



Community Ecotourism Initiative Becomes an Enterprise, Presenting Promising Opportunities for Sustainable Development

The Damajagua River in the Dominican Republic is internationally recognized for its biodiversity, which consists of five ecosystems and holds a unique geology that created the 27 Waterfalls Natural Monument. Since its inauguration in 1999, community organization The Damajagua River Guides Association (AGRD) has relied on management of the 27 Waterfalls eco-tourism attraction as a principal source of local income and community development of Imbert.



Institutional strengthening will benefit community groups such as artisans through improved community programs and employment opportunities.

The 27 Waterfalls attracts tens of thousands of adventurous visitors every year to scale each cascade and make their way down by natural toboggans that pour into refreshing pools of turquoise water.

The attraction is an incredible, lucrative source of revenue and opportunities for enterprise growth within the community with the cooperation of over sixty guides, administrators, and support staff.

The rapid growth and ambitious initiative of AGRD heightens the need for institutional strengthening and improvement of the existing community-run eco-tourism project while taking active measures to redefine the operations of the community organization and become an established, sustainable enterprise.

With USAID-DSTA support, AGRD is soon to have a formal Operations Plan, which will define the business structure, attractions, functions, and codes of conduct. In cooperation with its advisory committee, AGRD will create not only a dynamic Business Plan to manage the influx of tourist fees and community benefits but will also define an extensive strategy for Monument upkeep and conservation of the protected area. A highly-experienced manager will be hired with USAID-DSTA funds to act as a resource for direction and leadership during the process.

The aforementioned performance will not only ensure the financial stability and sustainability of the Dominican Republic's most widely-known ecotourism attraction but also improve operations for the benefit of visitors and the community. AGRD's capacity building program will guarantee a high standard of quality and safety of services offered to visitors by implementing first aid, rescue, language, and customer service trainings for personnel.

With AGRD's efficient operations, The 27 Waterfalls will result in higher visitation rates and escalating revenue for the community, which in previous years has been actively implemented towards community projects such as bus transportation for local students and aqueducts providing water supply to communities in the surrounding area.

Improvements aligned with the community development program will increase the potential for new ventures and the diversification of products through community integration and micro-enterprise growth.