tourism sector: most resorts reopened (the main tourism regions had been “largely spared” worst damage) and visitor arrivals were rebounding. In fact, Fiji set a record for tourist arrivals within a year after Winston, aided by a strong international marketing push and the demonstration that its core attractions (like coral reefs) were still intact and even showing “remarkable recovery” themselves. Fiji’s narrative was about resilience and the spirit of “Bula”- a welcoming culture, undiminished by the storm. On the other side of the world, a year after the catastrophic 2017 hurricanes, Caribbean destinations had largely recovered their tourism numbers: some, like Puerto Rico, leveraged reconstruction funds to rebuild hotels better than before and saw a surge in visitors when they fully re-opened; others, like St. Maarten, used the downtime to upgrade their airport and port, emerging with improved facilities that boosted tourism in subsequent seasons. These cases illustrate that by diligently executing recovery steps in the first 90 days and then continuing that momentum, destinations can not only restore but potentially surpass their pre-disaster performance- turning a crisis into an opportunity to build a more sustainable and resilient tourism industry.

Sector-Specific Recovery Actions

While the phased approach above provides a timeline of actions, it is useful to zoom in on specific recovery domains within the tourism industry. This section provides focused checklists for the four key sectors identified (Accommodation, Ground Transport, Attractions, and Entrepreneurs), ensuring that the unique needs of each are addressed in detail. These can be used by sub-committees or working groups dedicated to each sector, operating in parallel during the recovery.

Accommodation Sector (Hotels, Resorts, Guesthouses)

1. **Damage Assessment & Safety Check:** Immediately inspect all guest rooms, common areas, and critical systems (plumbing, electrical) for damage. Use a standardized Hotel Damage Assessment Form to rate each area (e.g., Green = usable, Yellow = minor damage, Red = unsafe). Prioritize areas to repair so some capacity can open. For instance, focus on restoring a block of rooms and one restaurant/kitchen to serve initial guests, even if other parts are under repair.
2. **Guest & Staff Welfare:** If the hotel was occupied during the storm, ensure all guests and staff are safe, as covered in Phase 1. Provide ongoing support or counseling to staff who may be traumatized or have personal losses- a functioning hotel needs its staff back on their feet too.
3. **Cleanup and Sanitation:** Conduct thorough cleaning of debris, mud, mold, etc. Sanitize water systems (pools, tanks) before use. If any doubt about water potability, work with authorities to test and declare it safe. Flooded areas should be professionally dried and treated to prevent mold (a major issue in humid climates).
4. **Critical Utilities:** Ensure the property has power (grid or generator), water, and communications. If using generator power for an extended period, set up a fuel supply plan and maintenance schedule to avoid outages. Similarly, arrange for potable water delivery if mains are not back- you might need temporary water storage tanks.
5. **Repairs & Contracting:** Engage contractors ASAP for necessary repairs (roofing, carpentry, glass replacement, etc.). If insurance assessors need to inspect, coordinate to do this quickly so claims can be processed- but don't wait idly for insurance if basic repairs can make parts of the hotel usable. Document all damage and repair costs meticulously for claims and potential government relief. Consider upgrading during repairs (e.g., install hurricane shutters, elevate generators) to improve resilience.
6. **Partial Reopening Strategy:** If the hotel cannot fully reopen within a few weeks, implement a phased reopening:
 - o Open undamaged rooms on a rolling basis as they become ready.
 - o Use only one section/floor initially to concentrate guests and operations (more efficient use of staff and resources).
 - o Perhaps offer limited services at first (e.g., a simplified menu, reduced hours) and scale up as more staff return and facilities are fixed.
 - o Communicate clearly to guests about what facilities are available vs. under repair, possibly offering discounts or credits for the inconvenience.
7. **Staffing:** Reach out to all employees regarding the hotel's status and timelines. Encourage those who left to return, and hire temporary staff if needed (maybe from other hotels that remain closed). Provide refresh training if any procedures changed due to the disaster (for

example, if using a temporary kitchen or new safety protocols). Cross-train staff to handle multiple roles during the recovery period, since you might be operating with a leaner team.

8. **Guest Communications:** For incoming bookings, proactively contact guests (or their travel agents) to inform about the situation and offer options: if you're ready to host them (even partially), explain what to expect; if not, assist with rebooking them at another property or changing dates. Transparency is key to keeping goodwill. Many guests will be understanding if kept informed; surprises on arrival are what cause anger.
9. **Marketing for Accommodation:** Once your rooms are available, spread the word. Update your status on your website and social media ("We are reopening on X date, now taking reservations"). Coordinate with the DMO so that your property is listed in the overall communications as *open*. Leverage any unique stories- e.g., a boutique hotel might share how staff banded together to rebuild, etc., which can be compelling in promotional efforts.
10. **Financial Recovery:** Beyond physical repairs, consider the financial hit- lost revenue, etc. Work with owners/investors to plan for the next year. If occupancy will be lower, adjust budgets accordingly. Negotiate with banks if loan repayments need grace periods. Government relief (tax breaks, subsidies) mentioned earlier should be utilized. Also consider business interruption insurance claims if applicable.

By focusing on these steps, accommodation providers can expedite their return to operation, which in turn provides immediate visible signs of recovery (tourists in hotels) and helps restore employment. A functioning hotel sector often becomes a base for other sectors (tours, restaurants) to revive as well.

Ground Transportation (Air, Sea, and Land Transport)

1. **Airport Operations:** Immediately after the storm, assess the airport's condition: runways, terminals, navigation equipment. Work with civil aviation authorities to resume flights as soon as safely possible. Even if terminals are damaged, set up temporary structures (tents for check-in, etc.) to handle passengers. After Hurricane Maria, some Caribbean airports used portable generators and tents but managed to restart commercial service relatively quickly. Clear any obstacles (wreckage, sand) from runways/taxiways. Ensure emergency repairs to perimeter fencing and lighting for security.
2. **Seaports and Marinas:** Evaluate port facilities, piers, and marinas. For cruise ports, coordinate with cruise lines on when ships can return- they may even help with port cleanup if it speeds their itinerary restoration. For example, Carnival Cruise Lines helped repair docks in Grand Turk and San Juan to resume stops soon after storms. For smaller craft, ensure channels are dredged if needed and navigation aids (buoys, lights) are restored.
3. **Road Network:** Prioritize routes between the airport, main hotels, hospitals, and key attractions for debris clearance and repair. If a major road is severed (bridge collapse, landslide), set up detours or temporary bridges (military-style Bailey bridges can be erected quickly- reach out to Army Corps or engineers for such solutions). Continue road cleanup beyond just clearing- by a month or two out, roadsides should also be tidied (broken signs replaced, etc.) to present a welcoming environment.
4. **Public Transportation:** If buses or ferries are part of tourism mobility, ensure those services resume and are reliable. Provide any needed support- e.g., if the public bus system lost vehicles, maybe allocate some tourism funds to assist in leasing new buses because

they also ferry tourists. For ferries between islands, collaborate regionally if one island's ferry terminal is down- perhaps a neighboring island can serve as an alternate route until fixed.

5. **Taxis and Ride-shares:** Engage taxi associations early; they are key ambassadors. Inform them of which areas are open to tourists so they can operate accordingly (and not take visitors to closed zones). If fuel is scarce, arrange a system for taxis to get fuel rations since they are essential services in this period. Emphasize to drivers any safety updates (e.g., “Bridge X is one-lane only now, drive slowly there” or “use alternate mountain road until coastal road reopens”). Encourage digital ride-share or taxi apps to update their info if road closures exist, so visitors using those services aren't sent the wrong way.
6. **Vehicle Rentals:** Work with car rental agencies- many will need to assess and repair their fleet (hail or flooding can damage many cars). If cars were destroyed, agencies might bring in replacements from off-island; facilitate any customs or import paperwork for that. Ensure they have a place to operate if their facility was hit (maybe temporary booths at the airport, etc.). Rentals often support self-drive tourists, so updated maps/GPS info on road conditions should be provided.
7. **Tour/Excursion Transport:** Many tours use vans, jeeps, boats. Check on these assets: for example, if a snorkel boat sank, help the operator connect with potential lenders of a boat or consider sharing between operators to keep tours running. If a safari jeep broke down, maybe parts can be salvaged from another. *Collaboration is key*- encourage tour operators to share resources to operate combined tours until everyone is back to normal.
8. **Logistics for Supplies:** A sometimes overlooked aspect- tourism needs supplies (food, linens, fuel) delivered reliably. Work with logistics providers to ensure supply chains are restored. If deliveries were disrupted, coordinate central drop points from which hotels can pick up supplies. By the second or third month, normal supply logistics (ports to distributors to hotels) should be nearly back to routine, which underpins the quality of transport services (e.g., tour buses need spare parts and fuel, etc.).
9. **Improvements:** Consider if any transport facilities can be improved during rebuilding. For example, if the airport terminal is under repair, maybe add a storm-resilient design or better drainage. If roads are being repaved, maybe include better signage or widen if it was a bottleneck. These enhancements, albeit small, can be silver linings of the rebuilding phase.
10. **Information to Tourists:** With transport systems coming back, ensure that tourists are well informed about how to get around post-disaster. Provide updated transit schedules, road conditions, and any special instructions on tourism websites and at information desks. A visitor shouldn't land and be confused about, say, changed taxi fares or detours. If anything has changed (maybe fares went up due to fuel costs, or a usual ferry route is altered), communicate it to avoid frustration.

A smoothly functioning transport network is the skeleton on which the flesh of tourism can grow back- it enables all other sectors to operate and gives visitors confidence that they can move around safely and conveniently.

Attractions and Tours (Activities, Attractions, Parks, Heritage Sites)

1. **Assessment of Attractions:** Right after the disaster, each attraction should be assessed for damage and safety (this likely happened in Phase 1). Now, prioritize which attractions are

essential to re-open first based on popularity and revenue generation. For example, if your island's top draw is a particular beach or park, focus efforts there.

2. **Cleanup Operations:** Organize intensive cleanup for natural sites- this can be a great way to involve the community and even tourists (if any are around, "voluntourism" beach cleanups are sometimes done). Remove debris, fallen trees, and ensure trails or access paths are clear. National Parks authorities or environment ministries often have protocols for this; partner with them and possibly conservation NGOs who are eager to help restore natural sites.
3. **Structural Repairs:** For built attractions (museums, visitor centers, zipline platforms, etc.), conduct necessary repairs or at least make safe. If an attraction cannot be fully repaired quickly, see if a partial opening is viable. For instance, maybe only the ground floor of a museum is open while the roof is being fixed- that's fine, just adjust the visitor flow and ticket price accordingly.
4. **Temporary Alternatives:** Creatively provide alternatives if a key attraction is out of action:
 - If a famous hiking trail is closed, open another less affected trail and promote it as a "special experience".
 - If a historic building is ruined, perhaps arrange guided walks around its exterior or create a photo exhibit of its former glory at a safe viewing distance- turning tragedy into education.
 - If a popular snorkeling reef is damaged, maybe boat operators can take tourists to a different reef or even offer "volunteer reef cleanup dives" as an activity.This shows that the destination still has plenty to offer, albeit with tweaks.
5. **Safety and Liability:** Very important- before reopening any attraction or tour, do a thorough safety audit. You don't want a secondary incident (like a tourist injury) during recovery period; that would set back confidence severely. Check that all safety measures are in place: railings replaced, warning signs for any remaining hazards, lifejackets and gear in good condition, etc. Also refresh staff on emergency protocols; for example, if a trail's terrain changed, guides need to know how to handle it.
6. **Training Guides/Operators:** Tour guides, park rangers, and attraction staff should be briefed on the *post-disaster storyline*. Tourists will inevitably ask about the hurricane ("Were you here? What happened?"). Guides should be prepared to answer in a positive, hope-inspiring manner rather than dour. Perhaps even incorporate the disaster and recovery into the tour narrative- e.g., pointing out how nature is regenerating or how the community rebuilt a site. This can enrich the visitor experience and turn it into a meaningful story of resilience.
7. **Events and Festivals:** If any annual festivals or events fall in the 0-90 day window, decide whether to hold, postpone, or pivot them. Sometimes, holding a festival (even if scaled down) can be a great morale booster and marketing tool, signaling recovery. For instance, if your island has a yearly cultural festival and it's 2 months after the storm, you might still hold it but focus it as a "celebration of recovery" with appropriate tone. If that's not feasible, plan a **special event** as mentioned earlier to attract visitors (e.g., a concert by local musicians inviting people to "music and solidarity").
8. **Marketing Attractions:** Work with the tourism board to highlight which attractions are open. Update guidebooks/websites that may advise "closed due to hurricane" if things change. Use social media- a simple post like "Look, the waterfall is flowing and our trails

are open again!” with photos can get widely shared. Show images of tourists enjoying attractions post-disaster as soon as you have them; seeing others having a good time is the best persuasion for more to come.

9. **Environmental Monitoring:** Keep an eye on environmental impacts. Sometimes disasters alter ecosystems (coral reefs might bleach, forests might become prone to landslides). This isn’t directly a tourism task, but important for sustainability. Collaborate with environmental agencies to monitor and, if needed, restrict access to areas that need to regenerate (better a short-term loss than permanent damage). Also be mindful of wildlife- e.g., if a bird sanctuary lost trees, the birds might be stressed; maybe limit visitor noise or give them space until they resettle.
10. **Long-Term Improvements:** As you restore attractions, think long-term: could you improve facilities? Add interpretive signage, better shelters, etc., possibly funded by recovery grants? If a pier was destroyed, rebuild it stronger and maybe wider for future demand. Aim to make the visitor attraction infrastructure more resilient (e.g., build raised boardwalks in wetlands, use hurricane-resistant designs for structures).

By carefully managing attractions and tours, the destination ensures that visitors have a quality experience post-disaster- which will be crucial for word-of-mouth and repeat business. A tourist who comes and finds a delightful, albeit slightly different, experience than before will spread the word that “Destination X is back and still wonderful.”

Local Entrepreneurs & Small Tourism Businesses

1. **Rapid Needs Survey:** Right after the event (or as soon as things stabilize), survey the small businesses (many of these might not be formally part of associations, so you have to reach out). Identify who has been impacted and how- e.g., the dive shop owner lost his boat, the souvenir vendor’s shop collapsed, the freelance tour guide’s house was damaged and he needs income. This information will guide targeted help.
2. **Facilitate Access to Aid:** Small businesses can be overwhelmed dealing with agencies or banks. Set up a help desk or single-window system where entrepreneurs can get information on all available assistance (government grants, NGO funds, micro-loans, etc.). Assist them in filling forms or meeting requirements. Even a modest cash grant, delivered quickly, can save a microenterprise from folding.
3. **Shared Resources:** Encourage collaboration and sharing among small operators. For instance, if one tour guide lost his vehicle, maybe he can partner with another who still has one, and share the clients until he’s back on his feet. If one souvenir crafter lost materials, another might share inventory space. The tourism office or chamber can facilitate these connections (“buddy up” system for recovery).
4. **Temporary Employment:** Where possible, involve small tourism business owners in recovery work to provide interim income. For example, hire local guides and boat captains in coastal cleanup crews (their knowledge of the area is valuable). Or enlist craftsmen to help rebuild a cultural center, paying them wages. This keeps their skills engaged and helps them financially while their own business is down.
5. **Training & Diversification:** Offer short trainings on business resilience and diversification. This could include teaching basic digital marketing (so a craft seller can perhaps sell online while tourist foot traffic is slow) or training on alternative livelihoods

during tourism low periods. Some entrepreneurs might benefit from learning how to access international relief funding or how to pool resources into a cooperative for strength. *Use the recovery period as learning time.*

6. **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Make sure small businesses have a voice in the recovery planning. Include a representative of tourism SMEs in the recovery task force or meetings, so their perspective is heard. They might highlight issues others overlook (like “the curfew is hurting evening food stalls” or “voltage fluctuations are frying our equipment”). Addressing such issues will help the whole ecosystem.
7. **Marketing for SMEs:** As tourists start returning, ensure the small businesses get visibility. The big hotels will have marketing muscle, but the small guys often rely on foot traffic or word-of-mouth. Feature them in destination marketing: e.g., social media posts like “Meet [Name], a local artisan who kept the tradition alive through the storm- visit her shop in the market!” or organize a special “Support Local Day” where tourists are encouraged (maybe with discounts or events) to visit local stalls and shops. This not only drives sales but builds community-tourist connections.
8. **Community Tourism Initiatives:** Post-disaster can be a good time to pivot towards more community-based tourism. If some large attractions are down, promote village tours, homestays, or cultural experiences that directly benefit locals. It helps spread whatever tourists do come to the grassroots level, aiding small operators. It’s also often a more resilient form of tourism because it’s decentralized.
9. **Monitor and Mentor:** Assign mentors (perhaps retired industry folks or volunteers from larger companies) to check in with each small business periodically through the recovery year. They can help troubleshoot problems and ensure the business is progressing. For example, a hotel manager could mentor a small B&B owner in marketing strategies to regain guests.
10. **Celebrate Re-openings:** Each time a small business reopens or achieves a milestone, publicize it. Not only does this encourage that business, but it signals overall recovery. A local newspaper or the tourism board’s newsletter could run a “Tourism Recovery Spotlight” series highlighting an entrepreneur each week who is back in action. This humanizes the recovery and shows momentum.

Local entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of the destination’s character- their recovery often mirrors the true recovery of the community. By investing in them, the destination ensures a more **inclusive and resilient comeback**, avoiding a scenario where only big players rebound and small ones are left behind.

Tools & Templates for Recovery Coordination

To help destinations implement the above steps efficiently, this playbook includes a set of editable templates and forms. These tools are designed for immediate use- just fill in with local details- and provide structure to the recovery process. You can download or copy these templates from the GTRCMC resource portal (or Appendix of this document) and adapt them as needed.

1. Disaster Assessment Summary Template: A form to compile initial damage and needs data from all tourism assets. It includes fields such as:

- *Name of Facility/Attraction, Location*
 - *Damage Level:* (None, Minor, Major, Destroyed)
 - *Operational Status:* (Open, Partially Open, Closed)
 - *Key Needs:* (e.g., generator, clean water, roof tarps, etc.)
 - *Estimated Time to Reopen:* (if known)
 - *Responsible Focal Point:* (contact person for that facility)
- This summary sheet allows the tourism recovery team to see at a glance the status of each asset and prioritize assistance. **Example:** A snippet might look like:

Facility	Damage Level	Status	Urgent Needs	Est. Reopen	Contact (Focal Point)
Beach Resort A	Major	Closed	Roof repair, generator	6 weeks	John Doe (GM, +1 234 5678)
Airport	Minor	Partially open (daytime ops)	Debris clearance on runway	2 days	Jane Smith (Director)
Museum	Moderate	Closed (artifacts secured)	Structural engineer assessment	4 weeks	Dept. of Culture rep
Dive Shop B	Major	Closed (boat lost)	Loan for new boat, replace gear	8 weeks (with support)	Alice Lee (Owner)

This form ensures no business “falls through the cracks” unnoticed.

2. Emergency Contacts & Coordination Chart: A worksheet to list all key players and their roles/contact info- essentially a who’s who of recovery. It can be organized by category: Government contacts (Tourism Ministry, Disaster Mgmt Agency, Utilities heads), Private Sector (Hotel Association president, Transport Union rep), Community leaders, and External Partners (donors, regional agencies). This helps everyone know whom to call for what, and can double as an organizational chart if you add a column for “Role in Recovery Task Force”. Having this in one document avoids frantic scrambles for phone numbers in the midst of crisis.

3. Tourism Recovery Action Plan Template: A simple table or document that outlines *Objectives, Actions, Owners, and Timeline*. This is used by the recovery committee to assign tasks and track progress. For example:

- **Objective:** Restore 80% of hotel room capacity by Day 60.
 - Action: Facilitate rapid repair team for Hotel X (owner: Tourism Ministry Engineering Dept, timeline: by Day 30).
 - Action: Expedite insurance claims (owner: Insurance Association rep, timeline: ongoing, check status weekly).
 - Action: Set up alternative accommodations (owner: Hotel Assoc., timeline: Day 14- identify options like villas, etc.).
- **Objective:** Resume international marketing by Day 45.
 - Action: Develop “Open for Business” campaign (owner: DMO marketing head, timeline: draft by Day 30).

- Action: Press trip with 5 journalists (owner: PR agency, timeline: invite by Day 20, trip on Day 50).
- etc.

This plan should be a living document, updated as tasks are completed or new ones added. The template provided has sample objectives and actions which you can customize.

4. Communication Templates: Pre-drafted templates for press releases, travel advisories, and social media posts are provided to save time and ensure consistent messaging.

- *Press Release Template:* with placeholders for specifics (e.g., “[Destination] Welcomes Back Visitors as [X%] of Tourism Sites Reopen”). It follows a structure of acknowledging the event, highlighting recovery achievements, quoting an official, and providing travel info for visitors. Using this ensures you hit all the important points and maintain an upbeat yet realistic tone.
- *Travel Advisory Template:* for use on official websites or to send to tour operators. It lists which areas are safe to visit, any areas to avoid, and any travel requirements (like if health certificates or curfews are in effect). It’s basically the “fine print” that should accompany your marketing messages, to set proper expectations.
- *Social Media Toolkit:* a list of suggested tweets, Facebook/Instagram posts with hashtags (e.g., #Visit[Destination]Again, #RecoverTogether), and guidance on sharing recovery milestones. Also includes do’s/don’ts (for instance, *Don’t share unverified damage images, Do share photos of re-opened attractions with smiling visitors*).

5. Monitoring Dashboard: A template (likely an Excel sheet) that tracks key recovery metrics over the 90 days. For example: number of hotel rooms available vs. pre-disaster, % of attractions open, weekly tourist arrivals, etc. It can be color-coded (red/yellow/green) to quickly convey status. This dashboard is useful for reporting to government or funding agencies on progress and helps the task force identify lagging areas. (E.g., if by Day 45 only 40% of rooms are back but the target was 60%, that flags need for intervention).

6. Forms for Tourists: It’s also important to have templates for front-line use. For example:

- *Guest Relocation Form:* A standardized letter or email text hotels can use to inform guests “Due to the hurricane, we are unable to accommodate your booking on [dates]. We have arranged an alternative at [Hotel Y] or can offer a refund...”- having a template avoids each hotel drafting ad-hoc communications and ensures consistent goodwill gestures.
- *Feedback Survey:* As visitors return, a short survey template to capture their experience (focusing on safety, satisfaction with the recovery changes, etc.). This can identify issues early. For instance, if multiple visitors say “the tours were great but the constant construction noise at the hotel was bothersome,” you might arrange construction schedules better.

7. Checklist for Businesses: A one-page Business Recovery Checklist tailored to tourism SMEs. It acts as a self-help guide: Did you contact your insurance? Have you applied for XYZ grant? Have you communicated with your clients? Are you keeping receipts of all repair expenses? It also

lists contacts for support. This empowers small business owners to take systematic action and not miss any step that could help them recover faster.

All these templates are intended to be editable- replace examples with your destination's specifics. They are based on best practices and common disaster management forms, adapted for tourism context. Using them can significantly streamline the recovery coordination, as evidenced by their use in various manuals (for instance, the Caribbean Tourism Organization's manuals include forms and checklists that proved invaluable for hotel operators after hurricanes)

Real-World Case Studies of Rapid Tourism Recovery

To put the playbook's guidance in context, here are a few concise case studies from past disasters in tourism-dependent destinations. These illustrate challenges faced and successful strategies employed in the first 90 days of recovery:

Case Study 1: The Bahamas (2019)- Communication & Segmenting the Destination
When Hurricane Dorian ravaged the northern Bahamas (Abaco and Grand Bahama), the tourism-dependent nation was projected to lose a significant number of visitors. However, the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism responded swiftly with a nuanced communication strategy. Within a week, officials publicly stressed that while two islands were devastated, "14 of the country's most-visited islands are unaffected" and open, including the major tourism centers. Deputy Director General Tommy Thompson actively countered the blanket narrative of destruction, saying talk of total devastation "gives the wrong impression". The Ministry launched the #BahamasStrong campaign and education efforts to essentially "teach geography" to the public- ensuring travelers understood the Bahamas is an archipelago and most islands (such as Nassau/Paradise Island, Exuma, Eleuthera) were ready to receive guests. They balanced empathy for the hard-hit areas with encouragement to visit the others, even framing tourism as a way to generate revenue for reconstruction. This strategy paid off: many travelers adjusted plans rather than canceling, flying into Nassau or other islands. The immediate takeaway is the power of clear, targeted messaging in retaining tourism flows. By 90 days out, the Bahamas had welcomed thousands of visitors to its unaffected areas, softening the economic blow and providing funds and jobs to support the overall recovery. A WTTC task force noted, "Most of the islands are open for business and we urge people to make their travel decisions based on up-to-date and accurate information"- essentially echoing what the Bahamas' own campaign achieved.

Case Study 2: US Virgin Islands (2017)- Phased Reopening with Cruise Tourism
In September 2017, back-to-back Category 5 hurricanes (Irma and Maria) struck the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). The immediate aftermath saw power outages, infrastructural damage, and most hotels closed. The USVI's Department of Tourism quickly developed a phased recovery approach, recognizing that cruise tourism could rebound faster than overnight stays (given hotel damage). Indeed, on November 3, 2017- less than two months post-storm- the Seabourn Odyssey became the first leisure cruise ship to dock in St. Thomas's Charlotte Amalie harbor. That November, 25 cruise ships were scheduled to visit St. Thomas. The Tourism Commissioner, Beverly Nicholson-Doty, highlighted that bringing back cruise visitors was a key step to "boost economic activity, generate employment and stimulate recovery efforts". To make this happen, USVI authorities worked intensely with partners like FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers to restore port

functionality and prepare the destination for tourists in a short time. They also curated the visitor experience: since some sites were still under repair, tours were adjusted to focus on what was accessible (for example, shopping and scenic drives vs. closed attractions). The influx of cruise passengers provided immediate customers for local vendors, taxi drivers, and excursion operators, injecting cash into the economy. Over the next 90 days, as power was gradually restored (with most of St. Thomas re-electrified by December), several resorts also reopened and airlines restarted routes. The USVI case underscores phased sectoral recovery- leveraging one tourism segment (cruises) to lead the way while working on others- and the importance of external support (federal agencies) in quick infrastructure fixes.

Case Study 3: Fiji (Cyclone Winston 2016)- Rapid Infrastructure Repair and Public-Private Coordination

Cyclone Winston struck Fiji in February 2016 as one of the strongest cyclones ever in the Southern Hemisphere. It inflicted heavy damage on parts of Fiji, but notably, the main tourism areas (like Nadi, Denarau, Coral Coast) were largely spared from the worst. Capitalizing on that, Fiji's tourism officials and the private sector moved fast to restore operations. Nadi International Airport was reopened just 2 days after the cyclone, initially for relief and outbound passengers, and shortly thereafter for inbound tourists. Telecommunications companies restored phone and internet services astonishingly within 2 days in key areas. Many resorts reopened within weeks after conducting repairs, and Fiji's Tourism Ministry launched marketing emphasizing that most of Fiji remained beautiful and open. They also invited media to see that the reefs were still vibrant (studies later confirmed coral recovery was strong). By mid-2016, tourist arrival numbers were climbing and Fiji actually recorded nearly 800,000 arrivals by year's end- a record at the time, despite the cyclone's interruption. This case demonstrates the benefit of pre-disaster preparedness (critical infrastructure was built robustly enough to recover quickly), public-private coordination (power, telecom, airport, hotels all synchronized efforts to present a unified comeback), and a bit of luck in that key assets weren't hit- but still, the way Fiji communicated and rebounded can inspire SIDS elsewhere. A phrase from Fiji's recovery was "Bula Spirit cannot be broken"- leveraging cultural positivity as a tool to assure visitors.

Case Study 4: Dominica (Hurricane Maria 2017)- "Build Back Better" for Niche Tourism Dominica, a smaller Caribbean SIDS, was *devastated* by Hurricane Maria; practically all tourism infrastructure (and much of the island) was damaged. The initial 90 days were about humanitarian recovery, but Dominica also laid plans to "build back better" its tourism, focusing on sustainability. With significant help from donors (EU, etc.), they didn't just rebuild trails and lodges, they improved them- sturdier eco-lodges, better trail signage, and a new emphasis on climate resilience in tourism planning. Though recovery was slower than in more developed islands, the groundwork in those first months- securing funding, setting up a Climate-Resilient Execution Agency- meant that when tourism did return, Dominica branded itself as "The Nature Island: back greener than ever". By one year after, major tourist sites were open and two new upscale hotels launched, sending a message that not only was Dominica back, it was aiming higher. The key lesson here is that for very hard-hit destinations, the first 90 days might focus less on immediate tourist returns and more on planning and garnering support for a resilient recovery. Dominica used its crisis to pivot to a more sustainable model (including pushing renewable energy, etc.) which has since become a selling point to environmentally conscious travelers.

Each of these cases aligns with the playbook's recommendations: strong coordination, clear communication, phased priorities, external partnerships, and using the recovery to improve future resilience. They show that even in worst-case scenarios, a thoughtful approach in the early days leads to positive outcomes over time. As WTTC research highlighted, government policies and marketing strategies can significantly speed economic recovery post-disaster- these cases are proof on the ground.

Conclusion

Tourism destinations in SIDS face an immense challenge in the wake of hurricanes, cyclones, or typhoons- but with a proactive and well-organized recovery playbook, they can turn the tide from devastation to revival in a remarkably short time. This Rapid Recovery Playbook has outlined a comprehensive 0–90 day strategy, emphasizing that speed and coordination save livelihoods in tourism just as they save lives in the immediate disaster response. By following the step-by-step phases, focusing on critical sectors, and utilizing provided tools and templates, destination managers can systematically tackle the chaos a storm leaves behind and restore normalcy for visitors and locals alike.

A few final key takeaways and best practices to remember:

- **Put People First:** Ensure the safety and well-being of both tourists and local workforce at all times during recovery. A destination's compassion and hospitality in crisis will be remembered and can become part of its brand identity (in a positive way).
- **Information is Aid:** Just as food and water relief are critical, so is accurate information. Keep stakeholders informed, and the public narrative truthful but hopeful. Combat misinformation swiftly, as it can heavily influence traveler decisions.
- **Prioritize and Be Pragmatic:** You can't do everything at once. Use data from assessments to prioritize high-impact actions (restore power here, reopen that road first, etc.). Also, be pragmatic- open what you can, when you can. A 50% experience for a tourist is better than 0%. Many will understand if some aspects are limited, as long as they can still enjoy the core of the destination.
- **Collaborate Widely:** Break silos- tourism recovery needs hoteliers talking to utility engineers, needs local vendors linked with national planners, needs public and private sectors in lockstep. Use the momentum of recovery to strengthen these networks for the future.
- **Integrate Resilience:** As the saying goes, *don't just rebuild, build back better*. This means physical structures (stronger buildings, smarter land use) and systems (having a crisis management plan, insurance coverage, backup resources). The investments made in resilience during recovery pay off exponentially in the long run, reducing downtime in future events.
- **Celebrate Progress:** Morale can be as important as concrete and steel. Mark milestones, thank those involved, share successes. It motivates everyone to push harder. Tourism is fundamentally about experiences and emotions- show the positive emotions of your recovering destination through stories and events.

In closing, remember that every disaster is also an opportunity- a chance to rethink and enhance how tourism is developed. As seen in our case studies, destinations have emerged from disasters not only with repaired infrastructure but often with renewed purpose and innovation in their tourism offerings. By applying this playbook, SIDS can shorten the painful downturn, get their economies humming again, and shine a spotlight on their resilience which in itself becomes a compelling story for visitors.

The road to recovery is challenging, but it is navigable. With coordinated action, creative problem-solving, and community spirit, even the hardest-hit paradise can welcome back visitors, support its people, and continue sharing its beauty and culture with the world. This playbook is your roadmap for that journey- now it's in your hands to drive the recovery forward. Together, let's build a stronger, smarter, and more sustainable tourism destination, ready to face the future.

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