Dominican Cocoa Route

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
milagnos puello

Coffee makes it possible to get out of bed. Chocolate makes it worthwhile.
Project Summary

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Project concept consists in developing the Dominican Cocoa Route as a rural tourism initiative involving rural private operators engaged in the cycle of production and processing of cocoa. The Cocoa route will be based on our Tuscan partners’ experiences regarding the “Wine and olive oil routes”.

Our Project will favour the discovery of the real identities of places and show tourists alternative routes, different from usual mass tourism. It will also contribute to provide a complementary tourism offer and increase and diversify earning of small rural cocoa producers, by ensuring competitive tourism-related initiatives through tailored-made training programs.

We will realize a ...
**Organization size**
Medium (101 to 1000 employees)

**Indicate sector in which you principally work**
Community Organization

**Year innovation began**
2009

**Indicate sector in which you principally work**
Living culture, Culinary or agritourism, Indigenous people.

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**Innovation**

**What is the goal of your innovation? Please describe in one sentence the kind of impact, change, or reform your approach is intended to achieve.**
To enhance rural economic development through the strengthening of tourism-related micro activities linked to cocoa production and processing cycle.

**Please write an overview of your project. Include how your approach supports or embodies geotourism or destination stewardship. This text will appear when people scroll over the icon for your entry on the map located on the competition homepage.**
Project concept consists in developing the Dominican Cocoa Route as a rural tourism initiative involving rural private operators engaged in the cycle of production and processing of cocoa. The Cocoa route will be based on our Tuscan partners’ experiences regarding the “Wine and olive oil routes”. Our Project will favour the discovery of the real identities of places and show tourists alternative routes, different from usual mass tourism. It will also contribute to provide a complementary tourism offer and increase and diversity earning of small rural cocoa producers, by ensuring competitive tourism-related initiatives through tailored-made training programs.

We will realize a system with as low intermediary presence as possible, based on a website where local operators can advertise their offers and where potential tourists can choose the best one and book their holidays.

Small and micro agro-producers who want to register in the Cocoa Circuit will be able to do so through the Santo Domingo Chamber of Commerce or operators identified by it.

Meaningful information will be put on the website to be used through a GIS open source: will be digital guides to be used with most common palmtop devices supporting GPS technology.

**Explain in detail why your approach is innovative**

The project innovation concerns approach, actors, tools and procedures. The approach is based on the direct participation of micro and small agricultural operators who will develop their tourism activity such as accommodations, typical food, cultural and ecological attractions. Their tourist offer will be publicized, shared and put up for sale in an open and free web space.

Only the key actors necessary for the proper system management will be involved in Dominican Republic and in Italy, active role will be played by visitors community too.

Updated information, knowledge and experiences will keep alive the website which, through the use of open source, GIS and cartographical tools, will constitute georeferred downloadable databanks, so that tourists can plan their tour at home by downloading the routes and using them when they reach their destination. There will also be a forum where tourists can exchange their experiences. The Santo Domingo CCI ensures that the website will host information about facilities with a good standard quality. These elements represent for tourists a well-informed and safe way of travelling.

The continuous interplay between the interested communities and the local operators represents an innovative and functional procedure to promote new destinations for leisure and enjoyment.

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**IDB/Fomin**

Si perteneces a un país de Latinoamérica y el Caribe tienes la oportunidad de presentar tu iniciativa para acceder a fondos para innovaciones en turismo sostenible del BID/FOMIN (para mayor información leer la sección sobre la oportunidad BID/FOMIN en la página principal del Desafío).

Deseo postularme.

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Consumidores (viajeros), Grupos comunitarios autóctonos, Atractivos naturales y culturales.

**Indica cuales de estas tematicas cubre tu innovacion (elige todas aquellas opciones que apliquen)**

Cartografía, Profesionalización, buenas prácticas y certificación de servicios turísticos sostenibles, Estrategias y herramientas innovadoras para la promoción y puesta en mercado de destinos y productos en turismo sostenible y geoturismo.

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**Impact**

**Describe the degree of success you have had to date. How do you measure, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the impact on**
The project goal is to involve micro and farm/rural operators rarely taken into consideration by main tour operators.

What are the main barriers you encounter in managing, implementing, or replicating your innovation? What barriers keep your program related opportunities for micro-small operators belonging to the rural world in Dominican Republic.

Rural and eco tourism is rising and we are confident that our proposal may be appreciated.

This website aims at satisfying the request of alternative tourist routes, providing guides, as well as information on new revenue-generating tourism-the potential geo-tourists.

The infrastructure needed is a website which will have an expositive function. It will market the combined offer of tourist services and the demand by the potential geo-tourists.

The project logic is based on a limited employment of financial and human resources who will undertake its implementation.

In what ways are local residents actively involved in your work, including participation and community input? How has the community responded to or benefited from your approach?

At the beginning of the projects workshops will be organized to involve field operators. They will work together in order to set up versatile tourist offers, while optimising resources and concerting shared solutions.

The project will contribute to develop the economic conditions of people involved (in the cocoa production and processing cycle and whole population). It foresees the lowest involvement of intermediating bodies or professionals and makes locals actors of the tourist process.

The proper understanding of Dominican Republic dynamics will help external people in differentiating the stereotyped cliché shouted by the tour operators.

How does your program promote traveler enthusiasm, satisfaction, and engagement with the locale?

Our proposal offers tourists a true enjoyment of the locations to be visited, becoming part during their stay, of the local communities and developing lasting relationships with them.

Moving away from the traditional package tours which offer sun and sea holidays, our proposal makes possible to live the real Caribbean, its population, traditions and history.

The direct locals’ involvement allows tourists to live an unique experience and improves the economic and social conditions of the very population.

The tourist will be satisfied because he will value living a true experience and not something artificial, expressly built for tourist purposes.

Describe how your work helps travelers and local residents better understand the value of the area’s cultural and natural heritage, and educates them on local environmental issues.

The possibility for tourists to live a true experience will develop its awareness of the place, its inhabitants, traditions and culture. At the same time locals, by reason of their direct and active involvement, will gain a greater awareness of a wide range of products and services that their country can offer and learn to increase the value of their economic operations and activities.

This greater awareness of locals will lead them to value, preserve and build on their natural, cultural and landscapes resources and will contribute to improve the economic situation of the communities and its inhabitants.

Sustainability

How is your initiative currently financed? If available, provide information on your finances and organization that could help others. Please list: Annual budget, annual revenue generated, size of part-time, full-time and volunteer staff.

The CCI of Santo Domingo is the applicant of the “Dominican Cocoa Route” project for which the co-financing of the MIF is needed.

In order to carry out this initiative, in addition to the website development, donor cooperation is required through non-refundable projects and/or seed capital; the funding will be used to develop the project whose components will address the different activities, many of them already mentioned.

The Santo Domingo CCI has a 86 full-time members and 15 volunteers.

Annual Budget: US$ 755,000
Annual Revenue: US$ 900.000

The partnership involved in the project is composed, at the moment, by:
1. The Chamber of Commerce Italy-Dominican Republic
2. Lucca Promos, special agency of the Chamber of Commerce of Lucca
3. Toscan Promozione, regional public agency

The proposal is based on a best practice transfer, thanks to the Italian partners experience about the “Wine and olive oil roads” project.

Is your initiative financially and organizationally sustainable? If not, what is required to make it so? Is there a potential demand for your innovation?

The project logic is based on a limited employment of financial and human resources who will undertake its implementation.

The infrastructure needed is a website which will have an expositive function. It will market the combined offer of tourist services and the demand by the potential geo-tourists.

This website aims at satisfying the request of alternative tourist routes, providing guides, as well as information on new revenue-generating tourism-related opportunities for micro-small operators belonging to the rural world in Dominican Republic.

Rural and eco tourism is rising and we are confident that our proposal may be appreciated.

What are the main barriers you encounter in managing, implementing, or replicating your innovation? What barriers keep your program from having greater impact?
Ihe project goal is to involve micro and small rural operators rarely taken into consideration by main tour operators. The programme target are tourists searching for an intimate tourism dimension, with strong characteristic values; for this reason the main barrier could be that our initiative wouldn't have a big impact in quantitative terms, during its initial phase and until wide awareness has been created regarding the Dominican Cocoa Route.

Others dynamics could make difficult the promotion of the tourist offer that, compared with those promoted by tour operators lobbies, are less visible so that there could be few people aware of the existence of this initiative.

The limited knowledge concerning the rural destinations reality in the Dominican Republic and the distrust of a far world unfiltered by important infrastructures (i.e. Holiday villages) are other factors which we aim to get over through a series of information and awareness initiatives.

However, we think that the problem of visibility for this initiative can be handled with the assistance of Tuscan partners who will promote the website through their institutional websites and, especially, through the replication of promotional activities that they have already prepared for the “Wine and olive oil routes”.

What is your plan to expand or further develop your approach? Please indicate where/how you would like to grow or enhance your innovation, or have others do so.

Our proposal is based on a wide use of new and innovative technologies (e.g. Internet and GPS technologies) that orients and informs tourist on point of interest he will visit.

In our project we foresee a distribution of open source files (GPX) that contain main information about the more important points of interest. We foresee also the organization of a local office that rents GPS devices to be used by tourists in the field.

Further sphere of action could be the translation of the tourist guides and thematic resources into digital and geo-referred materials.

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The Story

What is the origin of your innovation? Tell the Changemakers and media communities what prompted you to start this initiative.

Given the challenges arising from the global economic crisis and the need to comply with the Millenium Development Goals, the Dominican Republic, as many developing countries, is faced with the urgent need to diversify its economy in seeking new income and employment generation activities that may contribute to sustained and sustainable economic growth and development, leading to poverty reduction and improved living standards for its population.

Tourism is one of the key drivers and income generation sectors of the Dominican Republic’s economy. However, the tourism offer is highly concentrated in all-inclusive beach resorts operated by large hotel chains and some smaller hotels located in prominent tourist poles.

The Santo Domingo Chamber of Commerce, thanks to the activities of the Italy-Dominican Republic Chamber of Commerce, has been working on other issues with Lucca Promos - the special agency of the Chamber of Commerce of Lucca - and Toscana Promazione, the regional public agency for the promotion and internationalization of the local economic system.

Toscana Promozione and Lucca Promos, which aim to the internationalization of local enterprises, are partners in this project and the idea of Dominican Cocoa routes arises from their experience in “Wine and olive oil routes”.

These routes are an important tourist attraction in Tuscany and consist in evocative itineraries full of rural traditions. Tourists that pass through these roads can taste not only wine and olive oil products, but also all the typical Tuscany ones. Finally they can enjoy old wine and olive oil manufacturing methods.

In addition to this, tourists can stay in typical houses like agro-tourism and little B&B, so that they can come in contact with traditions, culture, and history of places, living a true experience and doing an authentic tourism. This tourism pattern attracts tourists that care about culture, tradition, people, landscapes and history.

“Wine and olive oil routes” experiences inspired us in writing this project: we want to realize Cocoa Roads in Dominican Republic where tourists can enjoy the cocoa manufacturing process, overnight in local houses living together with local communities.

Dominican Republic is one of the ten world's leading cocoa producers and exporters and, for this reason, we are really interest in promoting a tourism focused on the cocoa context.

We want to give rise to an authentic and responsible tourism where rural life, history, traditions and culture of Dominican Republic and its inhabitants play a key role.

This initiative, while promoting rural/eco-tourism other than the usual one, will have an important impact on the rural, low income-poor communities located along the Cocoa Trail, offering new opportunities to farmers and the young population to diversify and increase their earnings by developing sustainable business operations, thus contributing to improve the regions’ economic and social development.

Please provide a personal bio. Note this may be used in Changemakers’ marketing material.

Santo Domingo Chamber of Commerce, established in 1848, is the oldest business organization in the Dominican Republic and Latin America.

Its main objective, as embodied in the legislation creating national and chambers of commerce and in its by-laws, is to contribute to enhance economic development which has been achieved through diverse activities such as promoting trade and investment, trade policy advocacy, inputs to commercial and economic legislations, improvement of business climate and trade facilitation, enhancement of SMEs competitiveness through training, technical assistance and international promotion of their products and services; implementation of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, formalization of companies.

Describe some unique tourist experiences that your approach provides. Be specific; give illustrative examples.

Tourists will independently plan their holiday through on-line booking, choosing places to visit and downloading the digital routes guides.

Once at destination, they will live the cocoa production and processing cycle, passing through the evocative roads and green, lush rolling hills and valleys, suggested by the operators on the website.

Visitors will enjoy mountain climbing, or stopping to pick a banana, orange or mango along the way, sample honey, drink coconut water directly from the fruit, or take a rest under swaying palm, mahogany and bamboo trees.

They will be able to take refreshing swims at river falls and streams, taste typical food, come in contact with the local villagers and live their traditions and history.

Tourists who love horseback-riding or cycling will have the opportunity to experience a “burro” ride and use this mean of transport on the Dominican Cocoa Route, encouraging them to respect and share our objective of promoting ecologically sustainable tourism.

We propose an authentic tourist experience different from traditional mass tourism excursions, therefore a totally sustainable type of tourism, both from the environmental perspective, as well as concerning relations that will develop between tourists and local residents.
What types of partnerships or professional development would be most beneficial in spreading your innovation?

Strategic alliances and public-private partnerships with national and international institutions and development cooperation agencies are critical for the development and successful implementation of this innovation.

Partnerships are envisaged with:
- public institutions involved in tourism, competitiveness and export promotion, infrastructure, culture, research and innovation
- international multilateral cooperation agencies/organizations
- travel agencies, tour operators – establish links in their websites to serve as channels for marketing the Dominican Cocoa Route
- firms providing sponsorship and support through corporative social responsibility and other community support programs
- Cultural, Environmental, Tourist national and international NGO’s and foundations
- Specialized geographical and tourism reviews/guides

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/geotourismchallenge/entries/dominican-cocoa-route#comment-0