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Responsible Tourism Leads the Road to Recovery

Kathmandu, March 2010 – While international tourism markets continue to waver in the wake of the global financial crisis, one market segment is weathering the storm with relative impunity – Responsible Tourism.

The success of Responsible Tourism as a travel product is just one of the findings of “The Market for Responsible Tourism Products”, a ground-breaking new study commissioned by SNV Netherlands Development Organisation and undertaken by Stanford University’s Center for Responsible Travel (CREST).

Released in January 2010, the landmark publication examines trends in Responsible Tourism, with a focus on experiences in Latin America and Nepal, profiling products, markets and consumers, and making a series of in-depth marketing recommendations for service providers in or wishing to enter the Responsible Tourism market in developing countries.

As one of the world’s largest industries, accounting for an estimated 9.9% of global GDP and employing more than 22 million people in 2008 according to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), tourism is particularly significant for developing economies, who receive an estimated 30% of all global tourism expenditure.

“In a world of change, one constant in the last twenty-five years has been the sustained growth of tourism both as an activity and an industry,” SNV Asia Regional Director Andy Wehkampf said. “In recent years tourism has been increasingly recognised for its potential to contribute to poverty reduction. Its geographical expansion and labour intensive nature support a diversification of employment, and can be particularly relevant in remote and rural areas, where 75% of the world’s two billion people in extreme poverty live.”

Consumers around the world have increasingly aware of the potential impact of their tourism dollar in recent years, with socially responsible and environmentally sustainable tourism becoming a leading market segment globally.

“At least two thirds of the people walking into a travel agency are looking for authenticity, they are looking for something being put back into the local destination, and that we are actually enhancing livelihoods,” Federation of Tour Operators Responsible Tourism Coordinator Chris Thompson said.

As a result of this push, Responsible Tourism has become a key focus of organisations such as the UNWTO and is a priority sector for SNV, which now employs teams of specialist Pro-Poor Responsible Tourism advisers in 20 countries throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Balkans, where they work both to develop destinations and to support tourism businesses to integrate environmentally, economically, and socially responsible practices into their operations.

Along with providing the information needed for development agencies to help create commercially viable responsible tourism programmes, Ms. Wehkampf said the SNV publication aimed to address the lack of access to accurate market data and analysis faced by many tourism entrepreneurs in developing countries.

“Proactive engagement with the business community is a vital component of SNV's work, and through programmes such as the Responsible Travel Nepal initiative, and the National Rural Community Based Tourism Programme in Peru, our advisers are combining capacity-building with market incentives to promote, support and reward responsible and sustainable businesses in tourism,” she said.

“We are sure that the data and analysis in the report will prove a valuable resource for tourism entrepreneurs worldwide, and will also serve as a useful tool for development organisations and their national partners who are working so hard to promote socially responsible and environmentally sustainable tourism practices across the globe.”

“The Market for Responsible Tourism Products” is available in both printed (English) and digital (English, Spanish) versions from SNV. Contact SNV Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism corporate network leader Paul Stevens on pstevens@snvworld.org, SNV tourism advisor Monica Oliveros on moliveros@snvworld.org, or visit www.snvworld.org for further details.

SNV Netherlands Development Organisation is dedicated to a society where all people enjoy the freedom to pursue their own sustainable development. Our advisors contribute to this by strengthening the capacities of local organisations. SNV provides advisory services to nearly 1,800 local organizations in capacity building, in over 26 developing countries in West Africa, East and Southern Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Balkans.

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