

## Kawil Tours: Reconnecting Isla Culion to the world through tourism

Culion, Philippines  
Jesus Tibi Jr



Year Founded:  
2011

**Organization type:**

hybrid

Project Stage:

Scaling

**Budget:**

\$100,000 - \$250,000

Website:

<http://www.kawiltours.com>

**Twitter:**

<http://twitter.com/KawilTours>

**Facebook:**

<http://www.facebook.com/KawilTours>

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### Project Summary

#### Elevator Pitch

**Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.**

We never thought that a long-forgotten and isolated island can be a travel destination. When we started Kawil Tours, the challenges were overwhelming. But the 100-year isolation proved that we had 100 years-worth of inspiration to reconnect this former leper colony to the world through tourism.

**WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"**

What if a former world's largest leper colony is your next travel destination that will deeply connect with you?

#### About Project

**Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?**

Culion, a former leper colony, is located in a group of islands known for diving, snorkeling, island hopping and various tourism activities. Kawil Tours, for almost 3 years now, has been actively leading the efforts in promoting the island as a travel destination. Despite all the marketing efforts, tourism activities in Culion is still dull. This is amid the dense volume of tourists visiting the area through a more popular neighboring island.

**Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!**

Promoting Culion from or within Culion has been proven to be unsustainable and isn't enough to promote further development. The solution is to market Culion from the 'outside'. This will be done by setting up tourism desks in select countries that have a connection to Culion - countries with a significant number of citizens that already traveled to Culion and countries with cultural or historical links to the island. This way, we do not compete for travelers who come to the area who, most likely, have travel plans already. Instead, we market Culion to the right people or market, who will plan to visit Culion because they do wish or are looking forward to visit the island.

Impact: How does it Work

**Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.**

Bringing in tourists result to a chain of positive results for Kawil Tours and Culion in general. Tour operations are guided by the principle of inclusive development where all of Kawil Tours' stakeholders reap benefits. When travelers visit Culion, a small school-owned hotel benefits from it and the hotel's revenues proceed directly to the school that supports financially-challenged and marginalized communities. Families are hired to prepare meals for the travelers or during trips. Tour guides and boatmen also earn. Local craftsmen also earn through sales of their souvenir items. During voluntourism trips, communities also benefit from relevant activities that are conducted by the 'voluntourists'.

**Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.**

During Kawil Tours' 1st 2 years of operations, the total revenues reached around PHP700,000. At least 70% of this or PHP490,000 directly flowed into the economy of Culion. This is a very remarkable figure particularly for a community where employment opportunities are very limited and families live on an average monthly income of PHP4,000 or USD91. This was achieved despite the dull volume of travelers - average of one group of 6 travelers in 2 months. On the 3rd/current year, revenues increased significantly due to the presence of groups from foreign schools. Qualitatively, the community slowly moves forward from the painful past and the stigma it brought due to the appreciation and understanding expressed by those who already traveled to Culion. Being isolated for almost a century, bringing in travelers help the community slowly embrace their identity and place in history.

**Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?**

Kawil Tours aims to expand its tour operations outside the island's town center particularly in far-flung areas where tourism activities could also be developed, thus benefiting the communities in these areas too. An Organizational Development plan will also be implemented within the year to make sure that the organization continues to serve as a model of empowerment for the community and resources will be utilized sustainably. This will be designed in a way that could be replicated by other local organizations that also aim to create impact in their respective fields.

Sustainability

**Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution's plan to ensure financial sustainability?**

Due to the organization's limited financial resources, a grant will be needed for the solution to be in place. The grant will work as an investment. Once implemented, it will result to an increase in revenues for the business. A portion of the income earned will be allocated for the tourism desks to ensure financial sustainability and operational stability. These desks will also be utilized to network w/ other organizations that could also help.

**Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?**

There are no other organizations in or outside Culion that address the problem raised. However, in terms of tour operations, there are numerous tour operators based in a neighboring island that pose as competitors of Kawil Tours. They are more financially-able and can compete using red ocean strategies. But the services they offer doesn't focus or include Culion. The project is unique since we are promoting a new and unique destination that does not necessarily mean competing for the same share of market and the presence of Kawil Tours signify partnerships instead of competition.

Team

**Founding Story**

Back in 2009, I joined a Jesuit priest & former professor in his mission in Culion. I met there fellow volunteers and locals who share the same passion for the community. After our volunteering stint, there was a great desire to continue our works through a more sustainable way. After touring around some friends who visited Culion, we realized that we can actually start a tour operating enterprise. Our Culion co-founders are excellent divers and teeming with genuine hospitality, and us (Manila-based people) could serve as the marketing team. And the bonus - there are no tour operators in Culion yet. We started with zero-capital and only relied from 'downpayments'. Since then, Kawil Tours evolved into a full-fledged business organization.

**Team**

Our team is composed of 4 Co-Founders who compose the Management Team. Our General Manager is a Culion-local who is a trained tour guide and licensed diver. Another Culion-local who finished Hotel & Restaurant Management in Manila manages hospitality services. The remaining 2 are from Manila who are entrepreneurs and possess the necessary business acumen to help guide the business. We also plan to expand the management team as we incorporate.

About You

**Organization:**

Good IDEA Co.

About You

**First Name**

Jun

**Last Name**

Tibi

**Email**

[jun0721\\_tibs@yahoo.com](mailto:jun0721_tibs@yahoo.com)

**Twitter URL****Facebook URL**

<https://www.facebook.com/juntibi>

**About Your Project****Organization Name**

Good IDEA Co.

**How long has your organization been operating?****Project****Organization Country**

, PLW, Culion

**Country where this project is creating social impact**

, PLW, Culion

**What awards or honors has the project received?****Funding: How is your project financial supported?**

Friends and family, Individuals, NGOs, Customers.

**Supplemental****Sector**

Inclusive Business.

**Audience: Who have you identified as your customer/recipient groups and do these groups value your solution for different reasons? How do you engage different customer/recipient groups to deliver your solution?**

Our customers are primarily travelers who are after the experience of traveling instead of the usual tour activities. Specifically, we saw that Europeans are more inclined to book trips with us as they appreciate history and culture more than usual travelers looking for beaches and nightlife. Foreign students are also considered primary customers since they appreciate activities that expose or connects them with local communities.

**Scaling the solution: How would the prize money and publicity help you to achieve your objectives over the next two years?**

The prize money will help us implement our solution which will help us reach the right market and increase the profitability of the organization. An increased profitability will lead to more opportunities such as networking and new partnerships, for the local community and economy that directly benefits from our operations.

On the other hand, publicity will be very helpful in re-connecting Culion to the world which serves as the core of our project. This will introduce Culion to a wider range of people and organizations.

**Experience: Please provide examples of any previous entrepreneurial initiatives you have pioneered**

Prior to Kawil Tours, I also initiated the establishment of a consumer cooperative in Culion together with other mission partners. The coop served as an economic catalyst and indirect price stabilizer in the market. This year, I co-founded a design and communications company that works with NGOs, start-ups, and other organizations that need professional design & communication services but restricted by financial resources.

**Are you are eligible to attend the Accelerator event in Cambridge and subsequent events in London, UK in January, 2015?**

yes

**Will you require a visa to enter the UK?**

yes

**Are you are a current Unilever employee?**

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