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**COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM AND
THE TOURISM POLICY IN UGANDA**

by

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the United Nations.

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(UCOTA)

Uganda

- **Uganda** is landlocked and tourism is the second foreign exchange earner. Uganda's tourism industry was the fastest growing in East African region in 1960s but dwindled in the 70s and mid 80s due to political instability.
- Uganda has 10 national parks, 27 forest reserves, snow capped mountain on the equator, source of the second longest river, 25% of its land is covered by fresh water bodies and has 1/3 of the continent bio diversity species.
- some of the tourism products are wildlife safaris, mountain climbing, white water rafting, gorilla trekking, sailing, culture/ community tourism experiences.....

Uganda community tourism association (UCOTA)

- Is an umbrella organisation for groups involved in community based tourism in Uganda.
- It assists the groups to run small scale community tourism groups with the aim of improving community livelihoods.
- The groups are mainly located in rural areas adjacent to protected areas or in areas surrounding other tourism centres.
- They offer services like; guiding, cultural experiences, hospitality, handcraft sales etc

UCOTA achieves this through;

Capacity building

- Members are trained in conservation, various tourism aspects to improve their skills in guiding special tourist groups. Supplementary seed capital to improve community tourist facilities (*as and when available*)
- Training in resource mobilisation.

Marketing

UCOTA plays a role of providing supplementary marketing for community Based Tourism services and products for the groups.

UCOTA activities cont.

Networking platform

UCOTA provides the networking base;

Other activities; resource mobilisation and ensuring sustainable support of community development projects e.g. roads, health , agriculture and education programs etc.

UCOTA activities cont.

Advocacy

- UCOTA represents the voice of the community tourism groups and advocates for recognition at all levels particularly at district level where not much has been achieved. Other advocacy issues are on policy; tax reduction, community natural resources use concessions, provision of technical workers to work with the groups, evaluation of govt'/ private sector signed concessions to ensure community benefit etc.

Tourism policies

- Uganda like any other country has developed tourism policies and regulations.
- These aim at ensuring sustainable and pro-poor tourism. Policies regulate how the sector is run, to foster growth, empower private sector to drive the sector and ultimately tourism to become a poverty reduction vehicle.
- Tourism policy recognises CBT as an integral part of the tourism sector.

Uganda tourism policies on CBT

- **Regulatory**- land use (NEMA) forest use (NFA), Carry capacities (NEMA, UWA), service and facility standardisation (gov't and UCOTA)
- **Distributive** – commissions and concessions (UWA, NFA, DISTRICTS). Training; UWA, NFA, AWF, IUCN, EU Dev't fund)
- **Constituent**- administrative legal frameworks (NGO board, local gov't, UCOTA)

Tourism sustainability and pro-poor policies in Uganda

- Development of conservation bodies e.g. Uganda Wildlife, National Environment Management, National Forest, Uganda Monument and Museum Authorities to maintain the tourism resources and work with the communities to ensure poverty reduction e.g. ⁽¹⁾ UWA worked with Batwa (Forest people) to develop a tourism trail . ⁽²⁾ NEMA to carry out cost free Impact assessment studies for communities (prior to establishment of new ventures).
- Decentralisation of governance and formulation of local government councils, the districts now have the powers to support sustainable use of resources for tourism sustainability (increased growth of community based tourism).
- **User rights;** Memoranda of understanding; communities and local government sign MOUs for communities to sustainably use natural resources outside the protected areas e.g. swamps, forests,
- All natural resource use concessions must stipulate community benefits.

Some activities supported by Policies on CBT

Training and Human resource dev't

- Tailor made training courses provided to tour guides and community tourism staff and local government staff.

Resource planning

- Tourism plans for resources out side the protected areas are incorporated in district plans and encourage local tourism associations at district levels

Policies cont.

Marketing

- special consideration is given to Eco- tourism, community and cultural tourism products.
- Encourages backpackers that constitute a strong income source for community tourism.

Products and product dev't

- Tourism developed guidelines and procedures to be followed by local entrepreneurs for dev'g tourism products.
- Encourage NGOs to work with communities to establish tourism products.

Policy activities cont.

- **Registration** categorisation and licensing of tourism establishments is done by districts (easy for community establishments).
- Specific Ugandan sustainable branding.

Dev't framework

Road network maintenance; responsibility of districts and sub counties (apart from major routes)- community can easily influence repairs of roads to their sites.

Policy activities cont.

- Such roads are tendered to local community → income.

Finance and investment policy

- VAT is zero rated on tourism as an export industry.
- Community tourism ventures are in most cases exempted from tax by the sub-county authorities (advocacy).
- Items imported for aiding in tourism dev't e.g. vehicles, hotel construction materials, solar energy, etc are exempted from import duty tax .

Policy activities cont.

Private sector development

Business development scheme (BUDS)

- Small business capacity building support (50% contribution).
 - Award best practice small business (with banking sector, good business plans, good governance etc
 - Subsidising solar installment
 - Direct training
 - Negotiation with banks to offer cheaper loans.
-
- Apex fund with the National Bank (BOU).

Policy activities cont.

Awarding concessions

Concessions are granted to develop natural or cultural resources.

The concession agreements are made carefully to avoid exploitation of resources and emphasise community involvement and poverty eradication in case granted to a person outside the community.

Policy activities cont.

- **Revenue sharing**

20 % of gate collections from national parks is plowed in the Communities to support community dev't projects.

- **Multiple use**

Communities are permitted to harvest raw products for other uses from the tourism Natural resources to foster conservation.

POLICY CHALLENGES

- Dev't guidelines for local tourism ventures not in place.
- Little practical involvement of government → Tourism ministry still centralised → no tourism staff at district levels.
- Imbalance in concession rewarding (community vs other private investors)
- Concessions given to developers are not regularly reviewed to ensure the poor benefit.
- Most financial arrangements benefit the rich in the sector not the poor → no policy that favours CBTEs on financial assistance.
- Roads to CBT sites not regularly maintained.
- 20% of gate collections is very small compared to the total collections (about 1% of total collection) and is submitted at district level → not reach intended comm.
- Some of the above policy items are not yet in effect\ not enforced.

Ruboni community conservation and development program (RCCDP)

Location

It is located in Nyakalengeja Village in Kasese district on the foots of Mt. Rwenzori, at the main gate of Mt. Rwenzori national park.

- It was founded in 1998 and has 35 females and 15 males but benefits the entire village.

Purpose: to ensure community benefits from tourism activities in the area to foster conservation the tourism resource (Mt. Rwenzori National park -Rwenzori mountains)

Services and products offered

- Hospitality
- Guiding (village and nature walks, & traditional herbs demonstration plots)
- preparation of traditional herbs and preservation
- Handcrafts sales and demonstrations.
- Story telling at the camp fire.
- Entertainment (MDD)
- Volunteer vacancies (student placements).

Supported community projects

Scholarships and adult education programs, bridge construction, construction of community handcraft canteen, tree planting, environment cleanup (picking of polythene bags in the villages), purchase of community MDD uniforms, establishment of community clinic, road maintenance, etc

RCCDP & the Policy

- **Registration:**
RCCDP is registered with the district and belongs to Kabarole Tourism Association (KTA).
- **EIA-** was assisted by NEMA
- Product dev't; RCCDP works with various NGOs to build capacity.
- **Marketing;** It is promoted\ marketed by UTB.
- **financial& investment;** Minimum tax of about US \$ 20 paid annually.
- **Training;** at trained by Uganda Wild life Authority .
- **Concession;** RCCDP is seeking user right to Rwenzori NP to develop nature walk trail.

RCCDP Challenges

- **Concession**; request to use the already existing nature walk trail not yet granted.
- **Finance**; Limited accommodation capacity; RCCDP cannot afford the available bank loans
- **Training**; no tourism staff at the district to continuously work with the
- **Deforestation of neighbouring Land**; local government does not enforce the natural resource protection policy.
- **Revenue sharing from the park**; minimum community benefit → funds submitted at district and small proportion reaches the communities adjacent to the national park.
- **General**; Limited knowledge on policies

Thank you for listening