Project Brief

Reducing Poverty and Building Peace through Sustainable Tourism around Lake Chad: A Cross-border Community Pilot Program

Rationale

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 accounts for 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. International tourist arrivals in Africa increased an estimated 7% in 2018. Results were driven by the strong recovery in North Africa (+10%) and solid growth in many destinations in Sub-Saharan Africa (+6%). The region welcomed a total of 67 million international tourists in 2018 (5% of the world’s total). And tourism’s importance will continue to grow – from 1.4 billion international arrivals in 2018 to 1.8 billion by 2030.

But the sector doesn’t just play a role in economic growth; it is most remarkable for its potential to improve 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 contribute – directly and indirectly – to the achievement of all 17 SDGs.

The national governments of the Lake Chad basin, which covers parts of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and the Central African Republic, are committed to addressing the current issues of poverty, desertification, climate change, terrorism (Boko Haram), and migration in the region through sustainable tourism.

WHERE: Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Niger, Nigeria, (Lake Chad Region)

BENEFICIARIES: Local communities especially women and youth, public officials and the tourism sector in the countries involved.

PARTNERS: UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, UNV, Lac Chad Commission, UNDSS

DURATION: 24 months

TOTAL COST: EUR 550,000

SDGs:
Lake Chad used to be the main source of livelihood for communities in the Chad Basin but since 1963 has shrunk by 90%, from 25,000 km² to less than 1500 km² in 2001. This situation has led to a deterioration in socio-economic activities leading to internally displaced persons, severely adverse impact on natural resources, and conflict. Concrete action to save the lake and the population is urgently needed.

In this regard, tourism is a key part of the economic agendas of these countries and has proven itself a short- and medium-term source of job opportunities for youth and low-income groups, a building block for peace and dialog, and a tool for environmental sustainability.

**Background**

Lake Chad is the 4th largest lake in Africa, with surroundings rich in biodiversity, including 1200 species of fish, 372 species of bird, including migratory birds, numerous mammals and reptiles. It is located in the Sahel, on the edge of the Sahara, covering 2500 km². The lake is central to the economic, cultural, and social development of the Chad Basin, with an estimated population of nearly 35 million, and the threat of its disappearance is more than alarming. In view of the above, a project proposed by the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure of Cameroon for a “Cross-border Community pilot program to combat poverty by promoting sustainable tourism in the countries bordering Lake Chad” was submitted to UNWTO in 2018 to help address those challenges and improve the livelihoods of the communities living in that region. It will also contribute significantly to the implementation of the Regional Stabilisation Strategy and the Inter-Basin Water Transfer Project, led by the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

In line with a UNWTO priority area – Protecting Our Heritage: social, cultural, environmental sustainability – and the UNWTO Agenda for Africa, this project presents a timely opportunity to reduce poverty in the region. As a catalyst for positive change, tourism can help to re-stabilize the region and offer better livelihoods for its people.

**Overall Objective**

The main objective of this project is to eliminate poverty and build peace in the Lake Chad region through sustainable community-based tourism.

**Objectives**

**Objective 1:** Develop and implement a strategy for community-based tourism in the region around Lake Chad.

**Objective 2:** Build the capacity of local communities to preserve and enhance the rich natural and cultural heritage of project / program sites and participate in the development of tourism as a means of diversifying the local economy in selected tourism sites;

**Objective 3:** Strengthening the socio-economic development of communities around the targeted tourist sites, in particular by promoting fish, handicrafts, cultural and artistic productions;

**Objective 4:** Fostering the development of cross-border institutional partnerships to ensure integrated and coordinated development of sustainable tourism.

**Objective 5:** Building the capacity of local communities, especially for women and youth, through practical workshops aimed at preserving and enhancing the rich natural and cultural heritage of project / program sites.

**Objective 6:** Engage the support of UN and other volunteers for activities related to peace and development in the local communities
Main Activities

• A detailed review of the current status of tourism development in the Lake Chad area, including institutional issues; product development; land and water management issues; community involvement; access; and other issues that impact on tourism development

• Development of tourism products along tourist sites selected by the countries

• Development of joint marketing and promotion activities for Lake Chad

• Preparation of a Community-Based Tourism Development Plan through a participatory and consultative process

• A series of workshops for local communities to develop skills in tourism development and management based on the recommendations of the Community-Based Tourism Development Plan

• A series of workshops for government institutions on coordinating and integrating development of cross-border and community-based tourism, also based on the recommendations of the Community-Based Tourism Development Plan; consideration given to creating a “body” to coordinate such activities.
  
  • Organize workshops with stakeholders in the beneficiary countries
  • Organize awareness-raising training programmes and capacity-building activities for the local community on biodiversity preservation, handicraft production, and similar activities linked to tourism, especially for women and youth, in order to:

• Preserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) of the sites

• Promote sustainable tourism development

• Develop and promote local tourism handicraft products

• Create jobs along the value chain

• Organize follow-up seminars on lesson learned and information sharing with stakeholders

• Other activities as needed

Project Outputs

• Sustainable community-based tourism strategy developed

• 100 public officials and private entrepreneurs in participating countries informed and consulted

• 200 local community members, especially women and youth, informed, trained, and empowered

• 5 workshops/capacity-building programmes undertaken

• Activity report prepared for assessment and follow-up action

Outcomes

• Contribution to peace building and dialog through sustainable tourism

• Preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage

• Reduced migration of women and youth
Impacts

- Poverty reduced and jobs created in local communities
- Dialog through sustainable tourism promoted among local government, civil society, and local communities
- Peace building through sustainable tourism
- Reduced involvement of youth in terrorist attacks through involvement and empowerment in the tourism sector
- Contribution to stabilization of the Lake Chad Basin in the five beneficiary countries.

For more information, contact UNWTO: Institutional Relations and Partnerships at sdg17@unwto.org

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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