

Stakeholders want greater safety, security in tourism

By Veneranda Sumila
BusinessWeek Reporter

Dar es Salaam. The police force in Tanzania late last year established a special unit to beef up safety and security in the tourism industry. Stakeholders led by the Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO) have welcomed the move, saying it is long overdue.

Assistant commissioner of police Mr Benedict Kitalika at a stakeholders meeting in Dar es Salaam recently, revealed that the newly established Tourist Police Unit, has 60 officers and is seeking funding to increase the number to 300, and equip the officers with necessary skills for the new task. Currently, the unit is grossly underfunded and with no basic facilities, it was reported.

TATO chairman, Mr Leopold Kabendera, thanked the government for looking into the concerns of the private sector and established the unit. "The establishment of police unit to cater for the tourism industry was a step in the right direction. Also the announcement that the police force and the ministry of tourism are working on a memorandum of understating that would seek to tighten tourists' security country-wide is very commendable," he said.

Tanzania is a relatively peaceful nation but isolated cases such as mugging tourists and robbing them of personal effects have been known to happen. Some of these incidents have happened in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. There is also the killing of 57-year-old Dutch tourist, Eric Brewelmans, in the neighbourhood of the famous Serengeti National Park mid-last year. These incidents send the wrong signals to prospective visitors.

Then there are also the recent brutal murder of Roman Catholic



Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism Khamis Kagasheki and Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO) chairman Leopold Kabendera at a cocktail to launch International Tourism Marketing Strategy for Tanzania late last year. PHOTO | PAMOMA

Church Priest Evarist Mushi in Zanzibar; attacks on a church as well as last Saturday's killing of an Islamic Imam Khamis Ali, plus last year's attacks on Father Ambrose Mkenda and Muslim Cleric Sheikh Mussa Fadhili Soroga. These also send yet another message that Zanzibar may be unsafe to visitors. However, the government of Zanzibar, through its Information, Tourism and Culture minister, Mr Said Ali Mbarouk, allayed fears earlier this week, assuring investors, visitors and tourists that the semi-autonomous archipelago is safe and that police and security organs had initiated a round-the-

clock surveillance to ensure safety of people including tourists, investors and their properties.

The creation of this police unit is a sign of the government's commitment to protecting visitors, who bring colossal economic benefits to the country. Tanzania's economy is more dependent on tourism for revenue than any other country in East Africa.

The sector accounts for 17 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Tanzania; 5.7 per cent of the GDP in Kenya; 4.0 per cent of the GDP in Uganda; 3.3 per cent of the GDP in Rwanda and 3.6 per cent in Burundi. The sector is second only to gold in terms of foreign earnings.

Tourism receipts jumped from \$1.353 billion in 2011 to \$1.564 billion last year. It is, therefore, not too far-fetched to liken tourism to the goose that lays Tanzania's golden eggs. Whatever the circumstances, this sector cannot be killed. Indeed, we must do all we can to ensure it thrives. It is basing on this that TATO, according to Mr Kabendera, as well as other tourism stakeholders, are looking forward towards having a precise legal framework that provides specific security and safety for tourists.

Such a framework will determine how the Tourist Police Unit operates. For "Destination Tanzania" to remain competitive, security issues, pertaining tourists need to be comprehensively addressed through public private partnership, he said.

"We are grateful the public sector is listening to the private sector," he said. For years TATO has been advocating for greater tourism safety and security, whereby in 2011 it sought for solution. With funding from BEST AC, TATO conducted two studies: "The Impact of Crimes on Tourism in Tanzania" and "Review

of Legal Framework on Safety and Security for Tourism in Tanzania."

The studies called for the establishment of a Tourist Police Unit for ensuring security and safety of tourists among other things.

Mr Kabendera called for the review of police training curriculum to include tourism safety, as the industry was vital for Tanzania's current and future economic prospects.

"Tourism stakeholders are ready to discuss the police training curriculum development with the government, so as to include tourist safety and security," he said.

According to Mr Kabendera it is paramount for every police officer in the country to know the vital contributions of tourism to the economy.

According to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) more than any other economic activity, the success or failure of the tourism destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors. TATO's policy proposal presented to stakeholders called for policy and laws reforms that will provide clear provisions on tourists' security. The proposal indicated that safety and security have been identified as one of the five global factors that would drive the tourism industry in the new millennium.

"The Tanzania tourism industry currently is faced with challenges on the security and safety of the tourists and their personal effects while visiting the country," noted the TATO document.

The government of Tanzania has the responsibility for the legal, regulatory and judicial framework; fostering and prevention of crime; and providing adequate information to tourists to enhance their safety and security, notes the document.

THE NUMBERS: WEALTH

Two

The number that Tanzania holds world-wide in terms of natural resources attractiveness, according to the World Economic Forum (2011)

110

Tanzania's ranking in terms of tourism competitiveness out of 139 countries studied. This is a fall from 98 to 110 in the previous year- World Economic Forum (2011).

Sh2.502tr

The amount that Tanzania earned from travel and related activities in 2012 according to the Bank of Tanzania

17.5 pc

The contribution of tourism to Tanzania's Gross Domestic Product

CHALLENGES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

Lack of specific provisions under the law that clearly address security and safety issues for tourists.

Lack of a legal framework with specific provisions (laws and regulations) to deal with tourism safety and security.

Tourist Police Unit is very young and underfunded

Tanzania Mainland, Zanzibar have different Penal Decree with different provisions

The Tourism Act 2008 does not clearly provide the role of police officers in dealing with security and safety issues in tourism.

WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS WANT?

Tourism stakeholders want deliberate action to ensure tourist Safety and Security. TATO with support of other stakeholders proposes several urgent measures that must be taken to ensure comprehensive tourism security:

Amend the tourism policy to address tourist security risks or alternatively development of a separate national tourism safety and security policy

Enactment of law to take care of Tourism Safety and Security that would guide regulatory and judicial framework; fostering and prevention of crime; and providing adequate information for tourists to enhance their safety and security. Incorporate the new Tourism Police Unit into the Police Force Organization Structure just like other departments (Prison, FFU, Traffic Police etc). This will enable the unit to be allocated with funds and resources from the Government's Annual Budget just like other departments of the same Force.



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