



Good Practice Story Title: TACANA WOMEN'S ROUTE: Indigenous empowerment, conservation and sustainable tourism

Destination: Rurrenabaque Madidi Pampas

Country: Bolivia

Submitting Organization: Sustainable Tourism Council of the Rurrenabaque Destination Madidi Pampas

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities**
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

The Rurrenabaque Madidi Pampas Destination, is considered the most important in the Amazon of Bolivia (heart of South America), with a fairly extensive territory of 80,469 km² blessed by the natural wonders of the mountains of the tropical Andes and the Amazonian plain, it has protected areas rich in biodiversity and native populations that over time keep their culture alive. The destination is currently made up of: six municipalities that are within the jurisdiction of the departments of La Paz and Beni, two protected areas at the national level, the Madidi National Park and Natural Area of Integrated Management, one of the most biodiverse protected areas in the world, and the Pilón Lajas Biosphere Reserve and Community Land of Origin, which is home to ancestral indigenous people, it is also made up of five subnational protected areas, three Indigenous Community Territories: Tacanas, San José de Uchupiamonas and Pilón Lajas (TCO's), and finally representatives of tourism service providers. As a whole, the destination awakened their interest in the sustainable use of the natural resources that are around them and they work so that sustainable development becomes an engine for the economy of families, with the creation of employment in ventures directly and indirectly related to tourism, considering the preservation of their culture and the conservation of the agrobiodiversity of their territories.



Summary of Good Practice Story:

The Tacana Women's Route is an undertaking that is part of the Rurrenabaque Madidi Pampas Destination, located in the Municipality of San Buenaventura that links the populations of Tumupasa, Altamarani, Tres Hermanos, Capaina and Bella Altura, its objective being to make visible the role of the indigenous woman who belongs to the Tacana culture, in their commitment to the conservation of agrobiodiversity. their culture and their relationship with the forest. The route covers local small business that are under the business model called Tacana Brand, which were generated as a result of the training carried out at the Business School "Epuna Cuana Eme" (Woman's Hands in the Tacana language) considered the first business school for indigenous women, created under the principles of sisterhood and entrepreneurial culture. In this space, indigenous women began to dream of their small business and thus generate economic income, mainly to cover the costs of food that they do not produce in their territories. The resilience that characterizes the Tacana woman was another predominant factor that led to the creation of these small business, since their territories are constantly threatened by extractive activities such as mining, sugarcane planting, deforestation and constant fires such as those recorded between October and November 2023, which devastated around 100 thousand hectares of the Bolivian Amazon.

The route, which generates an experiential experience based on sharing local production activities, has a program of two days and one night, and is made up of small business led by women: "Tumi" in the Tacana Tres Hermanos community with the production of soaps and oils based on plants that are obtained from the forest, "D'Delmi" in the Tacana Bella Altura community with handicrafts in seeds from the jungle, "Mura Vita Vita" in the Tacana Capaina community with the production of chocolate based on native cocoa plantations, Tejedoras Tacanas in the Tacana Tumupasa community that rescues fabrics based on palca and Achilata with the production of banana flour in the Tacana Altamarani community. Currently, the Tacana Brand disseminated through the Tacana Women's Route, is an example of commitment to the development of sustainable tourism, the preservation of cultural and environmental identity, which gives a special focus on the empowerment of indigenous women as protectors of Mother Earth.

Issues faced:

- The Rurrenabaque Destination Madidi Pampas, constantly faces problems that threaten the sustainable development of its territory and therefore of the communities that inhabit it, in this case the Tacana culture. In this sense, it is considered pertinent to make the following point: - Tres Hermanos is one of the three Tacana communities adjacent to sugar mills, which unfortunately deforested 4,573 hectares of forested area between 2016 and 2019, according to the study Agroindustry and Bolivian Amazon by Daniel Robinson (CEDLA, 2019). Although there is no updated data, a review of satellite images shows that this deforestation was deepened in the last four years. This deforestation had serious consequences for the Tacana territory, as evidenced by an investigation by La Brava carried out in 2021. These effects were not only due to the change in land use, but also due to the contamination of their land and water sources, which obviously affects the health of the inhabitants.





- Livelihoods weakened by climate change: increased pressure on land, forests and natural resources. Climate change poses a serious threat to the livelihoods of Tacana communities, as they are considered vulnerable. Erratic and unpredictable weather patterns affect the traditional activities they depend on for their livelihoods, such as agriculture, fishing and livestock, leading to consequences such as food insecurity, increased poverty, water scarcity, ecosystem degradation and increased frequency of natural disasters such as forest fires.

- Indigenous Tacana women face a situation of greater vulnerability and disadvantage compared to other population groups. Men are generally responsible for providing for the household's economic support, with women taking care of all household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children and the elderly, and collecting water and firewood, which limits their opportunities to participate in education, training and employment.

- As for the tourist activity developed in the destination, the emblematic products are Selva-Pampa. The tour, which can be 3 nights - 4 days or more, combines both products, perfectly complementary, making the Amazon experience more intense and enjoyable by combining the experience in the Jungle with the greatest observation of fauna in the pampas. This combination has been growing significantly, up to 35% of visitors to the Destination would be requesting it. Practically all the companies in the Destination offer Selva y Pampa, although they do not have their own facilities in any of the spaces, so the tendency to have hostels in each of these main attractions is common among operators. Although companies have made evident efforts to differentiate themselves by improving the quality of services, customer service and applying the manual of good sustainable practices, the problem of the attractiveness and the tour offered being very similar persists, giving the customer many advantages to negotiate the price.

Solution:

Although tourism activity in the destination has managed to recover steadily and is in increasing development, evidently considering sustainability criteria, the urgent need to involve new products appropriate to the current requirements of tourists in terms of living more comprehensive experiences, incorporating more "emotions" to their visit and generating higher levels of satisfaction. In this context, the Sustainable Tourism Council of the Destination, under the guidelines of SDGs 5: Gender Equality, 10: Reduction of Inequalities and 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, supports the inclusion of the Tacana culture in sustainable tourism activity under an approach of integrality to the consolidated offer, promoting the participation of Tacana women from their local enterprises that represent their source of life.

In this way, with the support of three key actors: The Indigenous Council of the Tacana People (CIPTA), the Indigenous Council of Tacana Women (CIMTA) and the Sustainable Tourism Council of the Rurrenabaque Madidi Pampas Destination, coordination begins to design a product called: "Tacana Women's Route" that aims to facilitate authentic connections that promote sustainable tourism experiences that promote gender equality. The empowerment of indigenous women and community



development under the premises of conservation of agrobiodiversity, their culture and their relationship with the forest.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

Establishment of bases

"Practical Action", a non-governmental organization that has been working since 2015 in the Tacana territory, through the project called: "Tacana Indigenous women and youth lead sustainable forest conservation and management alongside agroforestry production", achieves significant progress not only for the empowerment of Tacana women, but, under a holistic vision, covers issues such as agroforestry monitoring and sustainable forest management. In this sense, the project was based on coordination between entities such as the Indigenous Council of the Tacana People (CIPTA), the Indigenous Council of Tacana Women (CIMTA) and actors belonging to the Sustainable Tourism Council of the Rurrenabaque Madidi Pampas Destination, thus constituting a support and validation group for the activities and results obtained. At the end of the project, 136 women and young people from the Tacana indigenous people in the Bolivian Amazon, belonging to the Indigenous Council of Women of the Tacana People (CIMTA) and the communities of Altamarani, Capaina and Tres Hermanos, lead the conservation and forest management of 4,000 hectares through environmental monitoring that allows the collection of information from the territory related to its biodiversity. use of forest resources and the sustainable management of its protected areas; family agroforestry production of bananas, coffee and cocoa; and sustainable entrepreneurship led by women.

Development of local capacities

The implementation of the Epuna Ecuana Eme Business School (Manos de Mujer in the Tacana language) allowed the training of 121 women from the Indigenous Council of Women of the Tacana People (CIMTA), who participated in 15 workshops on rural enterprise management and 5 workshops on digital marketing, under the "learning by doing" methodology. where it was possible to strengthen their capacities, from a focus of sisterhood and entrepreneurial culture, under a holistic methodology that has allowed women to consolidate as leaders in their communities with greater participation in decision-making.

As a result, the Tacana brand was created for finished products, designed, validated and put into use, which makes visible their role and work, their culture and their relationship with agrobiodiversity. Currently, there are 5 enterprises led by women related to the production of oils and soaps (Tres Hermanos community), handicrafts and jewelry (Bella Altura community), wild native chocolate paste (Capaina community), banana flour (Altamarani community) and weavers (Tumupasa community). In this phase, it is important to mention the non-governmental entities Practical Action and Conservation International, which provided their committed support so that the ventures can be constituted.

Linkage with sustainable tourism





Once the local capacities have been detected based on ventures led by women who are part of the Tacana Brand, and being that their settlements are within the destination, the need for their inclusion in the

sustainable tourism activity is detected, based on the development of a tourist route that allows diversifying the offer and that responds at the same time to the requirements of the new trends of the markets, where visitors seek to enrich their experience through discovery, learning and contact with indigenous peoples and their ways of life.

The route is in its design and pilot testing phase, for this, the actors took into account the holistic model of the expert Ana Báez (Turismo & Conservación Consultores SA, Costa Rica), based on the three responsibilities of sustainability: environmental, economic and social, but which includes at the base of this strategic triangle another duplicate figure based on the commitment that in turn includes values, principles and ethics. This model considers the conservation of the habitat nature of the Tacana culture in the environmental sphere, taking advantage of the resources it provides, but in a responsible way, creating a balance and harmony with the forest. In the socio-cultural sphere, the recovery and preservation of local knowledge in terms of medicine, fabrics and ways of life, and in the economic through the formation of local small business that promote the generation of jobs and therefore promote the improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants.

Achievements and Results:

- The application of a holistic model was promoted in the destination that links enterprises based on local capacities with sustainable tourism, which in turn generates a unique experience for the visitor, which not only allows them to appreciate nature but also to be an active part of the ways of life of the Tacana indigenous culture. It is also important to highlight the process of diversification and breadth of the offer, generating a more comprehensive development in the destination under the slogan of leaving no one behind.
- Tacana Women's Route as a means of dissemination and marketing of the Tacana Brand, opened the doors to the empowerment of indigenous women, connecting them with a broader environment that gives them the opportunity to share their culture and generate their own income. This initiative promotes a sustainable development model, based on deep respect for nature and active commitment to its conservation. We are aware that, although the route is in its design and pilot testing phase, there is a strong commitment from the entrepreneurs to achieve their positioning within the effective offer of the destination in the short to medium term.
- Relations between local actors were strengthened, which at one time did not find a link with the sustainable tourism that is developed in the destination, so that new strategic alliances are now created that promote local development in an inclusive way.
- The commitment of the Tacana culture towards the development of good practices in sustainability is consolidated, rejecting extractive activities that threaten their territories.





Lessons Learned and Advice:

- Promote holistic tourism models that integrate local capacities: The Tacana Women's Route has demonstrated a feasible option to link local small business with sustainable tourism. This holistic approach creates unique experiences for visitors and generates tangible benefits for local communities, diversifying the offer and creating complementary products to the star products.
- Using sustainable tourism as a platform for the dissemination and marketing of local enterprises: The Tacana Women's Route has served as an effective means to spread the Tacana culture and promote the development of the Tacana Brand. This approach can be replicated by other communities to strengthen their cultural identity and generate economic opportunities.
- Strengthen strategic alliances between local actors: Collaboration between communities, government authorities, the private sector, and other organizations is crucial for the success of sustainable tourism. It is important to foster dialogue and cooperation to create a strong framework that supports the development of sustainable initiatives.
- Consolidate commitment to sustainable practices: The Tacana Women's Route has set a precedent by rejecting extractive activities that threaten their territories. It is important that other communities adopt this commitment to sustainability, to protect their natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

Recognitions and Additional References

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