

## PROJECT SUMMARY

### **Stimulating pro-poor linkages between the tourism industry and local people in the Dominican Republic and the wider Caribbean**

#### **The purpose of the project**

The main objective of this project is to increase the development benefits of tourism in the Caribbean. This will be achieved by providing *practical guidance* and training for tourism providers on *how they can enhance their local development impact* and linkages with local businesses and communities. The project focused initially on tourism businesses in the Dominican Republic, but guidelines are now also being developed for the industry in the wider Caribbean.

#### **The need for training and guidance materials on pro poor tourism**

Tourism is an important economic sector in the Caribbean and the region is highly dependent on tourism for national income. Yet poverty reduction remains a pressing challenge. The proportion of the Caribbean population living below the poverty line ranges from 21% in Trinidad and Tobago to 65% in Haiti. Unemployment rates exceed 15% in Dominican Republic, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St Lucia, and St Vincent and Grenadines.

While tourism contributes substantially to the growth of Caribbean economies, it is also criticised for making an insufficient contribution to poverty reduction, particularly due to lack of linkages to the local economy (e.g. small farmers). However, there are now a range of *practical and innovative tourism initiatives* to build local linkages around tourism, particularly but not only in the Caribbean. These can offer highly relevant guidance to others in the industry. Moreover, there is increasing demand for such practical guidance, with growing interest from a range of operators to learn about, and take up, pro poor tourism (PPT) strategies. Such interest in the Dominican Republic led ASONAHORES, the Hotel Association, to initially contact the PPT partnership to request PPT training.

The Caribbean is a key destination for the UK outbound industry, with five Caribbean countries featuring in ABTA's latest top 20 long haul destinations. UK outbound operators are increasingly interested in raising socio-economic issues with their suppliers, both in the Caribbean and elsewhere, and supporting pro poor change. The UK Operators are producing a Preferred Code for their overseas suppliers, which addresses community partnerships and linkages. However, this needs to be complemented by practical guidance for local suppliers on implementing adopt pro poor approaches, and requires coordination between international and domestic personnel.

This project therefore addresses the need to provide guidance on pro poor tourism actions that is practical, tailor-made to Caribbean contexts, specific to poverty issues, draws on current cutting edge initiatives, and combines face-to-face training in the Dominican Republic with written guidelines, while linking with current UK initiatives with suppliers.

#### **Key issues, activities and products**

The pro-poor issues to be addressed can be divided into two categories.

- ❖ First, are issues associated with enhancing **business linkages with the local economy**. These linkages may be with actual, or potential, suppliers of goods and services to the tourism sector (e.g. of food, soft furnishings), or with providers of goods and services directly to tourists (e.g. of crafts, local food, taxi and guiding services).
- ❖ Second, are issues around developing **partnerships with local people**. These include supporting broader discussion of local people's needs and development options, finding ways to deal with competing use of natural resources, and increasing training and employment opportunities for local staff.

The project activities fall into two key phases over 2005. Phase 1 involved collection and analysis of best practice information and production of PPT briefs for hoteliers, restaurateurs, tour operators, and other stakeholders in Dominican Republic. A key activity in this phase was a training workshop held in the Dominican Republic on 8<sup>th</sup> July, which brought together resort managers, hoteliers, restaurateurs, ground handlers and other key stakeholders to discuss pro-poor tourism issues in the destination. Further details of this workshop can be found at: [www.propoortourism.org.uk/caribbean/workshop.html](http://www.propoortourism.org.uk/caribbean/workshop.html). Phase 2 focuses on production of Caribbean-wide briefs.

Thus the outputs the project can be summarised as:

- ❖ Overview reports on business linkages and community partnerships in tourism in the Caribbean
- ❖ A training workshop in Dominican Republic
- ❖ Guidance materials on building local linkages and partnerships in Dominican Republic
- ❖ Guidance materials on building local linkages and partnerships in the Caribbean

There are of course many existing codes and guidelines for sustainable and responsible tourism. The outputs of this project will draw on these with the aim of producing distinctive guidelines that are purely focused on the local socio-economic issues, very practical in addressing the 'what' and 'how' of implementation, and draw heavily on the successes and challenges already encountered by others.

### **The project team and project partners**

Phase 1 outputs were led by the PPT Partnership and ASONAHORES (Dominican Republic hotel association) in collaboration with Sheffield Hallam University. In Phase 2, Caribbean-wide briefs are being developed by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation and PPT drawing on Phase 1 outputs, plus collaboration with IICA (Barbados).

The project is funded by the UK Travel Foundation, and supported by the outbound UK tour operators First Choice and the TUI group. We are working with a range of other project partners including the Federation of Tour Operators in the UK, Oxfam Caribbean, GTZ, and TOI in order to maximise sharing of information and lessons.

*If you have experience, reports, or ideas you would like to share, we would be glad to hear from you.  
All inputs will be gratefully acknowledged and all our outputs will be freely available.*

For further information please contact:

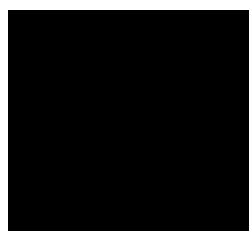
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