

CEDP promotes competitiveness in tourism

By Vision Reporter

Tourism is Uganda's fastest growing industry, with an average annual growth rate of 21%. As such, the Government recognises that in the short to medium term, the tourism sector will become the mainstay of the economy making the highest contribution to foreign exchange earnings, tax and non-tax revenue, employment and the Gross Domestic Product.

The sector has also been identified as the number one opportunity that will be harnessed for achieving faster socio-economic transformation.

With funding from the World Bank, through the Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP). The Government has earmarked the tourism sector as one of the four components being funded under the CEDP project.

Objective

Given the importance of tourism, the project is supporting initiatives geared towards creating and enhancing a competitive tourism sector which will unlock the potential to enable it grow, increase income and employment for Ugandans.

"THE PROJECT IS SUPPORTING INITIATIVES GEARED TOWARDS CREATING AND ENHANCING A COMPETITIVE TOURISM SECTOR WHICH WILL UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL TO ENABLE IT GROW, INCREASE INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT FOR UGANDANS"

The support will strengthen the public agencies, the private sector and their collaboration to develop a competitive offering.

The key activities

- Product development and planning, packaging and promotion including market representation as highlighted.
- Strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities and its related agencies: Uganda Tourism Board, Uganda Wildlife Authority and Hotel and Tourism Training Institute.
- Re-development of the Hotel and Tourism Training Institute. The project will revamp, equip and furnish HTTI in addition to curriculum overhaul to meet the world class standards required of a

hospitality industry. This will enable the provision of a quality labour force for the tourism sector.

Key results expected

- Increased international tourist arrivals
- Increased tourism sector employment
- Trained key personnel in the sector
- New MSMEs registered in the tourism sector
- HTTI accredited by at least three external industry and educational bodies.

About the CEDP

Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP) is a five-year government/ World Bank funded project geared towards enhancing the competitiveness of Uganda through supporting business environment reforms in Land Administration and



Tourism is one of Uganda's leading export earners bringing in about 26% of the GDP



The Government has earmarked tourism as one of the components to be funded

Management; Business Registration and Licensing; Tourism Competitiveness Development and enterprise support through the Matching Grant Facility. The Government

represented by the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, delegated the overall co-ordination of the project to the Private Sector Foundation Uganda through a project

co-ordination unit. For more information, one can either visit the website www.cedp.go.ug or the offices at the Private Sector Foundation Uganda, Plot 43, Nakasero Road in Kampala.

Strategic investments in tourism is the way to go for Uganda

By John Marie' Kyewalabye

CEDP's agenda is competitiveness and definitely our tourism sector falls in a hugely competitive international industry with many destinations fighting to increase their market share in the US\$ 7.17 trillion tourist industry worldwide.

Uganda faces a challenge from its geographical proximity to larger better known competitors who offer similar products. Uganda cannot afford to be a spectator in the market but must fulfil the conditions that enable it to stand firm



and compete. This is not a complicated task given that the country is gifted by nature, which, however must not make us complacent and take it for granted. We still have to do

something!

Over the years Uganda has made significant strides in terms of ensuring peace and security alongside the God given excellent weather, people and nature. Unlike other sectors these are God given and our only task is to maintain and harness them.

On the other side, is the large numbers of tourists arrivals estimated at 1.186 million who are desirous to travel the world and here is Uganda with all that it has to offer that can easily make it as one the best destination in the world. We

therefore must match the two: the strength and opportunities for which CEDP is playing a catalytic role of unlocking the potential.

Tourism presents a huge potential for this country in terms of economic growth. The investment in this sector will support job and wealth creation.

This is the only sector with the lowest barriers to entry and attractive for startups to enter with minimal capital investment! The tourism value chain is the longest and the trickle down effects immense.

Currently, tourism is the

leading export earner for Uganda bringing in about \$ 1.4b which is 26% of the total foreign exchange earnings and 9.9% of our GDP. The sector employs about 520,000 people directly and 1 million indirectly 70% of who are youth and women.

The activities being implemented under the CEDP will spur the tourism numbers internationally, regionally and domestically with the effect of increasing the contribution from this sector to GDP.

The writer is the CEDP Project Co-ordinator



PHG North American representatives meet Uganda Travel Agents and Hoteliers Association during their familiarisation tour in Uganda. UTB is now a member of the American Tourism Association



A team of German journalists during their visit to Bwindi Impenetrable Forest for gorilla tracking

CEDP boosts tourism sector

By Owen Wagabaza

Despite knowing really well Uganda's astonishing tourism uniqueness, John Skinner, a German tourist had been hesitant to travel to Uganda for his holidays.

"I had always known Uganda as a very beautiful country, however, the country was always associated with insecurity and dictatorship and that pushed me away," Skinner says.

It was until June this year that he saw a story about Uganda in one of the renowned travel magazines in Germany. The story not only brought to the fore Uganda's tourism uniqueness, but also stated clearly how Uganda was a very peaceful and stable country in which one can travel unaccompanied.

The story was an eye opener for Skinner, with security assured, his mind was made up to visit the country he had for long admired but could not reach because of insecurity.

"I talked to seven of my friends and we came in a group of eight, and believe me, this is one of the best holidays we have heard. I am happy to have visited one of the most beautiful countries in the world, and there is a 90% chance we will come back next summer" Skinner says.

The story that proved an eye opener to Skinner and his friends had been written by a tourism writer in Germany. The journalist had been part of a group of tourism writers and marketing experts who travelled to Uganda in May to document and market Uganda's tourism potential.

The group travelled courtesy of KPRN Network, one of the marketing firms hired by the Government under CEDP-World Bank funding to market Uganda to the outside world. Other marketing firms hired include PHG Consulting which will market Uganda in North America, Kamageo in the UK and Ireland. KPRN Network handles



UWA staff being interviewed by one of the journalists from Germany

Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Stephen Asiimwe, the executive director of Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) says Competitive Enterprise Development Project (CEDP) is a Godsend.

"They are doing a lot to not only improve, but also promote the tourism sector. They have greatly supported our goal of growing volumes and value as well as the tourists stay and spend," Asiimwe says.

Asiimwe says they are using the funding from CEDP for product planning, packaging and promotion, financing of expos, capacity building as well as marketing Uganda's tourism uniqueness to the outside world. Through CEDP funding, UTB has been able to represent and market Uganda at a number of Expos including Pearl of Africa Expo and JATA 2016 amongst others. Uganda will also for the first time host the Birding Expo in October, as part of the agenda to promote other tourism products.

"The impact is immense, recently, Uganda was admitted to the prestigious United States Tourism Association and this is a big milestone to the tourism sector in Uganda," he says.

"For product development, we are looking at how we can fully

maximise the Uganda Martyrs at Namugongo, which is faith-based tourism. The good thing about spiritual tourism is that it is emotional, tourists keep coming every year," Asiimwe says.

John Marie Kyewalabye the CEDP project co-ordinator says though the efforts to market Uganda through international public relations firms is already bearing fruits, their eyes are on the long term benefits. And in its efforts to fully maximise the tourism potential, CEDP is supporting the tourism sector in several dimensions as well.

"Tourism presents a huge potential for this country in terms of economic growth. The investment in this sector will support job and wealth creation. This is the only sector with the lowest barriers for entry and attractive for start-ups to enter with minimal capital investment!

The tourism value chain is the longest and the trickle down effects immense. The activities being implemented under the CEDP will spur the tourism numbers internationally, regionally and domestically with the effect of increasing the contribution from this sector to GDP," he says.

The project is supporting the development of labour force for the tourism sub-sector to the tune

WITH CEDP FUNDING, UTB HAS SIGNIFICANTLY MARKETED UGANDA'S TOURISM SECTOR ABROAD.

of \$12m through the construction of a Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (HTTI). The institute will be equipped with instructional facilities and materials.

The project will also fund training for the institute's instructors and administrators as well as reviewing and accrediting the institute's curricula and instructional programmes. On the agenda is the developing and implementing of a sustainable business model including a revenue generation strategy for the institute.

Jean Byamugisha, the chairperson of Uganda Hotel Owners Association, says CEDP's plan to support the skill's development in the tourism sector is long overdue. "Our biggest challenge is the poorly trained workforce. Our human resource is very uncompetitive, this has forced us to hire Kenyans because they are highly trained though very expensive," she said.

The HTTI will contribute to strengthening multiple links of the tourism value chain by providing up-to-date training to improve lodging operations, food and beverage offerings, and tour guiding.

The project also aims to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiques as well as UTB to the tune of \$3m. Kyewalabye says skills enhancement activities will support the MoTWA to develop the technical skills of sector-focused staff, launch and manage systems for tracking

sector performance through consistent collection, analysis, and dissemination of tourism data.

"We will facilitate the design and implementation of a lodging classification/grading system to achieve an improved standard and support informed policy advancements such as implementation of the national tourism levy," Kyewalabye says.

CEDP is significantly improving Uganda Wildlife Authority's (UWA) organisational capabilities and facilities. The aim is to develop a competitive wildlife product offering through institutional strengthening, branding and marketing, enhancement of participation in international trade fairs and improving facilities.

Recently, the project supported the acquisition of three motorised 45-seater boats for Lake Mburo, Queen Elizabeth and Murchison Falls national parks. This was aimed at improving facilities and capacity to handle the increasing numbers of tourists in the three lake National Parks.

The project has supported the acquisition of five executive buses for which a contract for supply was signed and delivery is expected by December. Kyewalabye says the aim is to improve facilities and capacity to handle the increasing number of tourists to the park and also promote domestic tourism which among others has been constrained by access due to lack of adequate transport to the parks.

CEDP is also offering firm-level support to enterprises and private sector engaged in the tourism sector to a tune of \$100,000 in the form of a matching grant facility. These have used the funding to participate in expos, branding, business development support as well as training to improve their services. Herbert Byamugisha, the chairperson of the Tour Guides Association says many of the members in the association have benefited from CEDP's matching grant facility.