Greetings!

Reducing inequalities in society through responsible tourism

Reducing inequalities is one of the seventeen Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Achieving this Goal requires an integrated approach from all the sectors. Tourism has in the recent years emerged to be a very powerful tool for community development and reducing inequalities, but for this to be realised it must involve the local people in its development. Many high tourism areas have local communities that are underprivileged in terms of income generation and access to basic services. However, there is good news because in Kenya responsible tourism is leading the push to reduce poverty levels by empowering local communities. This week, we want to highlight some of the ways in which inequalities in society are being reduced.

Promoting local employment

Provision of employment opportunities represents a critical channel through which income generated by growth, for example in the tourism industry can be distributed throughout a population including to the marginalised in society. In key tourist destinations in Kenya such as Maasai Mara and Amboseli among others, responsible tourism has been able to provide employment opportunities for the locals, where in the past there were little such opportunities. Accommodations including ecorated facilities have been able to provide training and employment opportunities to locals including those with low literacy and in this way they are able to earn income and uplift themselves from poverty.
Provision of market for locally produced products

Provision of market especially for the marginalised in society, is one of the ways in which economic growth can reduce poverty and reduce inequalities. In destinations such as Maasai Mara, local Maasai women have been engaged and supported to make handicrafts and access ready markets. Most ecorated facilities have provided markets for locals within their premises. Through this way, they are now able to increase their income, diversify sources of livelihoods and take their children to school. The picture below taken in October 2018, during the Ecorating audit at Mara Siria Camp illustrates curios made by women from Iltolish village displayed for sale at the facility.

Increased access to basic services
Poverty especially in rural areas is exacerbated by inadequate or lack of access to basic services such as water resources. The interconnection between water and poverty extends beyond just the need for drinking water! The availability and access to water determines the range of productive water use options available to the poor such as agriculture and livestock among others. Over the past years, there has been intense competition for water resources in Kenya especially in arid and semi-arid areas. This has led to increasing problems of water scarcity and “stress” especially for pastoralist communities. However, through responsible tourism some ecorated facilities are helping communities to access water, for instance by providing water in water bowsers, boreholes as well as piping. See the picture below taken during the Ecorating reassessment in the Maasai Mara in October 2018 at Sanctuary Olonana, of a local Maasai woman fetching water at the facility.

“People in poverty go through each day with the will to survive, but without the support and possibilities to move up the ladder of opportunity. Imagine where their efforts could take them if that ladder were in place. Our common responsibility is to help put it there” Said Juan Samovia
former International Labour Organisation Director General in his report to the International Labour Conference in 2003.

The importance of tourism for poverty reduction and reducing inequalities cannot be overstated, and we hope that greater gains will be achieved as tourism businesses continue to embrace sustainable tourism.