

G20 Tourism Side Event Focuses on Rural Tourism for Community Empowerment

***Rann of Kutch, India, 9 February 2023** – The first meeting of the G20 Tourism Working Group to be held under the Indian Presidency placed the focus on the sector's role in advancing the 2030 Agenda.*

UNWTO is working as the knowledge partner to the Presidency to deliver the Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a Vehicle for Achieving the SDGs. This week's meeting, held in the Rann of Kutch (7-9 February), featured as well a side event dedicated to rural tourism for community development and poverty alleviation. Here, UNWTO shared its recently launched **Tourism for Rural Development Programme**, including the Best Tourism Villages Initiative.

The side event was an opportunity to highlight opportunities for rural tourism, including new consumer behaviors and growing interest in new destinations. The meeting also explored the main challenges facing the sector, particularly with regards to digital and non-digital infrastructure, the **empowerment of local communities and skills development**. The findings presented were the result of an analysis of more than 200 candidacies by villages from around the world to the **Best Tourism Villages** Initiative as well as UNWTO Member States priorities and policies.

Representatives from Indonesia, Spain, Italy and Japan joined UNWTO, the UN Environmental Program, the International Labor Organization and the South Asia Women's Network (SWAN) in discussing how can tourism policy can support tourism's contribution to rural development. Participants stressed that the sustainability of tourism in rural areas is dependent on a comprehensive planning strategy is adopted and implemented based on a multi-action and multi-stakeholder participatory approach. Furthermore, it was noted that rural tourism requires the support of regional and local governments, the private sector, industry associations, civil society, communities and tourists.

In 2021, recognizing the immense potential of rural tourism in the country, the Ministry of Tourism of India formulated a National Strategy and Roadmap for Development of Rural Tourism. Reflecting this, the event included also rural tourism cases from India, including examples from Astro-tourism, homestays and women empowerment as well as the Indian village selected by UNWTO to join the Best Tourism Villages Upgrade Programme – the Khonoma Village in Nagaland.

Related Links

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