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FACTSHEET

Sustainable Winter Tourism Kyrgyzstan (WTK)

Developing sustainable tourism in Kyrgyzstan, with the perspective of economic opportunities and year-round jobs for women and men.

Country/region
Kyrgyzstan

Executing agency
Helvetas

Duration
2021–2026

Total budget
CHF 3,500,000

SECO contribution
CHF 3,500,000

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Rationale

Tourism in Kyrgyzstan has great potential to contribute to economic growth and sustainable development, creating income and economic opportunities for a wide range of people. To realize its full potential, the Kyrgyz tourism sector needs to overcome a series of competitiveness constraints and overarching sustainability issues. While favourable geographic conditions and existing infrastructure do offer opportunities for year-round tourism, a particular challenge is that the traditional tourism season in Kyrgyzstan is short and to date mostly limited to summer. Moreover, the projected growth in the number of tourists over the coming years, coupled with low productivity and insufficient capacity for stakeholders to collaborate effectively, could lead to a series of compounding social and ecological problems.

A two-year pilot project from 2019-2021 confirmed the potential and viability of developing winter tourism and served to identify entry points to remove barriers to inclusive and sustainable market growth. Building on these cornerstones, WTK will now strengthen the current off-seasons tourism offering to contribute to the sustainable development of the Kyrgyz tourism sector overall over the next years.

Objectives and activities

By 2026, WTK's overarching goal is to contribute to increasing decent jobs and income opportunities for women and men, with the perspective of year-round jobs through the development of a sustainable value chain. The concrete approach taken is to create high economic value and low social and environmental impacts, focusing on quality services rather than quantity, with certified actors in tourism destinations. National, regional and international tourists satisfied with the services will arrive in greater numbers and stay longer; thus small businesses' turnover will increase and additional employment opportunities be created.

The project focuses on the destination of Karakol in the Eastern part of the country. Karakol is to become a model for a participatory, green, and socially inclusive tourism development, which can inform reform at the national level.

In the current phase, WTK looks to achieve its goals through three interconnected sets of activities:

1. Capacity building for micro-, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs): MSMEs in Karakol will be supported to improve their business skills to provide quality and safe services along the winter tourism value chain. These enterprises will offer new safe tourism products within the areas of winter sports and year-round cultural tourism.

2. Strengthening of institutions in the sector: Key institutional partners are in a position to support a favourable business environment and improved coordination mechanisms among key tourisms stakeholders. This enhances competitiveness and fosters inclusion of businesses and local communities that will be consulted and involved in tourism development.

3. Developing tourism more sustainably: Enterprises, associations, and authorities are supported to embed sustainability aspects in their operations through good environmental and social practices and planning in line with sustainable tourism standards. Local stakeholders capacities to monitor and steer tourism development get stronger, in order to address sustainability systematically along the tourism value chain.

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Helvetas Project Website: Sustainable Winter Tourism | Kyrgyzstan | Helvetas