News Release

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UN Tourism and TUI Care Foundation join hands to support Rural Artists and Artisans Across Africa

Madrid/Berlin, 5 March 2026: Five African NGOs will now have the funding they need to support artisans and uplift communities thanks to a groundbreaking joint project from UN Tourism and the TUI Care Foundation.

The “Colourful Cultures” initiative is designed to empower local actors to generate income, protect heritage and shape their own development. It represents a landmark moment for UN Tourism as, for the first time, it provides direct financing and technical support to grassroots organizations.

A first call for proposals attracted 141 applications from non-profit organizations across Africa, with five NGOs selected. In Mozambique, artisans including people with disabilities will be supported with access to markets. In Namibia, indigenous heritage will be integrated into sustainable tourism value chains. In Rwanda, women and youth-led cooperatives are building creative and entrepreneurial skills while conservation and community tourism advance together. And in Tanzania, Maasai women and young people will be trained to build sustainable enterprises.

UN Tourism Secretary-General, Shaikha Al Nuwais, says: “This first call for proposals for the Tourism for Rural Development Small Grants, enabled by TUI Care Foundation, reflects our commitment to community-led tourism in rural areas. The awarded projects provide important local foundations for creatives and entrepreneurs in rural Africa. They not only advance economic empowerment but help us position tourism as a key driver for rural development.”

TUI Care Foundation Chairman, Thomas Ellerbeck, says: “Together with UN Tourism, TUI Care Foundation is proud to provide support and financial assistance to rural communities and further solidify the position of tourism as a driver for rural development. I deeply believe that the carefully selected projects will create a positive impact for both rural host communities and their visitors.”

The Awarded Projects in a nutshell:

Voices and Colors of Gorongosa

Organisation: Associação dos Deficientes Moçambicanos (ADEMO)
Country: Mozambique
This project boosts local artisan income for communities around the Gorongosa National Park, with a focus on empowering people with disabilities by strengthening local product development and market access. The core of the project involves developing locally certified artisanal products that showcase local culture, expanding market access through tourism partnerships, and creating a socially innovative network that links artisans, tour guides, and sustainable tourism actors. The project empowers up to 110 people with women representing more than 60 % of the direct beneficiaries. It engages community leaders, institutional representatives and tourism stakeholders through training, workshops and collaboration.

Traditions in Bwabwata National Park

Organisation: Namibia Development Foundation Trust
Country: Namibia
Rooted in the indigenous Khwe community of rural Namibia; this project aims to revitalize traditional arts through training in product development and cultural storytelling by supporting a cultural centre for artisans within the Bwabwata National Park. Providing space and technical support, the project will empower the guardians of Namibian cultural heritage and position their creativity within sustainable tourism circuits. The project will directly support 50 Khwe artisans, strengthening their skills, visibility, and access to sustainable tourism value chains.

Creative Tourism and Employment for Artists in Musanze

Organisation: Red Rocks Initiative for Sustainable Development
Country: Rwanda
Focused on two cooperatives of women and youth artisans in Nkotsi and Bisate villages in the Musanze District, this project is set to boost and diversify income generation through hands-on training in visual arts, entrepreneurship skills, and global storytelling. It aims to strengthen Musanze's creative tourism appeal while building capacity for communities to access the tourism market. The project aims to directly benefit up to 100 women and young people from artisan cooperatives in Nkotsi and Bisate villages by strengthening their creative skills, entrepreneurial capacity and access to tourism markets.

Enhancing Rural Tourism Capacity in Busaga

Organisation: Nature Rwanda
Country: Rwanda
This project aims to advance the protection of the ecologically rich Busaga Forest while transforming it into a women- and youth-led tourism destination. By establishing guided forest experiences and integrating locally made handicrafts, it aims to strengthen biodiversity conservation, community-based tourism, and the diversification of rural livelihoods. The project will directly support 30 community members, most of them women, creating new opportunities linked to forest conservation, tour guiding services, and local craft production.

Maasai Cultural Programme in Kiteto

Organisation: KINNAPA Development Programme
Country: Tanzania
With a focus on cultural preservation, this project will establish a community-run training programme for local women and young people in arts, crafts, and tourism services. It aims to turn heritage into an opportunity by promoting skills, pride, and economic empowerment in Kiteto District, Tanzania. The project will train 50 people, 60% of which are women, equipping them with practical skills in arts, crafts, and tourism services.

About the Tourism for Rural Development Small Grants Programme

The Tourism for Rural Development Small Grants Programme aims to diversify rural livelihoods, promote sustainable heritage management, conserve nature, and develop community-based tourism value chains. The first call for proposals called “Colourful Cultures” is enabled by the TUI Care Foundation and focuses on empowering artists and artisans, particularly women and youth. By supporting grassroots organizations, the first call strengthens creative economies, drives economic inclusion, and structural diversification through tourism in remote communities.

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