



Micro-enterprises Awaken Economic Opportunities in Los Bueyes

The community of Los Bueyes in the Dominican Republic is located in the province of Espaillat, an area that has suffered from decades of deforestation, low-wage labor, and effects of the “brain drain.” It wasn’t until the Asociación para el Desarrollo de la Provincial Espaillat (ADEPE) started implementing projects concerning reforestation and economic growth that this situation is starting to change.



“Mountain Serene” will benefit from the installation of solar-panels and water heaters, limiting maintenance costs and use of fossil fuels in the community of Los Bueyes.

Currently in the second phase of creating Los Bueyes’s first ecotourism enterprise known as “Mountain Serene” which offers rustic accommodations for domestic and international visitors, Los Bueyes turns to the area’s natural attractions as an opportunity for new sources of revenue, diversity of economic activities, and environmental conservation.

In response to Los Bueyes’s high levels of emigration due to lack of local education past the sixth grade, “Mountain Serene” intends to break the cycle and nurture community enthusiasm and involvement. “The members involved have developed a sense of hope for the community, a community that was being abandoned,” says Dorca Barcaled, Director of ADEPE. “Instead of leaving, more families have returned. The people are taking into consideration that they have a community with potential for development.”

As a project supported by USAID-DSTA, improvements of “Mountain Serene” lodging will provide benefits for its visitors through the installation of water heaters and solar panels providing fossil fuel-free electricity to the site, which cannot rely on the availability of electric energy. In addition, funding will cover the construction and establishment of community-run microenterprises providing five ecotourism operations (kayaking, tubing, camping, hiking, and horseback riding) complementing Mountain Serene.

“There’s a source of income and notable improvement of the community’s attitude towards the project and its natural attractions that wasn’t noticeable before,” says Dorca. “But with the recovery of biodiversity and the people’s attitude things are changing and promoting participation while raising standards of living.”

Residents of Los Bueyes had the opportunity to attend a Business Plan course and then participate in an open competition between community members to determine management of the five micro-enterprises benefiting from USAID-DSTA funding.

“Community members are developing values as well as an education through our workshops,” adds Jose Manuel Comprés, ADEPEs Guide instructor. Several workshops and conferences have ensued covering various topics such as: capacity building for women, self-esteem building, open dialogue between microenterprises, camping organization and hiking safety, and environmental awareness.

In addition, a third of the 26 youth tour guides associated with Mountain Serene hike 20 kilometers every weekend to participate in English language, customer service, and Red Cross first aid workshops. Dorca explains, “You see, the community is extremely motivated. People are coming together to create change in their community.”

Though project progress has been swift and concentrated, ADEPE maintains focus on the bigger picture. “We believe that this project and its effects won’t just stay here in the community but rather create a corridor of ecotourism initiatives in the area,” says Dorca. “We have the institutions, now we need to keep working so it’ll replicate in other areas.”

The project expects to benefit upward of 100 beneficiaries who are directly involved in the project and over 350 people who will indirectly benefit from growth in the local economy and environmental awareness.

“It was difficult to have a project vision without any realization,” states technical assistant Marie Claude Boudreau. “But now the constructions are at hand and the community is extremely enthused.