TOURISM BENEFITS AYAMARA PEOPLE ON THE WORLD’S HIGHEST LAKE IN BOLIVIA

PROJECT OBJECTIVE
The Bolivia pilot project was launched at the end of 2003, with the aim of creating 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 CONTEXT
Despite Copacabana’s outstanding attractions, international tourist flows have not benefited the local Aymara people. As a response to this dilemma, EPRP supported the creation of the Suma Jakañani Foundation, whose mission is to integrate the local population into the tourism value chain of products and services in cooperation with the Lausanne Hotel School (LHS).

ACTIVITIES
As a result of the project, practical tourism training was provided in collaboration with students from the LHS to the local population. In addition, the Suma Jakañani foundation also provided capacity building seminars to locals, such as the workshops provided in traditional techniques for handmade textiles and the colouring of the textile fibres with natural plants from the region. Other activities of the Foundation include waste collection and recycling, as well as the provision of English language classes.

A mobile tourism office supported by the project and operational since the end of 2006, has had a great impact on the promotion of local attractions. In addition, it has helped increase the average stay of tourists in Copacabana, in turn increasing the tourism-related income of the local community.
Additional project activities included the development of a website which provides information on local tourist attractions (www.copacabana-bolivia.com). Statistics reveal that the website is 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.

RESULTS ACHIEVED SO FAR

The Export-led Poverty Reduction (EPRP) 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 providing them with examples of how similar neighbouring areas are attempting to increase their revenues from tourism. Furthermore, the local NGO, supported by the pilot project, has gain knowledge from visits to nearby towns and villages which are more advanced in the implementation of inclusive tourism initiatives.

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

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INTERVENTION

An important follow-up activity of the project was the elaboration of an integrated tourism development plan for the village of Chissi, and the assistance to the local community in the improvement of housing to create the option of having home stay tourism. This activity was implemented in coordination with the local and national authorities as well as all the main project stakeholders (MDG 8). The project has been completed in 2007.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Marie-Claude Frauenrath
Trade in Services Officer
International Trade Centre
Palais des Nations,
CH-1211 Geneva 10,
Switzerland
+41 22 730 0295
frauenrath@intracen.org