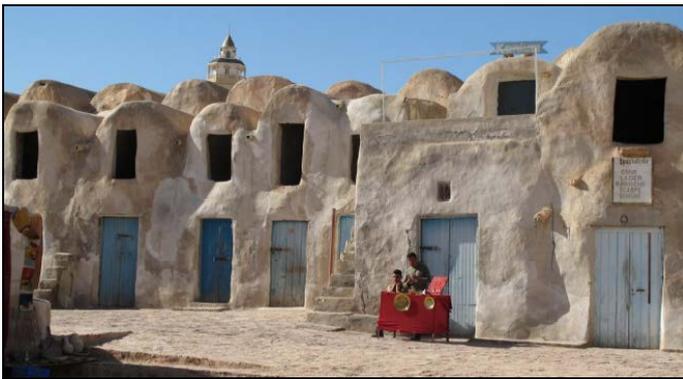


DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION IN TUNISIA: THE VALUE OF THE BERBER HERITAGE



PROJECT OBJECTIVE

ITC has been chosen as a partner by the NGO Swisscontact to apply to a SECO call for tender to develop tourism in the South-East of Tunisia, particularly affected by unemployment and young people's migration. The tender was won and the project's 18 months pilot phase will start in September 2014. The project's first phase will be followed by a three years' implementation period (November 2015 to April 2018). ITC will be the implementing agency for one of the six project's component.

The overall project aims at promoting an environmental friendly and inclusive tourism, able to preserve and enhance the Berber heritage, and benefitting local producers and services providers, and at strengthening the overall destination by creating a Destination Management Organization (DMO) managed by local public and private actors and in close collaboration with already existing national structures (National Tourist Office of Tunisia, etc.).

THE CONTEXT

In Tunisia, the tourism sector contributes directly to around 7% of GDP and is the second main source of foreign currency. The sector employs directly about 200,000 people and generates more than 400,000 indirect jobs, 13% of total employment. It is also one of the main sources of foreign investment.

Since the 2011 Revolution the sector is undergoing a profound crisis exacerbated by global competition on the sun, sand and sea tourist product. Diversification of the sector has been in the country's agenda for many years, but, except some attempts of promoting Saharan tourism in the southwest (Tozeur, Douz), many high potential tourist sites remain underdeveloped. The targeted region, Dhahar, is a relatively small mountainous area covering three governorates (Gabes, Medenine Tataouine) whose potential for cultural tourism, focused on the Berber heritage, is worth to exploit.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

The project's planned activities cover 6 main areas of intervention: (1) Coordination of local actors, branding of the destination; (2) Improvement of already existing accommodation (lodging and guest houses) and restaurants; (3) Enhancement/Promoting the Berber heritage; (4) Promotion of hiking tourism and geological and paleontological heritage; (5) Improvement of handicrafts' quality; (6) Effective waste management.

ITC has been subcontracted for component 5 given its expertise in handicraft sector development and linkages creation with the tourism industry. The crafts' production in the three governorates focuses primarily on tapestry, weaving / embroidery, jewellery and leather products. Tourists from Western and increasingly from neighbouring countries (Libya and Algeria) account for 80% of the market.

In the project's first phase, run by Swisscontact, activities will mainly focus on marketing support for the handicraft sector, while at the same time conducting a thorough study and value chain analysis to be able to design and implement in the second phase activities responding to the identified needs.

During the second phase a support strategy will be developed by ITC, which will be the main implementing agency in close collaboration with local partners such as the National Tunisian Handicrafts Office and the Higher Institute of Arts and Crafts in Tataouine (ISAMT). Building on lessons learnt from the Enact Programme (Enhancing Arab Capacity For Trade) ITC's expertise will be used to improve the quality and export readiness of the sector and strengthening linkages with tourism and export markets.

EXPECTED IMPACT ON THE POOR

The overall project using the DMO approach - based on local participation, "multi-stakeholder" coordination and public-private partnership - will contribute in the medium to long term to the economic and institutional development of the governorates of Gabes, Medenine and Tataouine. From an economic point of view, it will encourage local operators to invest in the region contributing to job creation, while at the same time having an impact in terms of social and structural change and civil society strengthening.

For ITC's component the direct expected beneficiaries are local handicraft producers and service providers (artists and performers) who will witness an increase in their revenues thanks to the established linkages with the tourism industry.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INTERVENTION

Sustainability of the project is facilitated by the multi-stakeholders approach used. A pool of international expertise (ITC, DMO Interlaken, Kuoni Travel and the University of St. Gallen) led by Swisscontact is complemented by local Tunisian actors to assure country ownership. Swisscontact has partnered with a broad spectrum of Tunisian specialists such as the Internet platform for alternative tourism Thousand And-A-Tunisia Tourism info, the organization Friends of the Earth, the travel agency Alyssa, the Tunisian Tourism National Office of Tourism and the National Training CENAFFIF training.

Moreover, to take into full account the different sectors involved in the development of the tourism offer, the project will collaborate with public and private stakeholders from other tourism related sectors assuring a wider impact and spill over effect.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT



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