GREENING JOBS IN INDONESIA’S TOURISM SECTOR – ONE VOLCANO AT A TIME

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(Mount Bromo, Indonesia) It’s five a.m. and pitch-black as hundreds of Indonesian and foreign tourists crowd the viewing platform that overlooks the volcanic crater of Mount Bromo, one of East Java’s main natural tourist attractions. The surprisingly cold and thin pre-dawn air makes the climb up to the viewing area literally as breathtaking as the approaching daybreak.

A young woman waves a flashlight then points it toward her face. “My name is Cita, I’m your guide. Let’s make sure everyone is here!” Bundled up in jackets and scarves, and using the lighted displays of mobile phones to check their footing, a dozen tourists stumble forward through the darkness to get the best vantage point for the sunrise. “Mind your wallets and possessions,” warns Cita.

Thousands of tourists flock here each week to witness the dawn and later make their way through the sand and ash, sometimes on horseback, to the base of the crater to take more photographs. Their interest in this natural environment presents important livelihood opportunities for people like Cita Wimanda. She’s a beneficiary of eco-tourism training for local guides, an initiative of the Australian Government – ILO Partnership Agreement’s Green Jobs in Asia project.

“Following the green jobs training I now say things like ‘ladies and gentlemen, we are now at the site of Mount Bromo and to preserve its natural state I ask you to keep the area clean and green, hold on to your rubbish or dispose of it only in the garbage cans,’” said Ms. Wimanda adding that “by doing these small things we can help preserving the environment and the earth.”

Indonesia’s eco-tourism industry is growing, and that’s created an opportunity for the government to further develop the idea of green jobs – important work that is both decent and better protects Indonesia’s natural environment.

In the capital Jakarta, among the institutions involved with the project at national level, two government ministries are working with the ILO to institutionalize the concept of green jobs in tourism and, eventually, other industries as well. “If the green jobs initiative is fully implemented in Indonesia it will have an impact. It will help us achieve the dual solutions of achieving decent work and improving the environment,” said Mr. Sanggam Purba, Head of Productivity Assessment at the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration.

Directly engaging tour guides and homestay operators through training about the importance of their jobs in relation to sustainable tourism has been an important first step in pursuit of those ‘dual solutions.’ More than 260 have participated in the training. The main objective is to ensure their jobs are decent, sustainable and supportive of environmental protection in the local communities.
"The tourists come and go, but the community itself works and lives at the destination. So it's important for us that they also take care of the environment to make sure that tourism (in their area) is not just a short term development but also a long term development," said Mr. Henky Hermantoro, Secretary Directorate General of Tourism Development at the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy.

Back at Mount Bromo, homestay owner Yeti Katariani, an indigenous Tengger woman, changes the bedding in a guestroom. Also a beneficiary of the ILO-sponsored Green Jobs training, she's learned about ways to make her small business more environmentally efficient — something the tourists also like to see. She's installed energy saving lights, converts food waste into compost and plans to grow a small vegetable patch that her guests can help tend. “After taking part in the training, I practiced and implemented what I learned. It helped me to understand what the guests want out of an eco-homestay and how to serve them better,” said Ms. Katariani, whose homestay now hosts 50 guests annually. The added income will help pay for her children’s education.

With more tourist arrivals predicted, local government officials in East Java say the green jobs approach will create employment, protect the environment and complement their economic development plans. “In East Java we have three priorities which are pro-jobs, pro-poor, and pro-environment,” said Mr. Jarianto, the Head of Culture and Tourism at the Provincial Office in East Java. “Thus, we are of the view that the ILO green jobs project in East Java is supporting the idea of pro-employment through eco-tourism.”

“The ILO’s Green Jobs in Asia project has brought technical skills training to the industry,” said Mr. Muce Mochtar, the ILO’s National Project Coordinator. “With the support of the Australian Government – ILO Partnership Agreement, we’ve managed to create a positive impact by linking sustainable tourism and green jobs.”

The local authorities agree the training has paid off. “We lack the right skills in eco-tourism so the ILO’s project helped increase the number of jobs considered green. That also had the effect of improving the general competencies of people working in tourism here in East Java,” said Mr. Harry Soegiri, the Head of Manpower and Transmigration at the Provincial Office in East Java.

“Eco-friendly tourism or eco-friendly business is okay,” said Mr. Bas Janssen, a tourist from the Netherlands. “In my opinion, we are not hurting or damaging the volcano and the people from Indonesia are showing their natural heritage and I think that’s okay.”

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