Title of the Story: COMMUNITY TOURISM AND EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN IN SAN MARTIN

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Nomination Category: (Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)

☐ Localizing the destination supply chain
☐ Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
☐ Culture & Communities
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☒ Nature & Ecotourism
☐ Tourism Reset & Recovery

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Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

What was the problem/issue solved with the good practice? Click to add your text

TURISMO COMUNITARIO Y EMPODERAMIENTO DE LA MUER RURAL EN SAN MARTIN

On the sides of the Huallaga River, in the middle of two protected natural areas: the Cordillera Escalera Regional Conservation Area and the Cordillera Azul National Park, in the touristic town of Chazuta, a group of rural women organized in the Association of Agricultural Producers Mishky Cacao, are one of the main attractions of the Cacao Route. Here they offer the organic handmade chocolate they produce with the cocoa that they and their families grow on their own farms. This chocolate has achieved international recognition for its quality and fineness, being recognized as the best handmade chocolate at the Salon du Chocolat in Paris in 2014. The Mishkys, as they are known, are part of the Chazuta Community Tourism undertaking, which is currently marketed by tour operators in the department. However, the story was very different 25 years ago. The economy of the farmers revolved around the cultivation of coca, which was produced for sale to collector who then inserted it into the illegal drug market chain. This situation generated social instability and violence, and the incipient tourist development was threatened by the bad image that the region projected, to the point that San Martin was listed as a "department not recommended for visiting" in the publications that the Ministry of Tourism published for foreign visitors. The tourist flow registered by the Directorate of Tourism in 1993 barely reached 48,524 annual arrivals (only 4,034 per month). At that time, Chazuta was one of the main exit routes for coca, and for the majority of farmers of the town, this product was their livelihood. Women were responsible for the domestic environment and helped in the fields.

The environmental problem was also critical; coca cultivation seriously affected the region's fragile ecosystem, resulting in deforestation, soil erosion and contamination, water contamination, drug trafficking and terrorism. In the year 2000, San Martin had become the most deforested region of the country, with 1,260,176 hectares of damaged forest, which meant 24.5% of the regional surface. In other words, our main comparative advantages for sustainable tourism (nature and biodiversity) were being devastated.

Faced with this bleak outlook, the authorities of the region, civil society and mainly the farmers of San Martin, decided to bet on an alternative crop that could replace coca, insert itself into the market guaranteeing a decent income, contribute progressively to pacify the region and help generate favorable conditions for other licit economic activities for which the region had great potential, such as tourism. Cocoa, which at that time was basically produced for self-consumption, was chosen. The women opted for the challenge of giving added value to this "native" or "criollo" cocoa, among others, and thus improve their income, their children's education and the quality of life of their community.
The implementation of the process to reverse the farmers' economy (linked to coca) and promote an alternative licit crop, allowed laying the foundations for the development of tourism. This required a joint effort between the main actors in the region, the Regional Government and local provincial governments (generating regulatory instruments and training projects as well as technical assistance to producers), international cooperation (complementing the financial and technical support) and mainly the farmers (who assumed the challenge of migrating to other crops, such as cocoa) and the women of San Martin, rural and urban, who transformed this product into chocolate that today is the pride of the region. To this purpose, several aspects were worked on:

A) Regulatory instruments

1. In 2005, through Regional Ordinance No. 021-2005-GRSM/CR, San Martin was declared an Environmental Emergency and Regional Decree No. 004-2005-GRSM/PGR prohibits slash-and-burn forest fires.

2. In 2006, through Regional Ordinance No. 012-2006-GRSM/CR, the territorial planning and Ecological Economic Zoning (ZEE) was initiated. The territory is classified into Productive Zones, Ecological Protection and Conservation Zones, Special Treatment Zones, Recovery Zones, and Urban and Industrial Zones. Sixty-four percent of the region’s territory is classified as protected and conservation areas. To date, there are four protected natural areas: Cordillera Azul National Park, Río Abiseo National Park, Alto Mayo Protected Forest, and Cordillera Escalera Regional Conservation Area. All of them have Master Plans in which the promotion of ecotourism is an important part of their management.

3. In 2008, Regional Ordinance No. 008-2008-GRSM/CR was issued, approving the Regional Forestry Plan, which is based on three pillars: 1) Reforestation and Agroforestry, 2) Management of Productive Forests, and 3) Conservation and Environmental Services. Cocoa cultivation is promoted under the Reforestation and Agroforestry pillar (Axis: Commercial plantations).

4. In 2010, the Regional Environmental Authority -ARA was created (Regional Ordinance No. 037-2010-GRSM/CR), an important government body whose function is to generate, promote and monitor environmental management in San Martin.

5. In 2016, with Regional Ordinance No. 008-2016-GRSM/CR, cocoa was declared a priority production chain in the region.

6. Similarly, provincial and district governments, in the framework of their Organic Law of Municipalities, developed their own Ecological and Ecological Zoning processes. These processes were promoted and accompanied by the regional government and various international and national cooperation institutions.

B) Promotion of Producer Associativity

A strong effort was made to promote producer associativity in order to provide training and technical assistance services from the cooperation and the government to achieve homogeneous quality and
volumes in order to have a better articulation to the market and strengthen their negotiating capacity. There are currently 46 organizations in the department (grouping 9,903 cocoa producers and 16,094 non-grouped producers).

C) Training and Technical Assistance
The Regional Government and different local NGOs have provided training and assistance with technological packages to improve quality and productivity. An example of this is the cocoa from the province of Tocache (south of the region), which obtained first place in productivity in the world, with a harvest of 3,800 kg per hectare. D) Articulation to the market
The articulation of the product to the market -national and international- in its different states: cocoa bean, cocoa liquor and chocolates was and is still being supported. Associations and companies are encouraged and supported to attend national and international fairs and events such as the Salon du Chocolat de Paris.

E) Transformation to generate added value
The achievements in this aspect are particularly important: from only four chocolate enterprises in 2010, there are currently 32 small chocolate enterprises registered, most of them managed by women and several of them by rural women, such as the emblematic case of the Mishkys. With significant advances in the pacification of the region, the reversion of coca plantations for cocoa and the improvement of San Martin's image, tourism began to emerge as a strategic alternative for the region. In 2003, the Tourism Roundtable was created, made up of the Regional Chamber of Tourism CARETUR San Martin, the Association of Travel and Tourism Agencies of San Martin APAVIT San Martin, the Tourism Facilitation Committee of the Guillermo del Castillo Paredes Airport in the city of Tarapoto, the Provincial Municipality of San Martin, the Chamber of Commerce of San Martin, the Regional Directorate of Tourism and other related institutions such as the Regional Environmental Commission CAR San Martin. The active and important work of this committee to put tourism on the regional agenda is the background for the creation in 2008, with Regional Ordinance No. 029-2008-GRSM/CR, of the Regional Tourism Council of San Martin, as "the highest coordinating, propositional and consensus-building body for tourism sector policies in the San Martin Region". The current Tourism Management Committees of Alto Mayo and Tarapoto Destination are based on these platforms and have actively promoted the growth of tourism in the region.

F) generation of new tourism products
Based on the Mishky experience, new tourism products were identified, either linked to cultural heritage or natural heritage, in which rural women or native communities could participate. These initiatives were inserted into the National Community Tourism Programme implemented by the Ministry of Tourism. Of the five that the region has registered in this programme, three are managed by women.

Key success factors

What helped you tackle the issues? Click to add your text
The existence of a National Anti-Drug Strategy, which expressed the country's political will to fight this scourge, made it possible to articulate multisectoral work at the three levels of government: national, regional and local. This work resulted in the reconfiguration of the region's economy; coca crops were replaced mainly by cocoa and coffee, which became the most important products in the department's exportable supply.
This new scenario allowed a positive change in the region’s image and made possible a sustained growth, registering 1,290,187 arrivals in 2019 -prior to the pandemic-, that is, 107,515 monthly arrivals, making San Martin the department with the highest flow among those of the Peruvian Amazon.

The National Community Tourism Program implemented by the Ministry of Tourism was used to insert initiatives linked to women and native communities that the region has promoted and accompanied.

Lessons learned
While implementing the Good Practice what challenges were faced, and how were they overcome? Click to add your text

- A central challenge was to overcome the reluctance and distrust of coca growers to migrate to substitute crops that were less profitable than coca. The organization of cooperatives or associations that received individual production in order to increase volumes, achieve better prices and make sales, was essential for the farmer to quickly make his product profitable and gain confidence.

- Another challenge has been and continues to be to achieve standardized quality in regional production. Technical assistance to producers with professionals from cooperation agencies and the regional government has this objective, as well as improving crop productivity.

Results, achievements and recognitions
What were the qualitative and quantitative results of the good practice? Has it received any rewards? Click to add your text

Recovery of the region’s natural heritage.
This is an important achievement because most of the tourism resources are linked to San Martin’s natural heritage (lakes, waterfalls, birds, orchids, insects, forests, etc.).

- San Martin is the only region in Peru that complies with international treaties in terms of reducing deforestation, since 2007 to date it has fallen by 50%.

- Coca cultivation has been steadily reduced in San Martin, from 28,600 hectares in 1992 to 1,238 hectares in 2012, 832 hectares in 2019 and to date, coca cultivation has no presence in the region.

- More than 50% of San Martin’s territory is under a protection modality. 2) Cocoa in the region’s new economic structure

- According to data from the Central Reserve Bank, San Martin has become Peru’s main cocoa supplier. (38.2% of the national total). In 2020, 70,549 hectares were planted.

- Cocoa provides employment and self-employment for 25,927 producers (9,903 associated and 16,024 unorganized).

- San Martin provides almost 40% of the country’s cocoa exports: It is important to note that Peru is the world’s leading producer with double certification: organic and Fairtrade, and the second largest exporter of organic cocoa in the world. Peru also provides 20% of the organic and highquality cocoa marketed in the world.

3) Cocoa, tourism and empowerment of rural women.

- Perhaps the greatest result of this process is that cocoa, transformed into chocolate, by women who have formed small businesses in rural areas such as the Mishkys in Chazuta, has served for their empowerment because in a short time they have gone from peasant women to successful businesswomen. Their enterprise is part of the Cacao Tourist Route in Chazuta, together with
the artisans of Wasichay, who develop ceramics that have been declared National Cultural Heritage.

- The leadership and entrepreneurship of rural women has generated a new opportunity for the communities (Professor Muhammad Yunus - Women at the center of our economic activity (see https://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/learn/knowledge-resources/editorial-opinion-piece-blogpost/profesor-muhammad-yunus-las-mujeres-en).

- The growth of tourism in the region has enabled rural women in particular to find in it an opportunity to generate additional income and thus complement the family economy and contribute to their empowerment. This is the case of Community Tourism ventures such as "El Bosque de las Nuwas" Awajun women who show their ancestral knowledge, "Las Cuevas de Palestina" product of spelunking conducted by women, "La Reserva de Santa Elena" and "Chazuta".

**Additional references**

*Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from Youtube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL.*

- [https://www.minagri.gob.pe/portal/download/pdf/especiales/bioenergia/san_martin/Planfor estalpresentacion_SAN_MARTIN.pdf](https://www.minagri.gob.pe/portal/download/pdf/especiales/bioenergia/san_martin/Planfor estalpresentacion_SAN_MARTIN.pdf)
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