PROJECT PROPOSAL: BRINGING THE BENEFITS OF TOURISM HOME IN THE PHILIPPINES

PROJECT OBJECTIVE
The project aims to bring the poor communities of mainland Aklan Province into the tourism supply and value chain by enabling them to benefit from the significant tourism flows to Boracay Island, the Philippines’ most popular beach tourism destination. This is to be achieved by building the capabilities of the mainland coastal communities, in particular the women weavers and local farmers, and linking them with the resort and restaurant owners of Boracay. The latter can bring their guests to the mainland province for day trips; source salad vegetable supplies and employ the pineapple fibre (pina) cloth woven by women in furnishings and handicrafts to sell to tourists.
THE CONTEXT

One of the poorer provinces in the Philippines, Aklan is notable for its unique and colourful Ati-Atihan festival (which every January pays tribute to the infant Jesus), delicately hand-woven pineapple fibre cloth and the distinctive white sand beaches of Boracay Island. ITC’s Inclusive Tourism project for the Aklan Province aims to enhance these exceptional products by improving community skills in design, management and marketing and to draw tourists beyond the island to other areas of the province. It also aims to raise the incomes of rice-growing farmers in nearby Nabas town, by enabling them to plant high value vegetable crops such as lettuce and asparagus to supply Boracay’s resorts and restaurants.

Manggad it Kalibo (Wealth of Kalibo) is an ecotourism package on the mainland coast of Aklan, 45 kilometers south of Boracay. It is run by a coastal community that also manages and protects the mangrove forest in their area. The tour provides ati-atihan street dancing, a pina-weaving demonstration and guided walks through luxuriant mangrove forests along a 700-meter bamboo boardwalk. The highlight is a sumptuous native lunch with a cultural presentation.

The pineapple fibre weaving enterprise is an all-female venture that produces fine cloth made entirely by hand, from the creation of the thread from the pineapple leaves, through to the handloom weaving of the cloth. Pina cloth is used for the famous Barong Tagalog formal attire worn by Filipinos on special occasions. The project aims to improve product designs and link the producers to markets in Europe and the U.S.

Most of the food supplies of Boracay Island, including vegetables and fruit, are from outside Aklan Province. A further goal of the project is to give local farmers the opportunity to supply the vegetable requirements of Boracay at close-to-farmgate prices, thereby earning additional income.

ACTIVITIES

An Opportunity study has been prepared by a national consultant, in partnership with the local government of Aklan Province, USWAG (an Aklan-based NGO) and the Department of Tourism of the Philippines. The study provides options for synergy with other projects and activities of multilateral and bilateral donor agencies in the country, and leveraging of funds for the project. Baseline information on beneficiaries has been gathered and the work plan drafted. Linkages are being established with the local governments, and the Boracay Foundation, an association of resort and restaurant owners on the island.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INTERVENTION

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between ITC and the Department of Tourism for capacity building in Inclusive Tourism for the agency’s officials and technical staff. Under the agreement, the Aklan Province Inclusive Tourism Project will serve as a case study that can be replicated in other ecotourism destinations in the country.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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