Why we invest in Tourism

Famously known for its mountain gorillas, Rwanda is attracting more and more tourists each year. Hence, tourism is seen as a major economic sector that contributes to the goals of the Vision 2020, the country’s strategy for economic growth, development and poverty alleviation. The Vision includes an increase in tourism revenues from $210 million in 2008 to $627 million in 2020. To reach this target, the Rwanda Sustainable Tourism Development Master Plan was issued in 2009. Its objective is to make Rwanda’s attractions and destinations more visible, diverse and accessible to visitors to ensure longer stays that will have a bigger economic impact. In particular, the Kivu Belt is regarded to have an enormous potential for various tourism activities, which is why Eco-Emploi’s support focuses on that beautiful region.

Our strategy and partners

The Promotion of Economy and Employment Programme (Eco-Emploi) supports the implementation of the Rwanda Sustainable Tourism Development Master Plan. The development of tourism destinations and improved, diversified tourism products and services require (cross-sectoral) collaboration between various actors. Partners from private and public sector, amongst others the Rwandan Chamber of Tourism and its different associations, the Rwandan Development Board (RDB), companies and TVET schools and other development partners, formed a core group to identify and coordinate all necessary interventions. Meanwhile, Eco-Emploi takes on the role as a facilitator between the various actors from government to private sector and society as a whole.

A few of our interventions

The Rwandan Chamber of Tourism plays an important role in the implementation of the Rwanda Sustainable Tourism Development Master Plan. As a representative organisation of the private sector, it works towards promoting and capacitating tourism operators. In order to be well prepared for this task, the Chamber joined hands with Sequa, a German consultancy specialized on business membership organisations, to strengthening its own organisational structure, its member services as well as management.

For the establishment of better products it is crucial to compare the international standards expected by tourists with the status quo and to manifest local standards. Hence, RDB and the Tourism Chamber are developing and upgrading quality standards for different tourism product categories. Furthermore, RDB is developing a marketing strategy for the Kivu Belt to exploit its full potential. The strategy will be implemented by the Destination Management Unit (DMU), a tourist promotion initiative in the region under the Chamber of Tourism. The DMU brings together public institutions, private businesses, local tour operators and members of communities to collectively promote the Kivu Belt as a tourism destination. Together with its members, the DMU is developing tourism attractions and products, improving services and conducting trainings of local tour guides, travel operators and service personnel. Linked to the activities of the DMU is the digitalization of the Kivu Belt marketing including the creation of a website for small tourism operators and the development of easy e-payment solutions.

The Chamber of Tourism and the ICT Chamber have assessed the status quo of digitalization in the tourism sector. Following, an ICT-Tourism-Cluster is setup to connect local companies and promote digital solutions within the two sectors. For instance, the cluster works on digitalizing the tourism service chain along the Congo-Nile-Trail. The
trail leads from the north to the south of Lake Kivu and the DMU is upgrading it with necessary services like signposts, trail development, accommodation and mapping according to international standards. In the near future, tourists will be able to get detailed information and book services such as hotels, activities and restaurants alongside the trail online. To further promote Rwanda’s rich natural diversity and history, the National Institute of Museums is developing a multimedia product. Equipped with a mobile application, tourists can soon follow the historic steps, route and endeavours of the German explorer Richard Kandt on his journey to the source of the Nile.

About eight percent of the world’s bird species can be observed in Rwanda, making the country an Eldorado for bird watching. The wide range of birding habitats, varying from grass- and wetlands to forests and savannahs allows for a spectacular diversity of beautiful birds. To promote Rwanda as a bird watching destination, the Rwanda Birding Association together with RDB works on developing a bird watching infrastructure, including training guides, building birding trails and launching a mobile application.

The ‘Kivu – Call for Proposals’ campaign promotes and supports young and innovative tourism graduates from Musanze Polytechnic, Muhabura Integrated Polytechnic and UTB-Rubavu to enter their start-up ideas in the competition. After receiving a training in business development, the young entrepreneurs with the best ideas are granted a loan by the I&M Bank and the Business Development Fund to start their own business. They receive further guidance in form of mentorship and professional internships.

The Chamber of Tourism facilitates further trainings for their members to increase the quality of their services and to capacitate in-company trainers, who will teach TVET students. To increase hospitality and service skills in the sector the Rwanda Hospitality Association (RHA) together with the Workforce Development Authority (WDA) is training hotel staff in house-keeping, culinary arts, food and beverages as well as front office. After completion, RHA places the graduates in one-month long internships in the hospitality sector as well as in temporary jobs in hotels. In addition, job seekers, registered at the Musanze Employment Centre and interested in careers in tourism and hospitality, are offered short-term employment oriented trainings, while the RHA gives short-term English courses for hotel staff and unemployed graduates in the sector. Mentoring and coaching programmes for hotel owners and managers offer long-term guidance. Business group counselling will be deployed to strengthen community based tourism (CBT), such as homestays, arts and handcraft workshops, tea and coffee plantation tours. To achieve long-term effects, counsellors coach groups of 10 to 15 entrepreneurs over a period of several months.

What we expect

The Vision 2020 targets an increase in visitors by 2020 to 1.6 million per year. Annual average growth rates of about 7 percent in arrivals, 9 percent in bed-nights and 15 percent in spending are aimed for in the period 2018 to 2020. It is expected that an increased variety of tourism activities will contribute to the achievement of these goals.

Moreover, the diversification, upgrading and promotion of existing and new tourism products will create new business opportunities in the Kivu Belt. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that the number of jobs in travel and tourism in Rwanda has increased from 110,500 in 2016 to 117,000 in 2017. Eco-Emploi’s activities maintain this employment trend, thereby contributing to nationwide growth.

The Promotion of Economy and Employment Programme (Eco-Emploi) is a joint Rwandan-German Development Cooperation Programme with Technical Assistance by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).