

Communities Taking Charge!!!

Fondo DESTINOS in the Dominican Republic



The tourism industry in the Dominican Republic has historically been concentrated in major all-inclusive “sun and sand” destinations. Traditionally, local communities provided low-wage labor and produced local handicrafts. To better integrate local communities into the tourism sector, the USAID funded Dominican Sustainable Tourism Alliance (DSTA) started a small grants program for local communities and entrepreneurs. Known locally as “Fondo DESTINOS,” community-based organizations throughout the country now have an opportunity to create and improve local tourism attractions and products while preserving natural habitats and local cultures.

Recently, 105 community-based organizations submitted Fondo DESTINOS concept papers; these applications came from 23 of the 31 provinces in the Dominican Republic. Using an extensive two-tiered selection process, all concept papers were evaluated by a local committee, national selection board, and DSTA officials to ensure both community support and technical feasibility of the projects. At the end of this rigorous process, ten organizations were selected to receive DESTINOS grants ranging from US\$11,000 to US\$56,300 to implement projects. Ultimately, Fondo DESTINOS supports projects that empower communities and protect the tremendously varied natural, cultural and historical resources of the Dominican Republic. Enabling communities to attract and manage



financial resources for tourism not only grows sustainable tourism, it supports cultural diversity while promoting local development.

Micro-enterprise Development: One approved project is a women’s artisan group that will form a jewelry making micro-enterprise in Villas Padre Nuestro. The grant will support the construction of a workshop, a gift shop, and the purchase of necessary equipment.

Building a Mountain Escape: In the mountains of Manabao, Jarabacoa, “La Milagrosa Community Association” was formed in 1963. This organization received a grant that aims to improve ecotourism attractions in their mountainside village. With the grant, wooden cabins, nature trails, campfire facilities, and river bathing areas will be rehabilitated allowing for tourists to experience a unique adventure in a traditional setting. Activities like this bridge cultural gaps, create economic growth, and sustain local communities while preserving natural and cultural dignity.

