

TOURISM INDUSTRY CHARITIES:
TRAVELLING FULL CIRCLE

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STARTING AT HOME

For the tens of thousands of professionals in the global travel and tourism industry, whether within the public or private sector, front line or back of house, below sea level or 35,000 feet, stitching curios or strategising new television creative, a shared sense of purpose, and shared point of pride, creates a global bond.

Even if the exact statistics are not shared in understanding, the fact that:

- 1 billion international arrivals are estimated in 2012,
- over 1 trillion US dollars was generated by the sector in 2011,
- the sector accounted for 5% of global GDP and 9% of investment, and critically,
- 1 in 12 jobs worldwide created by the industry,

worldwide, tens of thousands of people who work in the travel and tourism industry, know deep down they are part of something special. They know, they feel, that through tourism the people of a destination are able to feel a sense of pride in their country, participation in their economy, and hope in the future.

And, that they are able to stand up alongside any other country with an invitation to travellers worldwide to “*come to my home*” – unlocking a unique opportunity for learning of one another’s culture, history, heritage, values and aspirations.

For all the mobile phones and e-connections that the world has to offer, nothing connects people in mind, heart and place like tourism.

The sense of blessing of being part of such a rich industry often leaves tourism professionals wondering “*what more can I do?*” especially when taking travelers to destinations around the corner and around the globe that clearly are in need. Water. Education. Technology. Skills development. Opportunity. Possibility.

And so, even while the qualitative and quantitative benefits of inspiring travellers to travel are clear, often the question still remains: *What more could the industry do?*

Not surprisingly, this question is not one lacking a chorus.

The tourism industry has, for many years and generations of travel, been active in encouraging its guests, travellers, patrons and partners to take part in foundations and charities. Hotels and airlines lead the way in initiatives that invite travelers to spare a moment to put their spare change towards programmes aimed at bettering the lives of children in select parts of the world in which they fly, host, or have another form of presence. From BA to EK, Banyan Tree to Red Carnation, the breadth and depth of efforts underway by the sector is truly inspiring. The industry working with the traveller is proving a powerful combination.

But still, this industry, one constantly viewing the world, constantly seeing the connections, constantly seeing need, continues asking the question: *What more could the industry do?*

FOR THE GREATER GOOD

A new wave of activity has started to gain in strength and spread: the industry working with *the industry* to make a wider difference. More and more, industry associations and

communities are coming together to do their bit, play their part, working with other industry professionals to create an impact together, over and above efforts in place within their respective businesses. The sense of *'what more could we do?'* is reaching across to traditional competitors, bringing common desire to do more to the fore.

In some cases this joining of hands, joining of forces, has been prompted by tragedy, pushing tourism industry leaders to lead by example.

The day will forever be etched in the memory of a generation: December 26th, 2005. Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and a number of other Asian nations – some of the world's leading tourist destinations - woke to tragedy. With the shaking of the earth miles down, and the creation of a wave system beyond imagination, lives and livelihoods were lost, in the hundreds of thousands. The world learnt a new word in its mainstream vocabulary: *tsunami*.

Half a world away in South Africa, the tourism industry ached, feeling an overwhelming need to do something, do anything, to help these nations recover first in spirit, and then in infrastructure, and in tourism industry. While markets traditionally competitor destinations for South Africa, this was a time to come together, not compete.

And so, T.I.C.E. was born – the *Tourism Industry Charity Event* <http://www.tice.org.za> – an organisation that would host a charity event in honour of victims of the 2005 Tsunami, directly channeling funds raised to the nations in need. As explained by T.I.C.E. founding committee member and Treasurer, Larry Smulowitz, the organisation called together tourism leaders from the public and private sector around hosting *"a dedicated event (with) a desire to help raise urgent relief funds to help the affected countries that relied heavily on tourists for their income. It was the first time the Western Cape tourism industry was addressed as a collective to make a positive difference to others."*

Having hosted annual charity events to support nations in need across the globe, T.I.C.E. has recently pulled the lens of impact closer to home, supporting programmes needing profile and funds in South Africa, specifically the Western Cape.

Today, *"T.I.C.E. beneficiaries are chosen for their contribution to creating economic opportunity, skills development, protecting fragile biodiversity and assisting with social upliftment in line with the core principles of responsible tourism. This important and unique initiative is helping us to change lives in our province, and in turn to build a more sustainable destination."* Over US\$ 260,000 has been raised to date to assist local charities and non-governmental organizations, the latest being the Zip Zap Circus School <http://www.zip-zap.co.za>, a remarkable social outreach programme for children at risk. As stated by T.I.C.E. at this year's charity event under the circus dome of Zip Zap Circus School, *"If tourism is about awakening the world to connections between one another, to create a charity event is creating a direct line between the tourism economy and opportunity creation. Youth at risk are given the opportunity for a better future."*

BRINGING THE GLOBAL TOURISM INDUSTRY TOGETHER

As November begins, members of the global travel and tourism community will be making the annual pilgrimage to London for WTM – World Travel Market. Descending on London's ExCeL in Docklands, tens of thousands of travel industry decision makers and deal makers

(over 47,700 in 2011) will be meeting to look back and plan forward, identifying ideas, insights and opportunities for industry growth, development and impact. Acutely aware of the importance of WTM to the travel and tourism industry's leverage and longevity, and the high degree of sensitivity of members of this community towards social and environmental impact of tourism activity, Fiona Jeffery OBE, WTM's Chairman, created "*Just A Drop*" <http://www.justadrop.org> - a charity focused on the provision of clean, safe water to communities at risk in developing parts of the world, especially children.

As expressed by Jeffery: "*One motivation for setting up Just a Drop was becoming a Mum. My perspective changed and I started to think about how I could encourage businesses in the travel and tourism industry to give back to the places in which they operated – thus improving the lives of children and their families.*"

Launched in 1998, the charity was given its name to clearly express just what a big difference the small donations made by individual attendees of WTM can make when the travel & tourism community comes together to meet, make plans, and mobilize business. Participation is simple, results are clear. All it takes is one moment to answer "*what more can I do?*"

THE POWER OF ONE

At a time of year when looking to the future becomes the frame of reference, when the annual coming together of industry colleagues becomes the scheduling priority, and when the global travel & tourism sector nears the remarkable milestone of 1 billion international arrivals, now more than ever, the power of one – one member of the travel industry – should not be under-estimated,

Charity programmes, development projects, industry initiatives, foundations and philanthropic efforts – great ideas that bring the sector together to make an even greater impact – can be found across the globe. The industry we are a part of continues to step forward to play its part in ensuring that the tourism economy is truly building a more solid, sustainable, socially conscious and connected future.

One by one by one.

It just takes one drop, one tick of the box, and the water will flow.

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