

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM – ELIMINATING POVERTY

ST-EP PROGRAMME

BACKGROUND



In recent years the rate of tourism growth in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) has been significantly greater than that achieved by developed countries. In 2007, international tourism receipts in developing countries grew to 30% of the total and, in many of them, tourism is already one of the principal or the main source of foreign exchange earnings.

However, it should be acknowledged that, in many cases, the poor segments of the population in the LDCs receiving tourists do not fully benefit from the economic impacts of tourism. To reach its full potential, tourism should be guided by coherent policies.

Taking into account these trends, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) believes that tourism – which has become one of the most dynamic economic sectors – is in a very good position to contribute to eradicate poverty by developing appropriate strategies in cooperation with all major groups, indigenous and local communities. The potential for tourism to play a significant role in the alleviation of poverty is increasingly recognised by international bodies and national governments. Tourism is better placed than many other sectors in relating to the needs of the poor for a number of reasons:

- Tourism is consumed at the point of production
- It is a more diverse industry than many others
- Tourism is labour intensive, which is particularly important in tackling poverty
- It creates opportunities for many small and micro entrepreneurs
- Tourism contributes to a geographical spread of employment
- It employs more women and young people than most other industries
- It provides not only material benefits for the poor but also cultural pride and awareness of natural environment



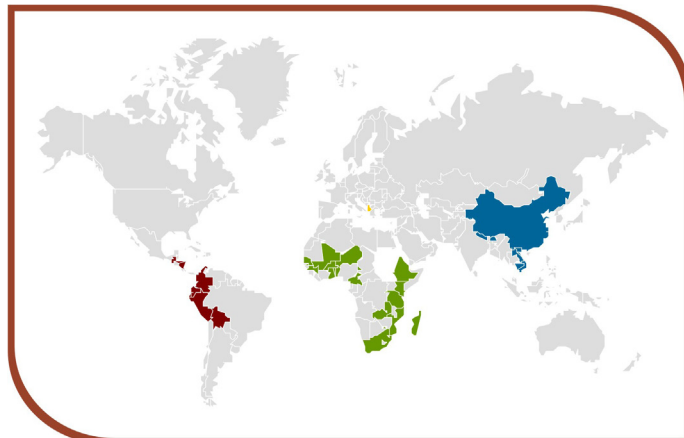
A workshop on eco-tourism conducted within the framework of a ST-EP project in Mali

- The infrastructure required by tourism, such as transport and communications, water supply and sanitation, public security, can also benefit poor communities
- Due to their authentic culture, art, music, natural landscapes, wildlife and climate among others, many of the poorest countries are actually at a comparative advantage over developed countries in the tourism sector

Under the title of ST-EP (Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty), this programme focuses on enhancing UNWTO's longstanding work to encourage sustainable tourism – social, economic, and ecological – with activities that specifically alleviate poverty, delivering development and jobs to people living on less than a dollar a day. With this commitment, the ST-EP Programme presents in the publication "Tourism and Poverty Alleviation: Recommendations for Action" seven different mechanisms through which the poor can benefit from tourism.



Micro-tourism entrepreneurs during one of the training sessions of the project in Ecuador



ST-EP projects world-wide

OBJECTIVES

- To identify, seek funds and implement a wide range of projects aimed at poverty reduction through tourism
- To develop practical tools and strategies aimed at promoting sustainable development to reduce poverty

ACTIVITIES

Through the ST-EP Programme, UNWTO has put in place a framework for poverty alleviation through tourism, which extends to a wide range of activities, including:

- Capacity building seminars: since 2004, seminars on Tourism and Poverty Alleviation are carried out aimed at providing a general orientation on the relation between tourism and poverty alleviation
- Research and publications: four reports related to tourism and poverty alleviation have been published. A new “Manual on Enhancing Pro-poor Benefits in Tourism Destinations and Value Chains” is being prepared
- Dissemination of information and awareness-raising
- ST-EP projects: some 75 ST-EP projects are currently being implemented by UNWTO thanks to the financial contributions provided by several donors (see “Partners” list). An additional 127 project proposals – identified through UNWTO field missions, technically formulated and justified, and formally approved by the corresponding governments – are awaiting for funds

PARTNERS

- ST-EP Foundation
- Government of Republic of Korea
- SNV Netherlands Development Organization
- Government of Italy
- Government of France
- Government of Macao S.A.R. (China), Flemish Government and Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)
- Partners at Project Level

FURTHER INFORMATION

- UNWTO – Department of Sustainable Development of Tourism
<http://www.unwto.org/sdt>
- ST-EP website
<http://www.unwto.org/step/index.php>

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