INCLUSIVE TOURISM IN NORTH EAST BRAZIL WELCOMES POVERTY REDUCTION TO THE COCONUT COAST

EXPORT-LED POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE

Since 2003, the Brazilian inclusive tourism project aims to improve the livelihood of thousands of people. Poor communities scattered around the 200 kilometers of the Coconut Coast have benefited from tourism development in the region. Through the partnership with the Santander Bank Group in Brazil and the Imbassai Institute, the tourism value chain led by resorts and international investments has been rearranged to generate pro-poor income.

THE CONTEXT

Surrounded by nature and ecological protected areas, the Coconut Coast is one of the favorite destinations for domestic and international tourism in Brazil. However, the seven municipalities connected by the Green line highway constitute a region of contrasts and inequality. ITC therefore works to improve employability and income generation through capacity building, organic agriculture, hospitality, art and culture.

ACTIVITIES

In the early stages of the project, a demand survey, a community census and agro-industrial research indicated the productive chains to be analyzed and developed to include poor communities. Using EPRP tools, the Imbassai Institute was created to develop and manage various projects encompassing the selected areas such as organic waste processing, fruits and vegetables, hospitality, artisanal products and cultural activities.
The projects receive the support from major hotels in the region to harness the entrepreneurial potential of the poor and encourage increased local sourcing of products and services. ITC provides technical assistance; while the hotels offer direct employment and purchase locally produced products. Applying the EPRP methodology, the Santander Group, Brazil has launched the CapTurismo project, aiming to achieve capacity building of young individuals from poor communities. The young women and men receive training in hospitality management, tourism and sustainability in order to be employed in the existing resorts along the coast. Another great initiative is the organic waste processing plant, which was installed in 2007. With the capacity to produce five tons of organic fertilizers per day that benefit 150 farmers, the plant generates an increase in the production of fruits and vegetables as well as an improvement in the products’ quality. Furthermore, the Imbassai institute offers courses demanded by the communities, e.g. English, Environmental Education, Hotel Business, Civil Engineering, Organic Agriculture, Arts and Crafts, Culinary and others. Digital inclusion is also an important activity of the institute for these communities. Other activities have included the organization of a women’s cooperative, the enhancement of skills of women craft producers and the creation of linkages to the market. Additionally, the project has provided development and advanced leadership courses.

IMPACT ON THE POOR

Incorporating the three pillars of sustainability, the organic waste processing plant not only brings broad environmental benefits to the region, but also provides balanced fertilizer at subsidized rates to 150 farmers (MDG 7). The high quality organic crops produced are sold to hotels and restaurants generating income for their families. A warehouse for agricultural products has been built and is managed by a cooperative composed of 350 members, enabling them to market honey and other organic produce from the region. As a result of capacity building activities, jointly organized with our partners, 70% of the 3,000 beneficiaries have found employment after having received training.

Communities have thus been able to share in the benefits from the considerable increase in hotels built along this stretch of coast, with a decrease in the local unemployment rate from 30% to less than 5%. Salary increases are already visible with the monthly income of 390 local women artisans having risen from US$ 40 to US$ 250 (MDG 3). The partnership with the Santander Bank Group, Brazil made it possible for 34 socially excluded young people to be trained with a special curriculum related to sustainable tourism. This will enable them to be employed by the Fiesta Group that is inaugurating its resort in the region this year. Additionally, 350 people are now involved in creating cultural products and services for tourists.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INTERVENTION

The challenge is to replicate the success achieved so far around the seven municipalities, where 550,000 inhabitants face the inequality of development. The replication phase includes ensuring the sustainability of the already implemented projects and the development of new interventions. A significant new initiative is the Flour Mill House. Planned to be inaugurated by mid 2010, the architectural manufactory will generate income for 60 families. Additional gains will come from the tourists and visitors attracted by the regional tradition of cassava processing. Another novelty is the School Kitchen Garden. The scheme, involving families with current income of less than 25 dollars per day, will disseminate familiar agriculture techniques and stimulate cooperation and community development. Following the remarkable results obtained with the first organic waste recycling plant, a new fertilizer factory is planned to be inaugurated in 2010. It will be able to produce fertilizer to benefit another 500 farmers in the region. Maintaining the capacity building activities, every year, 600 people will benefit from the diverse trainings provided by the Imbassai institute. These people will then be able to apply for the jobs created by the tourism development on the Coconut Coast.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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