

RWANDA TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF HOTEL SERVICES



Rwanda attracts more people but it needs to improve its tourism infrastructure. There is a need for more hotel rooms, English speaking personnel, and for better services in general.

Rwanda needs to prepare for **increasing tourism demand**. In 2008 Rwanda attracted **980,577** visitors which is an increase when compared with 826,374 visitors coming to the country in 2007. It is also very important employer and foreign currency earner for the country's economy. The main attraction for visitors of Rwanda is the **mountain gorilla**. A ceremony on June 20 at which eleven baby gorillas will be given names will be an interesting boost for Rwanda's tourism industry. Local hospitality sector needs to improve their services to capitalize on this growing demand. According to Rosette Chantal Rugamba, the deputy CEO in charge of tourism at Rwanda Development Board, at least **6.000 rooms** will be needed in three years time to accommodate the demand. Currently there are 3,552 rooms available.

There is also problem with the **quality of services** in the hospitality sector. According to Ms. Rugamba many hotels do not meet international standards. Some even lack the most basic equipment. According to the CEO some hotels have e.g. only outside toilets. There is a lack of English speaking hotel personnel too. Hygiene is an issue in some facilities especially with respect to food. Poor service or the fact that not so many hotels accept payment with international credit cards such as Visa is also among the problems that may scare tourists away.

Rwandans, however, are aware of the problems. The Rwanda Development Board has decided it will implement the East African Community classification system of hotels and restaurants. Rosette Chantal Rugamba hopes the classification would result in improved quality of services. The classification process will start by mid 2009.

To improve the bad hygiene situation, the Rwanda Bureau of Standards started to teach people about hygiene from processing, storage to serving. The program attracted mainly quality assurance managers from food processing industries and hotels across the country.

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