Rationale

The Usambara Mountains are located in Lushoto District, Tanga Region, in Tanzania and have a population of about 500,000 people. The destination is strategically located between the main National Parks in Tanzania (Kilimanjaro, Serengeti) and the Tanzanian coast. Tourism is one of the sectors that can help diversify the local economy and stimulate initiatives to stop soil erosion, in particular by supporting nature conservation and tree-planting initiatives.

In recent years, tourism growth in the Usambara Mountains has faltered a bit, with more tourists flying between the National Parks and the Coast and bypassing the overland route through these mountains. Support for tourism promotion and further product diversification will help to turn this trend around and motivate more tour operators and tourists to visit the destination. In this way, tourism can continue contributing to local economic development and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage.

Boosting Sustainable Tourism development in the Usambara Mountains

WHERE: Usambara Mountains, Lushoto District, Tanga Region, Tanzania

BENEFICIARIES: The direct beneficiaries are the local residents involved in organizing excursions and providing other services for tourists. The indirect beneficiaries will be local residents in the Usambara Mountains working in the tourism sector, i.e. local residents who are employed in tourism enterprises or who are selling goods and services to tourists and tourism enterprises, and who will have good opportunities to obtain new or more stable employment and gain more income from an increase in visits as a result of the new marketing activities.

PARTNERS: Friends of Usambara Society (FoU), Tanzania Tourist Board (TTB)

DURATION: 12 months

TOTAL COST: EUR 150,000

SDGs:
Background

The local NGO Friends of Usambara Society (FoU) is a grassroots organization established in 1997 to support sustainable tourism development in the Usambara Mountains and help protect the area's natural and cultural heritage, while also involving local guides and community-based tourism enterprises. FoU organizes tourist excursions in these mountains and allocates part of the income generated to community development initiatives for conservation of the natural and cultural heritage. With the dedicated assistance of several local volunteers FoU has supported the construction of primary school classrooms in disadvantaged communities and set up a tree nursery making over half a million tree seedlings available to local schools and families. Over the years, FoU has trained about 100 local guides, enabling them to generate income by organizing excursions in the Usambara Mountains. Continuation of the work of FoU is very important to protect and promote the beauty and biodiversity of the region. The project will help promote local tourism initiatives that are already supported by FoU and diversify or develop new tourism products and services by providing training to local guides, entrepreneurs, and community-based organizations.

Overall Objective

Strengthen the capacity of local entrepreneurs and communities in the Usambara Mountains to further enhance and diversify community-based sustainable tourism initiatives in the area with a view to enhancing tourism's contribution to local economic development and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

Objectives

• Deliver capacity-building activities to new and existing local entrepreneurs and communities in the Usambara Mountains, focusing on product development and diversification, customer care, and promotion, specifically targeting youth and women and working with groups to use part of the tourism-generated income for community development and environmental protection initiatives.

• Strengthen FoU’s marketing activities to help increase visitor numbers for all local tourism initiatives in the Usambara Mountains, making optimal use of the new e-marketing tools.

Main Activities

Initially, new and ongoing sustainable tourism initiatives that can be developed or strengthened in the Usambara Mountains and provide good opportunities for local residents to gain additional income from tourism will be identified in collaboration with local tourism operators and with support from the project. Next, the project will carry out a training-needs assessment for the improvement of tourism products and services and on that basis prepare a capacity-building plan and organize training sessions for local residents on topics such as tour guiding, customer care, and housekeeping.

The project will support FoU in preparing a marketing action plan for the Usambara Mountains. Consultations will be held with the representatives of local sustainable tourism initiatives and local tourism operators, including a stakeholder workshop, to brainstorm about efficient marketing activities. Based on the marketing action plan, new marketing materials, including brochures and articles for newspapers and travel magazines will be prepared. Familiarization tours will be organized for Tanzanian tour operators to the Usambara Mountains to support the participation of new and existing sustainable tourism initiatives in regional tourism trade fairs, such as the Karibu Travel market-Tanzania, Kili Fair, and Swahili International Tourism Expo. Finally, a local e-marketing specialist will be recruited to help FoU actively promote the Usambara Mountains and the new and existing sustainable tourism initiatives, making use of social media and other e-marketing tools and to advise local tourism initiatives on how to promote their products through the social media.
**Project Outputs**

- Training for community members on existing sustainable tourism initiatives (such as local excursions and home-stays), product development and diversification, customer care, and promotional tools;

- New sustainable tourism initiatives from local entrepreneurs/community groups; and

- A marketing action plan for the Usambara Mountains

**Outcomes**

- Establishment of new local sustainable tourism initiatives and improved performance for existing local tourism initiatives; and

- Development of promotional materials and e-marketing activities, facilitating growth in visitor arrivals for sustainable tourism initiatives in the Usambara Mountains.

**Impacts**

The project will bring about enhanced local economic impact from tourism, resulting in growth of local employment and new income-generating opportunities. As an indirect impact, an increase in visitor numbers will enable FoU to generate additional income to support community development and biodiversity conservation activities in the region, in particular for the improvement of primary schools and the planting of trees.

For more information, contact UNWTO: Institutional Relations and Partnerships at SDG17@unwto.org

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Tourism is a powerful vehicle to promote and reach the milestones of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development given that it is one of the most important sectors in the global economy and a main job and wealth creator for many countries. Tourism is now the third largest export category in the world, behind fuels and chemicals, and ahead of food and automotive. It provides 1 in 10 jobs and contributes to more than 10% of global GDP. In 2018 alone, international tourist arrivals amounted to 1.4 billion and generated US$ 1.5 trillion, while domestic tourism generated a further US$ 3.88 trillion.

But the sector doesn’t just play a role in economic growth; it is most remarkable for its potential to improve the quality of people’s lives. Truly sustainable tourism can act as a catalyst for environmental protection, champion diverse cultural heritage, and contribute to peace-building in the world. In all these areas, tourism offers great potential to advance sustainable development, and thus contributes – directly and indirectly – to the achievement of all 17 SDGs.

The World Tourism Organization has been providing technical assistance in countries across the globe for more than 40 years, supported by a wide range of donors, in partnerships with other IOs, Civil Society and the private sector. It has knowledge and expertise in the development of a sustainable, responsible and accessible tourism sector that contributes to a better world.

To scale up the efforts to unlock aid flows for tourism in the new 2030 aid architecture, UNWTO has developed a co-creation space in the T4SDGs platform for sharing developing countries’ needs.

Please visit www.Tourism4SDGs.org