

#TourismTuesday: Tourism industry contributes to development agendas

July 2017, Windhoek: The tourism industry, one of the largest contributors to Namibia's GDP, has the potential to help achieve sustainable development in line with national, regional and international development plans.

Due to its warmer climate, rich cultural history, abundant biodiversity and impressive landscapes, the tourism industry, in Namibia, has a comparative advantage to other industries, allowing for steady growth, resulting in increased revenue and job creation.

According to the Namibia Tourism Board Tourism Satellite Account, in 2006 the nominal contribution towards GDP amounted to N\$7 billion, but in 2012 grew to an amount of N\$15.5 billion. In total, tourism contributed roughly 15.5% in 2012 to the GDP.

As a result, tourism has had an immense spillover effect in the Namibian economy, especially observed in the labour market. The Namibia Tourism Board also found that direct contribution to employment amounted to 22,857 in 2012, whereas the indirect contribution to the labour market totaled 88,200 in 2012.

The resulting employment and income from the tourism industry allows people to sustain livelihoods, subsequently positioning tourism as an important driver in H.E. President Hage Geingob's Harambee Prosperity Plan to eradicate poverty and national development plans. It also falls in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 goals aimed at ending poverty, promoting peace and protecting the environment.



Highlighting the interconnection between tourism and the SDGs, the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC) to Namibia Kiki Gbeho says, "At the heart of sustainable development lies social inclusion, economic development and environmental protection. These aspects should not be assessed individually but should be seen as interconnected."

"The dynamic tourism sector, which provides employment for many Namibians, is key in ensuring that people are able to fulfill their basic human needs including food, education, clean water and shelter, falling in line with the targets of many of the SDGs," she says.

Namibia is one of a small number of countries where the environment and tourism sectors are combined in one Ministry, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), indicating the linkage between conservation and tourism and thus steering the path for conservancy. With the prominence of conservancy practices implemented in Namibia, it can assure that SDG 13 'Climate Action', SDG 14 'Life Below Water', SDG 15 'Life on Land' are met.

"Goals 13, 14 and 15 ensure that we will protect our precious environment, as a healthy, thriving environment in which biodiversity is sustainably managed and lays the foundation for many aspects of life," Gbeho says.

The MET's *National Tourism Investment Profile & Promotion Strategy 2016-2026* highlights that more than 43% of Namibian land is under conservation management. The Government of the

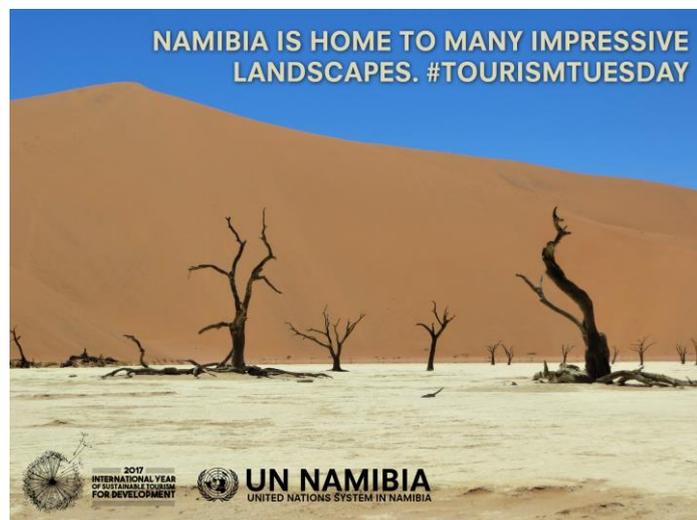
Republic of Namibia (GRN) has received international acclaim for its pioneering conservation method, Communal Conservancies under the Nature Conservation Amendment Act, which has been in legislation since 1996.

According to the World Wildlife Foundation, there were 82 communal conservancies covering approximately 20% of Namibia's land in 2012, with one in five rural Namibians living in a conservancy. These conservancies are communal conservancies where the local community has control over the natural resources, resources such as wildlife and plant life and has involved 184,000 people.

The long-standing effectiveness of the Communal Conservancies programme showcases the ingenuity of the GRN, as it had set very similar targets to that of SDG 11 'Sustainable Cities and Communities' years before the inception of the SDGs in 2015.

The *Guide to the Namibian Economy 2017* by Richard Sherbourne found that Namibians on communal conservancies also generate goods and services such as crafts, maintain and run campsites, hunt and participate in joint venture tourism. According to the MET, these goods and services form part of the Community-Based Natural Resource Management Programme (CBNRM) and has become a major development programme in the country.

The MET identifies other core tourism value chains in Namibia besides wildlife tourism and trophy hunting and other types of hunting that commonly occur on conservation land. These include coastal tourism, community-based tourism including cultural tourism, economic empowerment and transformation incubation centre, film tourism, car testing, cruise tourism, township tourism promotion initiatives, circuit development/route development model (directing tourist flows to certain areas), luxury affordability and medical and retail tourism.



The MDGF Joint Programme "Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Namibia", a nationally owned programme that ran from 2009-2013 which was funded by the Government of Spain and supported by various UN Agencies and partners, highlighted the immense tourism opportunities in Namibia.

"Heritage sites, arts and crafts, and traditional ways of life add a broad and rich variety of interests to the entertainment most visitors are expecting when coming to Namibia. Moreover, such assets are, by their very nature, enshrined in the people's lives and livelihoods, thus linking any spill over from tourism to their immediate welfare and social change," the programme highlighted.

The tourism sector has the power to empower Namibians in many different ways. Through effective partnerships, tourism can continue to promote sustainability in the country and around the world.