Greetings!

**Best Practices in Staff Welfare**

The tourism industry is a labour intensive sector which means the people you employ are the core of your business. Their physical and psychological wellbeing will determine how sustainable your business is, especially in the area of financial sustainability. Staff are more motivated when they are happy, healthy, treated equally, empowered and given opportunities to develop in a clean, friendly and safe environment with fair business policies.

Staff welfare involves all the practices by an employer which are directed towards providing the employees with certain benefits in addition to wages and salaries. Welfare facilities are essential for the health of the company/organization since they bear a close connection with the productiveness of the labor force. These welfare facilities entail sanitary and hygiene facilities, accommodation facilities, medical facilities, recreational & cultural facilities, training & development facilities among others.

Responsible tourism operators must therefore provide their staff with adequate and appropriate working & living conditions, in a way that is morally, ethically and legally acceptable. In the list below, we highlight best practices that tourism business operators should adhere to, in regards to staff welfare issues.

1. **Wages:** Staff should be well compensated for the work done and as per their skills, qualifications and experience. The wages should be above the minimum wage as specified by the *Kenya Employment Act, 2007.*

2. **Housing:** Employees should be provided with decently constructed, safe and secure housing. The accommodation facilities should be rain proof, easy to clean, well ventilated.
and free from dust. If the employer is unable to provide housing within the business premises, the employee should be fairly compensated to facilitate acquisition of good housing.

3. **Water:** Clean and wholesome running water should also be made available to the staff for drinking and domestic use.

4. **Food:** Where the employer provides food, the employees should be fed on a nutritious and well balanced diet. The food should also be handled, prepared and stored in clean and hygienic environments, as prescribed in the *Public Health Act, 2012*.

5. **Hygiene and sanitation:** It is recommended that every employer shall provide suitable and decent washroom and ablution amenities whose construction should be approved by a Public Health Officer or Sanitary Inspector.

According to the *Public Health Act, 2012* it is a requirement that one latrine (or WC) should serve at most 25 people (where the employees are or exceed 100) and latrines should at all times be maintained in a fit state of repair and cleanliness.

![Illustration of poorly designed staff makeshift bathrooms with no drainage](Photo credits: Ecotourism Kenya)

6. **Medical attention:** Staff should be provided with access to healthcare when needed and take note that you should be in compliance with the basic insurance medical scheme provided by the government which is deducted from payroll (National Hospital Insurance Fund). However, where possible, providing additional medical insurance for your employees is highly encouraged.

7. **Training:** Appropriate and thorough education and training of staff is essential for improving a company's overall sustainability performance. Staff members need to be regularly trained on both skills related to their responsibilities in the workplace, as well as being taught how they can help improve the sustainability of the destination and the business.
Since revision of the Eco-rating Certification Standard in 2016, Ecotourism Kenya lays special emphasis on staff welfare issues most notably the working & living conditions, in line with the international responsible tourism standards and the Kenya labor laws.

An eco-rated facility should demonstrate or show evidence that employees are respected, are paid at least a sustainable wage, are provided with proper working and living conditions (where accommodation is provided), and local residents/disadvantaged groups are given equal opportunity for employment. Specific indicators in this case include:

- A clear employment policy
- Compliance with legal labor regulations (the Employment Act 2007) and other applicable regulations such as the Public Health Act 2012, Occupational Health and Safety Act 2007, etc.
- Affirmative action and capacity building of local residents and disadvantaged groups
- Ensuring staff remuneration is in line or above the set legal minimum wage
- Ensuring employees have a right to paid annual, maternity or sick leave in accordance with the labor regulations
- Evidence of a staff welfare union (where applicable)

Staff welfare is an important aspect to your business. Apart from making your business comply with the labor laws, it also provides a good image for your company. This will not only reflect on how your employees relate with clients but also how the clients perceive your business. As Richard Branson famously quoted “The way you treat your employees is the way they will treat your customers.” After all, your business is your staff!

It’s smart to be responsible!