Tourism and Rural Development

Governance and Community Engagement for an Enhanced Rural Development

Islamic Republic Of Iran
Cultural heritage, tourism and Handicrafts Ministry

Present By:
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Iran’s challenges for Rural Tourism

Community based tourism’s export capacity is limited by:

- Lack of specialised human resources
- Low perception of needs to develop the sector
- Low involvement of local communities
- Lost of social fabrics
- Environmental issues from domestic tourism
- Waste production and management
- Traffic congestion
- Noise pollution
- Lack of access to Internet and to foreign countries
- Weak exploitation of comparative advantages
- Lack of international tourism expertise
- Issues of recruitment, training and financing
- Limited international technical assistance

- Limited geographical focus of tourism
- Short length of stay in rural communities
- Limited activities of travel agencies in the field of CBT
- Villages seen as stopover only by travel agents
- Lack of capacities and funds to develop creative experiences
- Lack of accommodation in villages
- Lack of comprehensive policy, plans and strategies for CBT
- Individuals have limited understanding about the tourism sector.
- Observed changes in lifestyle within the youth
- Inflation for products, land and properties
- Individualist behaviours leading to decrease in the quality of products vs. increase in price
- Ceremonies, events, activities, art and handicrafts had been adapted to satisfy visitor expectations

Absence of crisis communication unit to react efficiently to propaganda
Paralistic vision due to a lack of competencies in marketing and communication
Lack of use of internet to share experiences and promote the destination
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Country’s negative image
Absence of adequate branding strategy
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Key challenges for Rural Tourism:

1. Lack of a comprehensive plan for rural tourism development

2. Expecting well-utilization of tourism capabilities like as cultural-historical section.

3. Needs for a better marketing plan, consisting an introduction to rural tourist attractions.

4. Low-level of national and international investments in rural tourism
Key challenges for Rural Tourism (continue):

5- Insufficiency of balanced rural tourism industry chain from origin to destination (Transportation, Hospitality, Accommodation, …)

6- Weakness of sufficient awareness of the local community regard industry tourism

7- Deficiency of coordination between and within government and non-government bodies in charge of rural tourism
Levels of Tourism Development Planning

- Provincial Tourism Plan
- National Tourism Master Plan
- Strategic Plan
Policies and actions adopted to overcome the challenges:

- Formulation and approval of a tourism Strategic document
  Determine roles and responsibilities for collaborating with other relevant organizations

- Planning to formulate a National Tourism development Master Plan with the collaboration of UNWTO

- Preparation of National Tourism Export strategy document with the International Trade Center (ITC)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategic objective</th>
<th>Operational objective</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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| 1. To enhance coordination and cooperation in ecotourism/nature-based tourism and community based tourism | 1.1. Provide a framework for coordination, convergence and control of activities in the field of eco-tourism and CBT | 1.1.1. Enforce the implementation of the eco-tourism’s strategic document and establishment of an eco-tourism policy / a rural tourism policy  
1.1.2. Development of an eco-tourism master plan for each “ecotourism” priority area  
1.1.3. Development of specific materials on best practices, quality standards and sustainability at each nodes of the tourism value chain  
1.1.4. Guidelines for organization willing to support tourism related project  
1.1.5. Development of Dos and Don’ts for CBT and eco-tourism destinations (for local communities, tour guides, Travel agents and tourists) |
|                     | 1.2. Constantly update the institutional knowledge on new trends in tourism with a focus on Wellness tourism, eco-tourism and CBT | 1.2.1. Organisation of yearly international academic and professional tourism conferences / workshops to keep update of international good practices in tourism  
1.2.2. Development of a manual for efficient participation to trade fairs (identification of new trends and best communication strategies, how to organise B2B events, etc.)  
1.2.3. Upgrade of tourism program in TVET with the support of internationally recognized institutions |
|                     | 1.3. Establish a more effective coordination and cooperation mechanism between tourism stakeholders | 1.3.1. Creation of an online platform that empower and connect tourism related entrepreneurs  
1.3.2. Empowerment of regional arms of the national industry associations  
1.3.3. Creation and/or make available access to online courses on tourism related activities in foreign languages (including a certification process)  
1.3.4. Creation of a national tourism association |
Other activities:

- Re-organization of tourism organizational structure (Ministry-based)
- Establishment of a Rural Tourism Steering Committee (RTSC)
- Signing a memorandum of cooperation with other relevant public sector and banks
- Determining the indicators of tourist destination villages
- Identify and classify about 500 selected villages for tourism based on cultural, natural, handicraft and ....
- National and world registration of valuable villages (Registration of three villages from Iran in the World Handicrafts Council)
- Support to build 2258 eco-lodges
- Establishment of a professional association of eco-lodges
Marketing activities:

• Launching **new types of tourism** in rural areas such as agricultural tourism, mining and ...

• Designing and holding tourism **events** in rural and nomadic areas annually (41 events)

• Allocating **25%** of the content of Iran's tourism advertisements to the introduction of villages

• Allocating about **22%** of national and international **FAM trip** to visit villages

• Holding **virtual tours** to get acquainted with the attractions of the village during the Corona era
Training:

- Holding 305 empowerment training courses in rural areas of the country and training about 12,300 people in rural areas
- Training and licensing for 1,200 local tour guides

Infrastructure and Investment:

- Allocation of governmental funds for tourism infrastructure in tourist villages of Iran annually
- Bank loan settlement of 16170 rural projects
- Allocation of eligible rural historic buildings to private sector investors
- Improvement and restoration of villages with historically architecture context
- Issuance of 401 production licenses for rural handicraft
Success Story: Esfahak village

- The old village was destroyed due to an earthquake in 1978

- The new village was built and founded near the old one

- Many of the buildings of the old village have been restored and turned into ecotourism resorts.
Characteristics of Esfahak:

- Eight resorts with all facilities (consist of shower, shopping center, mosque,...) with a special form of village desert architecture
- Using renewable and green energy
- Prohibition of Electricity for Lighting, Using lanthorn instead!

By development eco-lodges in the village:
- Employment of village residents
- Offering traditional and organic food
- Supply of handicrafts
- Providing medicinal plants packages
Esfahak has won the “TO DO 2020 Award” of Germany
Lessons learned:
• Enhancing Coordination and Cooperation
• Upgrading and capitalize on existing practices / assets
• Enriching the experience and the story telling

Benefits:
• Reverse migration to the villages
• Employment of village residents
• Preserving historically architecture context of the village
Framework for developing rural tourism

- Establishment of a rural tourism policy
- Development of a rural tourism master plan for each “rural tourism” priority area
- Development of specific materials on best practices, quality standards and sustainability at each nodes of the tourism value chain
- Guidelines for organization willing to support tourism related project
- Expanding action plan (to Do and Do not list) for CBT (for local communities, tour guides, Travel agents and tourists)
Thank You

“Iran: Everywhere is yours”