Greetings!

Collaborations that work

‘No man is an island; no man stands alone’. This statement comes alive when one belongs in a community. According to Google, community is also defined as the condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common. This ‘condition’ happens often than we think; it happens when one is picking friends, business partners or even a dream job for that matter.

Kenya for instance has more than 42 officially recognized tribes, most of which comprise smaller clans with different lifestyles and culture. The Meru of Kenya for example still solve disputes with the help of the clan elders known as ‘Njuri Ncheke’. This council of elders presides
over community disagreements and the decision is usually final with no need for assistance from the national government court system. Every other clan/tribe has its way of settling disputes in Kenya making each encounter with these groups very unique.

Community based Tour Organizations are built on this uniqueness. They identify the various experiences in the grassroots and package them accordingly for presentation to the tourists. These tourists reach them through accommodation facilities or are sent directly by tour agents/operators. On receiving the guests, the CBTOs are entrusted with the task of ensuring the most memorable experiences are delivered.

Kenya being a world class tourism destination is visited for its rich wildlife, landscapes and culture. Therefore, the CBTOs are charged with tapping into the diversity of the communities present in Kenya to give rise to alternative products for consumption by tourists.

The existence of Community Based Tourism has therefore, increased demand for cultural practices hence forcing communities to preserve their culture. In a world where globalization entices even the most loyal of servants, the surety that one’s daily bread will be provided is the glue that keeps cultures intact. These practices range from oral traditions, customs and customary law, indigenous knowledge, history and historical evidence in art, music and records, and traditional cultural expressions.

Being that cultural heritage encompasses: archaeological resources (artefacts, _ecofacts_ and features), cultural sites and landscapes, monuments the environmental benefits. Community attach different spiritual benefits to flora and fauna therefore a site preserved for touristic purposes upholds these beliefs. Conservation of environmental resources is then influenced by cultural, political, social and economic structures of the various communities. For instance, the Mijikenda of Kenya derive intrinsic source of ritual power and the origin of cultural & Spiritual identity from the Kaya forests. For these reasons the Kayas forest have been preserved, e.g. Kaya Kanondo, Kaya Kayombo.

Due to the task carried out by the various communities, they automatically require utmost support from tourism stakeholders for continued safeguarding of the various cultural resources available in Kenya. These community members should also be included in stakeholder
consultation which encourages ownership of these resource hence very minimal interference from them.

Safeguarding the cultural value of the country is a way of developing sustainable sources of livelihood. The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals are pegged on the idea of not leaving anyone behind. Embracing and working with CBTOs ensures the practicability of this statement. The collective responsibility of ensuring poverty is eliminated and all humans are living in dignity can be achieved through supporting Community Based Tours. Look out for the continuation on this subject next week.