



President Yoweri Museveni receiving a contract document in May from an official of one of the public relations firms hired to market Uganda's tourism industry abroad. He is flanked by James Tumusiime. Right is Vice-President Edward Ssekandi flagging off the Pearl of Africa expo last year



Barcelona legends' promotional tour of the Murchison Falls National Park while in Uganda last year

KEY RESULTS

- Three international PR firms signed up to market Uganda as tourism destination of choice.
- Feasibility study for the overhaul of the hotel and tourism training institute finalized.
- Curriculum review for the HTTI institute completed.
- Barcelona Legends and Pearl of Africa Expo exposed Uganda as must visit destination.



CEDP unlocking tourism potential

By Billy Rwothungeyo

Uganda is gaining popularity as a tourist destination. Global news giant CNN last year named Uganda as one of the top 16 emerging travel destinations in the world this year.

The sector is set to get a boost from a joint funding from Government of Uganda and World Bank under the Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project (CEDP), coordinated by the Private Sector Foundation of Uganda (PSFU).

Why did government choose tourism as one of its four components of the project? Ambassador Patrick Mugoya, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities explains: "Tourism is one of the areas that have been identified as a key contributor to the social and economic transformation of our country. There is still a lot of untapped potential in the area. Unfortunately over the years, this sector had been neglected".

"We have challenges of infrastructure, roads, electricity, ICT, inadequate human resources and insufficient accommodation in the areas with our tourist attractions."

Mugoya says CEDP is a much needed boost that will help unlock the sector potential in this country, contributing more to jobs and wealth creation.

"Under this project, we are building the capacity of the sector players, and prioritizing development of the labour force including overhauling the training curriculum and facilities of the Hotel and Tourism Training Institute in Jinja. We are stepping up the

visibility of our attractions globally by hiring three reputable international marketing firms so that Uganda becomes a choice destination. We are also supporting the tourism sector players through a matching grant facility to enable them improve their enterprises. This should enable the tourism sector in this country move to a higher level" he says.

Market representation

Uganda's tourism sector is set for new heights after she signed deals with three international firms that will make a difference in the country's visibility, brand and marketing. Stephen Asiimwe, the Chief Executive of the Uganda Tourism Board says these companies will represent Uganda in three different markets; the North America (USA and Canada), English speaking market specifically UK and Ireland, and the German speaking Europe targeting Germany, Austria and Switzerland. "PHG consulting will represent Uganda in the north

American market, Kamageo in English speaking Europe, while KPRN will represent Uganda in the German speaking world," the UTB boss says.

"These contracts have been signed and were endorsed by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni in May 2016," he adds.

"Destination marketing is a very complicated thing. Tourism is among the top businesses in the world; all countries are fighting for a share of these numbers. These agencies will be our ears, eyes and mouthpieces in each of these markets," Asiimwe reasons.

"They will represent Uganda at different fora. It would be very expensive for us as a nation to know and attend all exhibitions that take place in these markets. Since these are specialised companies with core competencies in these markets, they will be representing us."

Capacity building

Under the project, the capacities of the ministry, Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), Uganda Hotel and Tourism Training Institute, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and other sector players are being strengthened. Tracking tourism sector performance through collecting, analysing and disseminating appropriate data, designing and implementing a lodging classification and grading system and implementing relevant policies, including the national tourism levy is ongoing.

Tourism product planning, packaging and promotion, developing and implementing tourism value chain packages while supporting links between the public and the private sector are all being undertaken. The aim of these interventions is to support the tourism sector through strengthening of public and private sector stakeholders' collaboration to develop a

competitive tourism offering.

Boosting domestic tourism and improving transportation facilities

Under the project; buses, game drive trucks and customised vans are being purchased to support UTB and UWA to boost domestic tourism, especially for people who want to visit tourist attractions around the country but do not have the luxury of owning personal vehicles but also to ease transportation to the various tourists' sites.

"We are also going to build modern gates with service points at key national parks, introduce smart cards to improve our data collection, get modern boats to be used on waterways such as the Kazinga Channel," says Mugoya.

Re-development of the Hotel and Tourism Training Institute

Under the CEDP, the Uganda Hotel and Tourism Training Institute Jinja (HTTI) will also undergo an overhaul to meet the world class requirements of the hospitality industry. The training institute will be remodelled, furnished and equipped with modern hotel and training facilities.

Currently, a feasibility study is being undertaken, according to Ms. Miriam Amori, the institute's acting Principal. Development of a business plan and a curriculum overhaul is ongoing to ensure the institute produces highly skilled labour force for the growing sector and can sustain itself.

Amori says the final report on the feasibility study is being finalised. "We want to be a centre of excellence for tourism and hospitality in the region. We are going to have four star hotel facilities, additional classrooms, training labs, a revamped administration block, a library and new hostels," she says.

WE ARE BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF SECTOR PLAYERS AND PRIORITISING DEVELOPMENT OF THE LABOUR FORCE BY OVERHAULING THE HOTEL AND TOURISM TRAINING INSTITUTE