



Tourism Contribution to Poverty Reduction

Historical Background:

Eco Tours (Tanzanians and Friends Eco Tourism Limited), is a locally owned tourism company registered in Tanzania with offices in Moshi, Kilimanjaro. The broad objective of the company is to improve life in the disadvantaged communities of Tanzania through conservation and utilization of natural and local resources, focusing mainly on tourism. Our company is one of many that specialize in mountain treks and safaris in Tanzania. However, there is one big difference. We **allocate part of the profit made from tourism to support the community**.

The company specializes on Wildlife Safaris, Mountain Climbing, Beach Holidays and Cultural and Eco Tourism. The company employs young local professionals as guides, cooks, and drivers in various other duties. The company also undertakes charitable activities including environmental conservation, health services and economic projects designed to support vulnerable community groups. The primary beneficiaries are orphans and street children, disabled people, widows and poor rural community members.

The United Republic of Tanzania comprises of Tanganyika and the Zanzibar Archipelago – which made up of Unguja and Pemba Island. The country covers an area of 945,087 square kilometres, out of which 61,000 square kilometres is covered by water. Tanzania has a population of 35 million according to the 2002 national census, 80% of whom live in rural areas with poor economic status.

The country bordered by Kenya and Uganda to the North; Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic to the West; Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique to the South, and Indian Ocean to the East.

However, Tanzania is one of the poorest countries in the world, with an estimated per capita income of less than \$400 per year. Thus is it not surprising that there are huge numbers of children living on the streets of Tanzania. Many are orphans, while their families due to extreme poverty, AIDS, and other infectious diseases have neglected them. With other things these are the reasons led Eco Tours to establish the programs which works to support the community initiative and innovative on poverty reduction through tourism business.

Why Eco Tourism?

Our company works to ensure that the communities in and around touring areas should benefit from tourism. We endeavor to conserve the environment and improve the well being of the local population by following these principles:

- Minimize impact.
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide a positive experience for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.
- Support international human rights and labor agreements.

Tourism Opportunities in Tanzania:

Tanzania, a country endowed with abundant wildlife, great and unique natural features friendly and hospitable people and a superb climate has gradually become a favourite destination for international tourism. Tanzania embodies all the attractions of Africa. With 14 National parks, numerous Game and Forest Reserves taking 38% of its landmass, it is truly a Garden of Eden on this earth; hence it invokes awe to many international tourists. From the fabled snow capped highest free standing mountain in the world – Kilimanjaro, game parks, historical and archaeological sites to virgin unspoiled beaches, the country has made positive gains in its approach to low impact/high yield sustainable tourism policy. This has led to the protection of environment from irreversible damage while at the same time creating a top class eco-tourism destination.

Why Tourism to Alleviate Poverty:

Tourism industry is a key sector in poverty reduction. Governments in underdeveloped countries urged to make policies and management plans that enable the benefit of tourism reaches the poor in their countries. As tourism is the largest business sector in the world economy employing more than 300 million people, proper planing and management would give the sector potential to become a formidable tool for poverty reduction and a powerful stimulant for economic growth.

Case studies from different countries revealed that tourism in the poor countries have the comparative advantage over other economic sectors because it related directly to the need of the poor. For instance, tourism is relevant to remote rural areas, supports other economic activities, employs women and young people and has low entry barriers. Cultural tourism, eco-tourism, community wildlife management areas, hotel supply and employment in the hospitality industry are some of the ways through which the poor in the rural areas can be incorporated into the industry and drive income from them.

In Tanzania, tourism accounts for 16% of GDP and nearly 25% of its foreign exchange earning which grew from US\$259.44 million in 1995 to US\$746.02 million in 2004. Tourist arrivals have also shown a steady increase from 295,312 to 582,807 in the same period. It also supports 198,000 jobs in 2003.

On the other side an international organizations including WTO and other tourism and travel organs should work to promote and develop sustainable travel and tourism business to support the disadvantaged communities. Since tourism is the primary source of foreign exchange in the least countries, which include most African countries and so can make the impact on the war against poverty.

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