



**Greetings!**

### **Ways to involve the local community in your operations**

Community involvement is a key element for countries practicing sustainable tourism as it's a means of contributing towards poverty alleviation and rural development. Visiting tourists also seek to discover the authentic culture of the community, local heritage and a deep level interaction with the community members. Since most accommodation facilities are located within local areas it is therefore their responsibility to engage the local communities in their tourism business operations with the goal of promoting sustainable tourism.

This week's eco- byte focuses on some of the ways in which the camps/lodges can involve the local communities in their business operations.

#### **Promote the local culture**

Inform the visitors in your facility of the local culture and educate them of its importance. One of the ways this can be achieved is by creating an information folder with elaborate information about the local people, their culture, values, etc. such folders can be placed within guest rooms, library, visitors' lounge, or any other place where guests can have access to reading material.

#### **Promote village visits**

Create programs through which the guests can visit the local community. In most cases, a fee is charged for village visits. The best practice however, would be to organize a system in such a way no cash payments are exchanged between guests and the locals, e.g. an organized receipt system may be implemented where the local village is paid on a monthly basis, so as to prevent the creation and promotion of "commercialized cultural villages". You may also want your guests to experience the local culture while they are within the facility. Invite the local dance and other entertainment groups that have been formed in the local community to perform for your guests – the proceeds should directly benefit the local community.

### **Source for labor from the local community**

Facilities should always recruit staff for skilled jobs and managerial positions from the local community to promote empowerment. A big percentage of your employees should be recruited from the local community for either skilled or unskilled labour. Where the locals are employed as naturalists and guides, they are able to preserve their rich culture and history and your guests also get the opportunity to obtain first-hand information about the local community. This creates a competitive advantage for your business. As local communities begin to see their natural resources as sources of income and employment, they become actively involved in protecting those resources.

### **Create personal development programs**

The facility can create a program that helps employees from the local communities to improve their skills/levels of education (especially those that are marginalized and therefore have generally low levels of education). Also ensure that the employment opportunities and other income generating activities target both genders. However, this is only possible where culture is not a limiting factor.

### **Involve the local community in decision making**

This may help prevent conflicts between you as an investor and the locals. Inform the locals through their local leaders or the local administration of your development plans and consider their views during the decision making process.

### **Create beadwork market for community onsite**

Camps/lodges should create avenues through which the locals can sell their local products within your facility. You can also opt to source for quality products from the local community such as fruits, vegetables, curios, beadwork, etc. where possible. This boosts the local economy and also improves the livelihoods of the local people. The picture below taken during the ecorating reassessment of Sanctuary Olonana in October 2020 illustrates the local women selling their beadworks at the camps gift shop.



### **Create partnerships with government/organizations to support community**

Help improve the well-being of the locals by partnering with other organizations or the government that support community projects such as building of schools, health facilities, supply of water to the locals, construction of roads within the local area, among other initiatives.

The local communities play an important role in promoting sustainable tourism. Their traditional practices and wisdom can help boost your profits and also improve the local economy. Therefore, seek to engage them actively in your activities in order to attain sustainability