



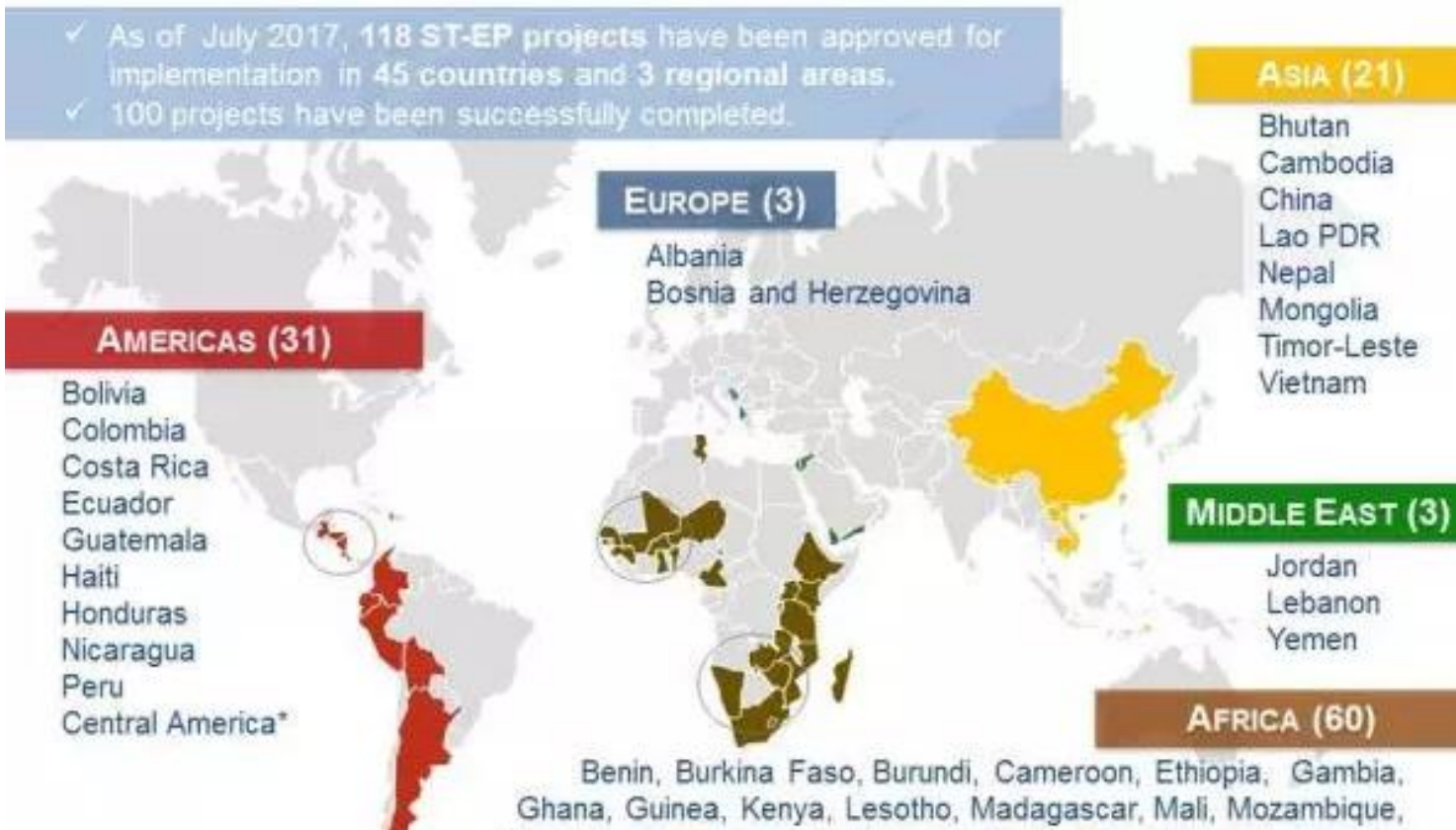
Kisiizi Falls

UNWTO ST-EP Project Analysis

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Source: UNWTO

Overview

Kisiizi Falls is a historical site located in the Rukungiri district of Western Uganda. Once known for its tragic past where unwed pregnant girls were punished to death, the site has now become a tourist attraction due to its beauty and the construction of the Kisiizi Falls Hospital in 1958 (Uganda Tourism Board).

The UNWTO provided support to the Ministry of Tourism in Uganda through the framework of its ST-EP (Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty) program to aid in the touristic and economic development of Kisiizi Falls (UNWTO 2017).

The main objective of the project was to enhance the tourism activities at Kisiizi Falls through the construction of new infrastructures such as a visitor center, bathroom facilities, and hiking trails as well as the addition of recreational activities such as a zipline (UNWTO 2017).



Kisiizi Falls as a Tourist Destination

Kisiizi Falls is an attractive destination because of its historical and social significance which is depicted by the Kisiizi Falls monument, as well as the beauty of the waterfall. Besides sightseeing, tourists can engage in a number of activities. For instance, due to the installation of a suspension bridge and walking paths, visitors can go hiking and bird watching. In addition, the project has created a lagoon for kayaking and a nearby zipline for recreational use.

The Falls are located on land owned by the Kisiizi Hospital which makes it a popular location for hospital staff and nursing students. Moreover, the majority of visitors are domestic tourists (Kisiizi Hospital 2019).

Image Source: UNWTO, "Kisiizi Falls Tourism Project in Uganda Successfully Completed" Oct 17, 2017.

Economic Impact

According to the UNWTO (2017), Kisiizi Falls saw an increase in tourism traffic after the completion of the project in 2017. It was reported that Kisiizi Falls received 7,856 visitors and entrance fees generated 9,146,000 Ugandan Shilling (~ 2,248 Euros) during the first half of 2017.

As of November 2019, Kisiizi Falls has had a total of 4,942 visitors and a cumulative total of 22,817 visitors since the end of 2016 (Kisiizi Falls Hospital 2019). The Financial income generated as of November 2019 is 14,096,000 UGX (~3,525 Euros) from entrance fees and 8,423,395 UGX (~2,105 Euros) from sales made in the visitor center for a total of 22,519,395 UGX or approximately 5,535 Euro. Furthermore, Kisiizi Falls reported a total profit of 44,074,000 UGX (~11,018 Euros) for admission fees from December 23, 2016 to November 11, 2019 (Kisiizi Hospital 2019).

The project employs three fulltime employees and extra staff are recruited during the winter holiday season, which sees a high increase of visitors (Kisiizi Hospital 2019). There are also per diem workers from the Kisiizi Hospital Power Limited Hydroelectricity generating company who help to staff the zipline. The project also indirectly employs local workers who make Kisiizi Falls coffee and handicraft items which are sold in the visitor center. In addition, bags made by hospital workers are sold at the visitor center to supplement their income (Kisiizi Hospital 2019).

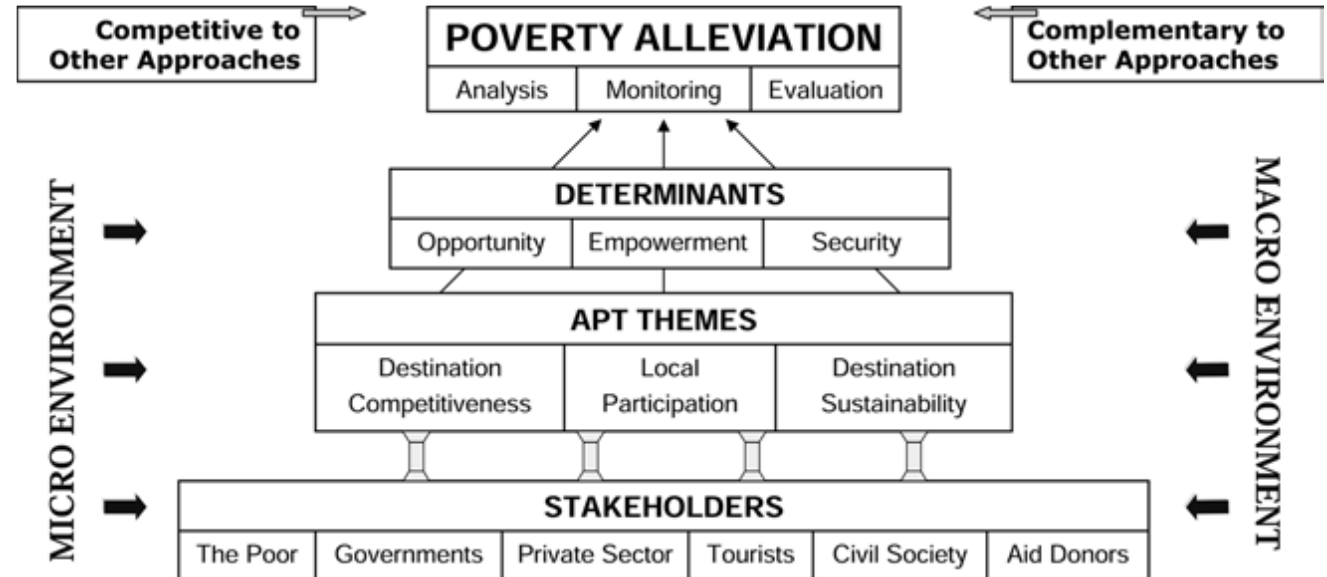
Some of the funds from Kisiizi Falls are given to the Good Samaritan Fund to help poor and sick people in the community (Kisiizi Hospital 2019).

Anti-Poverty Integrative Framework

One method that can be used to analyze the effectiveness of tourism on poverty reduction is the Anti Poverty Tourism (APT) integrative framework (Zhao & Ritchie 2007). The APT model is a proposed guide to further research pro-poor tourism approaches. There are four levels of the APT framework: poverty alleviation, determinants, APT themes, and APT stakeholders.

In order to alleviate poverty, it is necessary to define poverty on a microscale by asking questions such as “What is poverty and who are the poor?” “What are the reasons for poverty?” and “How to measure poverty and track the progress towards poverty alleviation?” (Zhao & Ritchie 2007,13). Unfortunately, economic data specific to Rukungiri district is not extensive, but we can access poverty in Uganda.

The GDP per capita in Uganda is about 642 USD (~2,351,549 UGX and 574 Euros) and poverty is concentrated in rural areas in the North and East (The World Bank 2018;2016,18). It is determined by several elements such as family size, level of education, and access to utilities such as electricity and water. Moreover, some reasons for poverty in Uganda are inadequate access to services, undeveloped infrastructures and large unsupportable household sizes. Kisiizi is located in Western Uganda, which has a lower poverty rate than the North and East, but it still falls behind Central Uganda which hosts the urban capital, Kampala. For example, 40% of residents in Central Uganda have electricity compared to only 8% in Western Uganda. (The World Bank 2016,19).




Source: Anti-Poverty Integrative Framework model in *Pro-Poor Tourism: Who Benefits? Perspectives on Tourism and Poverty Reduction*.

Anti-Poverty Integrative Framework

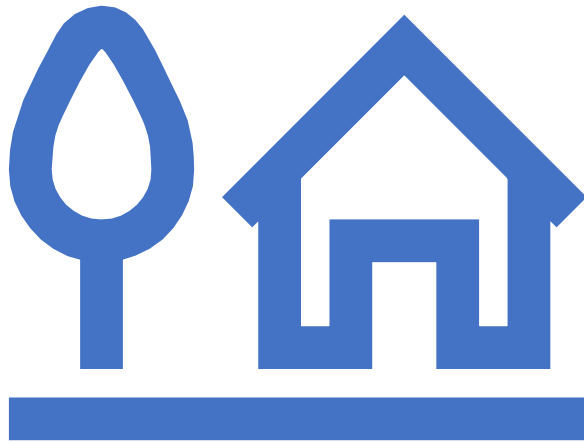
The determinants of poverty reduction include opportunity, empowerment, and security. Opportunity refers to access to economic opportunities that can change the economic status of the poor (Zhao & Ritchie 2007). Empowerment refers to either the economic or political empowerment of the local people. Economic empowerment is the ability to build assets to engage in markets and political empowerment is the capacity to influence state and social institutions which strengthen participation in political processes. Security refers to reducing vulnerability to risks such as poor health, unexpected economic occurrences, and natural disasters (Zhao & Ritchie 2007).

In regards to Kisiizi Falls, the availability of economic opportunities are few. There are only three fulltime staff members and extra staff are temporary. Moreover, only three locals have the ability to change their economic status. The destination indirectly employs local production workers but the number of employees and revenue generated from this is unknown. The economic and political empowerment is little to none as Kisiizi Falls is still a developing tourist destination. It is possible if the destination continues to grow and proves to be of importance, the locals can have influence on the local economy and stakeholder decisions.

The primary economic sector in the Rukungiri district is agriculture and it employs 90% of the population (Rukungiri District Local Government 2015, 15). Therefore, tourism is not a prosperous economic sector and it does not provide enough revenue to support the local economy. Although Kisiizi Falls does not provide economic security, the funds that aid the development of the Good Samaritan Fund provide health security. In addition, Kisiizi Falls brings in additional revenue that would be nonexistent without the implementation of the ST-EP project. This could help locals if there is agricultural instability or an unexpected economic occurrence.



Anti-Poverty Integrative Framework



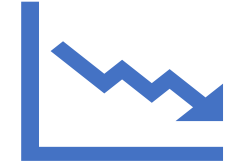
The themes to consider when developing a pro-poor tourism project are destination competitiveness, local participation, and destination sustainability. Although, Kisiizi is a developing tourist destination, it still has to distinguish itself from its immediate competitors. Kisiizi Falls faces competition from the numerous national parks and outdoor sites in Uganda such as Queen Elizabeth National Park and Bwindi Forest. The Falls are distinct from similar locations because of the historical significance of the location and recent development of activities like ziplining. In addition, it is more advantageous for Kisiizi to attract domestic tourists rather than international tourists as it requires a lower demand of resources which helps to gradually attain competitive elements (Seckelmann, 2002; Sindiga, 1996). The majority of Kisiizi visitors are domestic tourists and it plans to attract more Ugandan tourists with formal touring visits (Kisiizi Hospital 2019).

There are two forms of local participation which are economic and public (Zhao & Ritchie 2007). There is economic local participation in Kisiizi Falls as local workers gain wages and paid work from the tourism sector. Publicly, Kisiizi Falls does not engage in any public councils or any decision making processes.

Destination sustainability is the final theme and it aims to determine if tourism practices are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. The Kisiizi Falls project is still in its early stages but it has placed an emphasis on environmental sustainability. Kisiizi Falls has initiated educational demonstrations to teach local students about hydroelectricity generation and has designated an area of land to encourage repopulation of birds that have lost their habitats due to agricultural development (Kisiizi Hospital 2019). The site is also economically and socially sustainable due to training provided by the UNWTO STEP Program. With the knowledge acquired, staff and the management team know how to properly maintain a tourist destination to benefit the social and economic needs of the community.

The primary stakeholders in the Kisiizi Falls project are the poor, tourists, the Kisiizi Hospital, UNWTO, and the Korean Tourism Organization, which helped to fund the project. Currently the project does not have any private stakeholders which could be detrimental to its longevity. Without the support of the private sector, the tourism sector in a developing destination like Kisiizi will experience difficulties to flourish (Zhao & Ritchie 2007, 20).

SWOT Analysis



Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides employment• Managed by locals• Donates revenue to the Good Samaritan Fund and supports the Kisiizi Hospital.• Educates locals on tourism sector and environmental sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Far away from the capital city Kampala in a secluded location (~6hrs by car).• Limited full-time job opportunities• Tourism is a small economic sector and does not provide a lot of benefits to the local economy.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possibility to diversify the economic sector with tourism.• Future partnerships with local accommodation/ recreation sites to increase revenue and employment opportunities.• Market tours to Ugandans to increase domestic tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competition from similar tourist sites• Kisiizi Falls is managed by a small team of 9 people that also manage several other projects. Preoccupation with other tasks can slow down productivity and management.



Conclusion & Recommendations

Kisiizi Falls has grown as a tourism destination and tourism sales have benefited the community. But the beneficial effects of tourism are not only limited to tourism expenditure (Capo & Valle 2008, 203). The concept of rural tourism and rural entrepreneurship have previously been discussed by Díaz-Pérez C. Fernández-Hernández, J. A. Alvarez González et al. (2008) in regards to La Palma in Spain. The authors state that the purpose of rural tourism and entrepreneurship is to diversify the resources of farmers so that they can supplement their incomes. Comparably, the Kisiizi Falls project provides extra support for the local community that would not be available without the funds created from the tourist destination. Moreover, the primary purpose of the project is not necessarily to maximize profit but to improve economic and social conditions and to empower local community members through the management of a tourist destination. In addition, the project is not managed by the rich or affluent but by locals, and more specifically a local stakeholder, the Kisiizi Hospital. Furthermore, the UNWTO project is not subject to a trickle down effect in which the revenue generated goes directly to the wealthy. Instead, locals are directly receiving the benefits of tourism.

Though the project has been beneficial to the development of Kisiizi, some recommendations would be to increase stable full-time employment opportunities, increase political empowerment through public engagement, and enlist support from private stakeholders to strengthen the tourism sector.

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