

# UNESCO 'World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme'

## *Chinese Pilot Programme (2015-2020)*

### 1. Introduction to the programme

#### 1.1 Background

The World Heritage Committee, in its 34<sup>th</sup> session in Brasilia in 2010, recognizing the increasing challenges and opportunities relating to tourism for World Heritage properties, '*requests the World Heritage Centre to convene a new and inclusive programme on World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism, with a steering group comprising interested States Parties and other relevant stakeholders, and also requests the World Heritage Centre to outline the objectives and approach to the implementation of this programme*'. In 2012, the World Heritage Committee adopted the World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme (hereafter referred to as 'WH+ST') in its 36<sup>th</sup> session (36 COM 5E), integrated the programme into *the Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention 2012-2022* (WHC-11/18.GA/11) and coordinated by the World Heritage Centre on the global scale.

In 2009, the international conference on 'Advancing Sustainable Tourism at Natural and Cultural Heritage Sites' was held in Mogao (hereafter referred to as 'Mogao Conference'). The policy orientation suggested in the Mogao conference, which defines the relationship between World Heritage and sustainable tourism is the working basis of WH+ST. The following three recommended approaches are outlined: i) a policy orientations statement defining the relationship between World Heritage and tourism; ii) proposed Principles to provide a best practice framework for stakeholders to protect and conserve heritage resources in the context of tourism; iii) recommended minimal changes to the Operational Guidelines to ensure the appropriate consideration of tourism issues in nomination and state of conservation process.

China, as the representative of the Asia-Pacific region and one of the six UNESCO Electoral Groups member (Germany represents Europe and North America, Slovenia represents East Europe, Argentina represents South America, Tanzania represents Africa, and Lebanon represents the Arab region), played an important role in the WH+ST. The World Heritage Centre called an Expert Meeting in Switzerland in October 2011 and drafted the WH+ST Programme. The draft Programme was sent to States Parties for consultation in January 2012, and the programme was finalized in May. The document was submitted and adopted in the 36<sup>th</sup> session of World Heritage Committee. In March 2014, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris called a meeting of the steering group again to advance the implementation of the WH+ST programme. Professor HAN Feng from Tongji University, appointed by UNESCO, participated in the whole process.

The following set out the five objectives of the WH+ST programme:

A. Integrate sustainable tourism principles into the mechanisms of the World

Heritage Convention.

B. Strengthen the enabling environment by advocating policies, strategies, frameworks and tools that support sustainable tourism as an important vehicle for protecting and managing cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.

C. promote broad stakeholder engagement in the planning, development and management of sustainable tourism that follows a destination approach to heritage conservation and focuses on empowering local communities.

D. Provide World Heritage stakeholders with the capacity and the tools to manage tourism efficiently, responsibly and sustainably based on the local context and needs.

E. Promote quality tourism products and services that encourage responsible behavior among all stakeholders and foster understanding and appreciation of the concept of Outstanding Universal Value and protection of World Heritage.

From the current situation of heritage protection and tourism development in China, the objectives of WH+ST correspond to the difficulties that China faces and are the exact topics that China needs to explore.

WH+ST started establishing the pilot programme in the Nordic-Baltic region and Africa, and obtained good results in the preliminary phase. From 2012 to 2014, led by the Nordic World Heritage Foundation, Category II Centre under the auspices of UNESCO, and based on the overarching goal of WH+ST, fifteen pilot studies of world heritage were completed in the Nordic-Baltic region. The core outcome of the studies is the 'World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Analysis Framework' which includes a list of impacts that influence the sustainability of tourism. The list covers the important topics of organization management, monitoring, local community, environmental issues, and visitor management etc.

In November 2014, WH+ST started a subproject of Capacity Development of Sustainable Tourism in Africa (here after referred to as Africa project). Africa project was supported and hosted by the African Heritage Foundation, and conducted researches in four World Heritage Sites in Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia. Each of them organized workshops three times to guide the local use of the *'World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Toolkit'* to establish the strategies of sustainable tourism and focus on how to promote broad stakeholder engagement in the development and management of sustainable tourism.

In February 2015, Mr. Peter Debrine, project manager of WH+ST from the World Heritage Centre, visited the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP), a Category II Centre under the auspices of UNESCO. He proposed WHITRAP to initiate a pilot programme in the Asia-Pacific region which includes China. Based on the consensus of the discussion between WHITRAP and WHC, WHITRAP will promote the implementation of WH+ST firstly in China,

cooperating with the World Tourism Organization, the UNESCO Beijing Office, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People's Republic of China, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, the China National Tourism Administration, local government of heritage sites, and relevant universities and academic institutions.

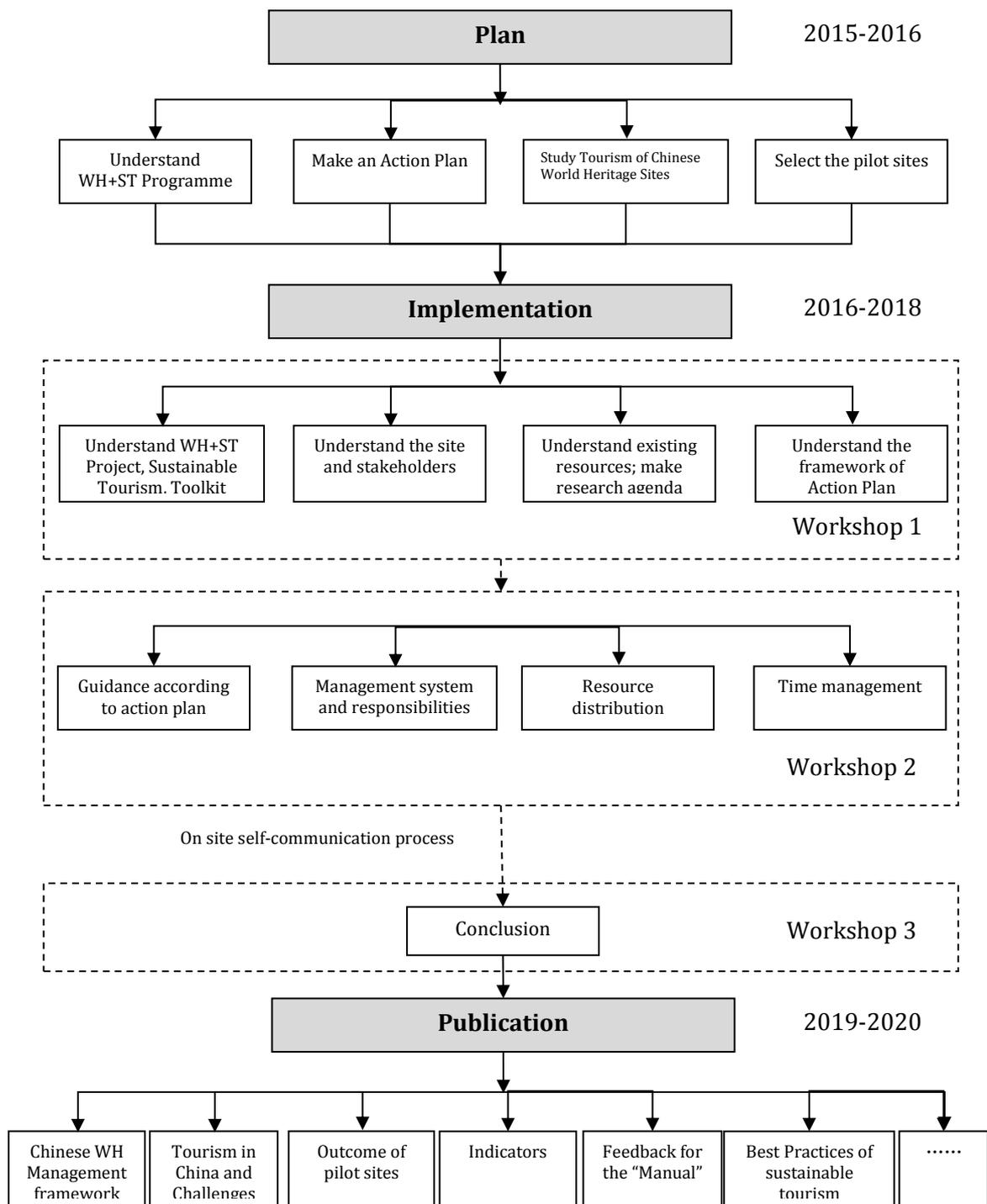
## **1.2 Objectives and expected outcomes**

In line with the Five Objectives, the Chinese Pilot Programme expects to accomplish the following tasks on the sites by applying the '*World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Toolkit*' and the '*World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Analysis Framework*':

- 1). To distribute and promote the WH+ST Programme so as to enhance the implementation of its Action Plan;**
- 2). To enhance the implementation of the WH+ST Programme through capacity building, focusing on the emphasis of Outstanding Universal Value;**
- 3). To identify the main issues and their solutions related to sustainable tourism so as to contribute to the application in Chinese World Heritage properties based on pilot studies and comparative research.**

## 2. Project Implementation

The Chinese Pilot Programme started in 2015, **planning to select** 2-3 World Heritage sites and identify their research orientations in 2016; **Put in practice** through training and research in World Heritage site or sites on the “Tentative List” from 2016 to 2018, solving the realistic problem of properties in regards to sustainable tourism; **Publishing research results** and the best practices in sustainable tourism at World Heritage sites in China from 2019 to 2020.



**Figure 1. Programme process**

## 2.1 Implementation

The Chinese Pilot Programme is divided into two steps. Firstly, targeting different audience, WHITRAP will organize the **Training on World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism** (hereafter ‘Training’) annually, mainly for professional practitioners and decision-makers of World Heritage sites. The training strengthens the communication between professionals by lectures, case studies, group work and field study, which will lead the selection of Chinese pilot sites. As long as the training receives positive feedback, it will open to the Asia-Pacific region. Secondly is **On-site workshop and Research**. After the pilot sites and research orientations have been confirmed, project management teams will give guidance and cooperate with local practitioners to undertake 1.5 - 2 year research. During this period, WHITRAP will host at least 3 on-site workshops for local site managers and stakeholders. It aims to identify project objectives, working mechanism and responsibilities; to give professional guidance; to identify appropriate monitoring indicators; to control the timeline and outcomes etc.

## 2.2 Publication

The outcome of the Chinese Pilot Programme is expected to be published, including specific study subjects, project implementation and best practices of World Heritage in China and all over the world. It aims to further share and explore the developing path of sustainable tourism.

The project management teams will develop the themes and subjects out of the different pilot sites implemented from 2015 to 2020. The whole publication process will be dominated by a hired chief editor for time management and content.

## **Appendix 1: The selection standard for pilot sites**

### **1) World Heritage Committee's request and local enthusiasm.**

Due to the whole project implementing from 2016 to 2017, WHITRAP will take into account the recommendations of newly inscribed World Heritage Sites and decisions from the State of Conservation reports in the aspects of sustainable tourism or development. For instance, Honghe Hani Terraced Fields Cultural Landscape (Decision 37, COM8B.24, Article 5), "*Requests the State Party to submit a report to the World Heritage Centre outlining progress made in the implementation of the abovementioned recommendations to be examined by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015, given the considerable pressure that the rice terraces could face from increased tourism;*" World Heritage sites are responsible for reporting progress to the World Heritage Committee, to facilitate the implementation of the pilot project in case the local authority is proactively seeking professional assistance.

### **2) Diversity**

Considering the research and project itself, the pilot sites should be chosen based on the diversity. For example: The World Heritage is defined as cultural, natural and mixed Heritage in line with the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, while specific types of cultural properties are cultural landscapes, historic towns and town centers, heritage canals and heritage routes etc. On the other hand, in the *UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Toolkit (the Toolkit)* the cooperation and the mutually beneficial relationship within heritage sites and stakeholders, such as residents, business people and managers, have been highlighted several times. The "living heritage" should also be considered as a priority on the list of pilot sites.

### **3) Access to the local resources**

The pilot project will not be successful without the full and active involvement of local authorities and stakeholders, as well as the access to other resources.

### **4) Fitness to research orientation**

The pilot project will focus on 10 basic points in the *Toolkit*: understanding, strategy, governance, engagement, communication, infrastructure, value, behavior, investments and monitoring. Several out of 10 points should be addressed according to the need and the allocation of resources and time.