

PROJECT PROPOSAL: INCLUSIVE TOURISM & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION IN TAJIKISTAN



PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The proposed project aims at (1) upgrading the Pamir tourism association PECTA into a Destination Management Organization (DMO), strengthening especially the region's branding and marketing, (2) enhancing the quality and availability of products and services supplied to tourists with a strong poverty reduction potential (3) creating/strengthening backward linkages with tourism related supply chains and forward linkages with out-bound international tour operators.

THE CONTEXT

Tajikistan is not yet considered a tourist destination; in 2013 207,911 foreign citizens officially crossed the Tajik borders as tourists. The country is poorly served by international flight connections and visas to visit certain regions are difficult to obtain.

Nevertheless the tourism industry in particular in the Pamirs is developing fast. In this mountainous region, situated in the heart of Central Asia (also called the "roof of the world"), key tourist activities include touring and trekking but cultural tourism has as well high potential for growth. There are a number of interesting cultural sites for tourists and cultural heritage is significant and diverse. Tourists can visit communities leading traditional lifestyles and producing typical handicrafts and food and assist to regional festivals. In the Pamirs, the majority of buyers of handicraft products are tourists. It is therefore important to strengthen the links between these two economic sectors in order to provide benefits to both.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

In the framework of the SECO funded project "Tajikistan: Strengthening export competitiveness of SMEs in the textile and clothing sector and enhancing trade support institutional capacities" ITC conducted an opportunity study to determine the feasibility of establishing a DMO in two tourist regions of Tajikistan (the Zarafshan Valley and the Pamir Region) and identify trade-related technical assistance (TRTA) needs and priorities in the tourism sector, including the generation of pro-poor income and employment creation. The findings of the opportunity study were presented and further elaborated by Tajik tourism stakeholders at a roundtable in Dushanbe in May 2014.

The project proposal is articulated around three outputs: **(1) Enhancing Pamir Destination Management:** The main beneficiary is the Pamir tourism association PECTA, whose governance and lobbying capacity at state and central government level will be improved. PECTA's capacities will be enhanced in order to offer better services to members and to position the organization as DMO in the region. Linkages between PECTA and national tourism associations will be enforced. The project will put in place a branding/marketing strategy in order to build a visual "corporate" Pamir Identity. **(2) Enhancing the quality and availability of products and services supplied to tourists with a strong poverty reduction potential:** Upgrading of tourist facilities is considered fundamental to meet tourists' expectations. Awareness about the need to improve services offered (hotels, home-stays, restaurants etc.) will be raised at SMEs and TSIs level and procedures for certification will be facilitated. Assessment of food-products and handicraft sectors' value chains will be undertaken. For food products, the project will work to facilitate enforcement of quality and hygiene standards; feasibility of formalization of suppliers' network to strengthen the value-chain will be assessed. Quality of craft products will also be improved in terms of design, packaging, trends etc. Diversification of products and services offered and development of new tours in the region are also key activities to meet visitors' expectations and extend the tourist season. Cultural tour(s) to Pamir villages and communities will be developed in an inclusive approach assuring revenue generation for local producers; potential of including music, entertainment festivals and culinary experiences (food tasting) in the tour(s) will be assessed. Revival of traditional methods will be promoted as a way to preserve cultural heritage and as a tourists' asset **(3) Creation of backward linkages with tourism related supply chains (food products, crafts, visual arts and entertainment) and forward linkages with out-bound international tour operators:** Benefits and impact of eating and sourcing locally will be raised among tourism businesses and tour operators. The development of cultural tour(s) will facilitate contacts between handicraft and food producers and tourists. Mechanisms will be established to distribute the expected generated revenues from tourism in a fair manner. The project will bring in-bound tour operators offering Pamir to one international trade fair to facilitate business contacts with international tour operators.

EXPECTED IMPACT ON THE POOR

The project is expected to have an impact at TSI and SME level. The main beneficiary TSI will be PECTA whose strengthening will have positive spill overs on members who will be offered better services. The other direct beneficiaries of the project are local producers (food and handicraft) and services providers (artists and performers) who will witness an increase in their earnings thanks to the established linkages with the tourism market.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INTERVENTION

Once funding has been secured, ITC would coordinate project implementation and provide its expertise to ensure that all project outputs are achieved. Partnering with other agencies with experience in the country, such as GIZ and AKF, is also considered important for project's funding and successful implementation. AKF has already established cross-border tourism activities between Pamir and Northern Afghanistan and could complement ITC action. ITC project could also build on AKF's organizational structure in the villages. Strengthening of PECTA's role in the region and building its capacities to continue activities when the project ends is crucial for the future sustainability of the intervention.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT



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