



TOURISM BENEFITS AYAMARA PEOPLE AT THE WORLD'S HIGHEST LAKE IN BOLIVIA



PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The Bolivia community-based tourism (CBT) pilot project ran from 2003 to 2007. The aim was to create a sustainable environment that would allow the 6,000 local inhabitants of Copacabana to participate in the tourism value chain, as a means to achieve poverty reduction.

The project was part of ITC's Export-led Poverty Reduction Programme (EPRP) which aimed at helping poor community producers by enhancing their entrepreneurial capacity and to understand and meet market requirements. EPRP furthermore created and enhanced sustainable and fair market linkages between local producers and tourism markets.

THE CONTEXT

Nested in Bolivia's high plateau, Copacabana offers a commanding view of lake Titicaca, as well as of the snow-capped Andean mountain range. Despite Copacabana's outstanding scenery, international tourist flows have not really benefited the local Aymara people. For most Aymara, these tourists flows through their land left little behind. As a response to this dilemma, ITC supported the creation of the Suma Jakañani Foundation (or Foundation for Copacabana's Sustainable Development), whose mission was to integrate the local population into the tourism value chain of products and services.

ACTIVITIES

Practical tourism training (technical and managerial skills training) was organized in collaboration with students from the Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne (LHS) to the local population. In addition, the Suma Jakañani Foundation also provided capacity building seminars to locals, through workshops on traditional techniques for handmade textiles and colouring of textile fibres with natural plants from the region. Other activities of the Foundation included waste collection and recycling, as well as English language classes.

A mobile tourism office supported by the project and operational since the end of 2006, has had a positive impact on the promotion of local attractions. In addition, it has helped increase the average stay of tourists in Copacabana, which in turn increased the tourism-related income of the local community.

Additional project activities included the development of a website which provided information on local tourist attractions. Statistics reveal that the website was visited more than 2,000 times per month, making it one of the most visited websites providing tourist information for Copacabana and the Titicaca Lake surrounding areas.

An important follow-up activity of the project was the elaboration of an integrated tourism development plan for the village of Chissi, adjunct to Titicaca Lake, with the aim of assisting the local community to improve housing conditions in order to enable locals to offer home stay tourism. This activity was implemented in coordination with local and national authorities as well as all the main project stakeholders.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The project has been important in creating and strengthening the network of tourist actors in Copacabana. For instance, the project supported the participation of local tourism stakeholders in the main regional tourist fairs increasing their knowledge of client needs and requirements, and provided them with examples of how similar neighbouring areas are trying to increase their revenues from tourism. Furthermore, the local Foundation, supported by the pilot project, has gained knowledge from visits to nearby towns and villages which are more advanced in the implementation of this type of inclusive tourism initiatives.

The conservation of traditional ancestral designs for the elaboration of different types of handicraft, including adaptation to tourist demands in the region has also been achieved by the project. Additional activities to raise awareness have included animal care, collection of wood, cleaning and treatment of textiles, and new textile techniques respecting traditional patterns.

IMPACT ON THE POOR

The resulting impact on the poor from this project was the creation of awareness of the potential income of tourism. Indeed, the project allowed the local inhabitants of Copacabana to use tourism as an engine for poverty reduction. The Suma Jakañani Foundation's work integrated disadvantaged sectors of the population into the local tourism value chain of products and services.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INTERVENTION

The changes introduced by this project continued after ITC intervention by involving from the beginning responsible players at local level and assisting them in this endeavour.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT



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