



A Concept Note for Multiple District 19 Lions



Project Name: Women's Economic Empowerment through Community Based Tourism

Location: Chota Valley, Ecuador

Amount Requested: \$80,000 (Over Two Years)

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Introduction

Most of the rural economy in Ecuador relies on the work of women. But there is a huge gender gap in the country, giving women access to only a fraction of the productive assets, inputs, training and information that men have. According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, only 5 percent of all extension resources – such as inputs and training – are directed at women. Moreover, only 15 percent of extension workers are female. In Ecuador, between 10 percent and 20 percent of all landholders are women, but the amount of female smallholders who can access credit is 5 percent to 10 percent lower than male smallholders. Women often are relegated to activities with lower added value, and their huge contributions are not recognized or remunerated. CARE works in many of the most beautiful places in Ecuador, which have considerable potential for tourism, although poor communities suffer from the constraints mentioned above.

CARE's Capacity and Project Strategy

CARE has worked in Ecuador since 1962. To address the underlying causes of poverty, we have defined a program strategy that consists of three key elements that apply to all programs: 1) Increase the capacity of key local and national actors; 2) Support integral development approaches developed by excluded

groups; and 3) Influence policies and promote civic and private attitudes and practices at the local, regional and national level that promote equity, inclusion and improved power relations. To operationalize this strategy, CARE pursues a multi-disciplinary approach to the design and implementation of programs in democracy and governance, education, health, water and sanitation, natural resource management and economic development, with a focus on empowering women and girls.

According to the World Bank, tourism has been steadily increasing in Ecuador, with tourist arrivals growing from 440,000 in 1995 to 1.3 million in 2015. However, with large national and international companies dominating this market, revenues from tourism have not always reached the community level. Community-based tourism (CBT) is a way of promoting tourism in a way that is inclusive for host communities and maximizes their income, while being environmentally and socially sustainable. CBT is experiencing a growing international demand. Tourists attracted by this alternative style of travel are interested in experiencing something different from the mainstream tourism circuits directed by international tour operators and large hotel chains. CBT is an activity with high potential for women's economic empowerment, as the economic activities promoted in the communities are usually led by women.

Goal, Strategies and Activities

The *Women's Economic Empowerment Through Community Based Tourism* project will, in partnership with the private sector, test and scale up innovative business models to promote community-based tourism and empower women in low income communities in the ecological route through Cayambe, Cotacachi and the Chota Valley. **This project will benefit 500 people – making up 100 families – in the target communities.** The project will promote CBT value chains that are inclusive and empowering for women, and connect international and local tour operators to the communities with community-based tourism projects. The initiative will be designed as a social business driven by CARE, working toward income generation, sustainability and scalability.

Strategy

- Increase and diversify income sources in rural communities through women's economic empowerment interventions, also increasing resilience.
- Economically empower women, who usually provide substantial contributions to the tourism industry as service providers, input providers and entrepreneurs.
- Provide communities with access to private-sector companies and other important decision-makers, so they can have influence on their own development strategies.

Activities

- Select target communities in coordination with relevant social actors.
- Define the profile of the pilot tourists together with the partner company (volunteers sent by CARE private-sector partners during the first pilot).
- Conduct feasibility study and baseline survey; monitor and evaluate the project's impact.
- Design draft business plan.
- Secure agreements with private-sector partners.
- Establish mechanisms for host communities to be able to permanently accommodate tourist traffic.

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