

# DIASPORAS IN DEVELOPMENT

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**Session Title:** Job Creation in the Tourism Sector: Opportunities and Challenges

**Presenter:**

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- **Moderator: Don Hawkins** – Chairman, Solimar International, Inc.

**Session Summary:**

The tourism sector presents a unique space for economic development. As the tourism industry grows, opportunities for employment, infrastructure development, and investment increase. However, the tourism industry also has many challenges. It is a volatile sector whose success is often linked to variables that cannot be controlled by those working within the sector, (i.e. government stability, public health and an enabling environment). Furthermore, success in this field is rather difficult to measure. Diaspora can play a key role in promoting tourism through their ability to pool efforts, their awareness of market opportunities and challenges beyond their place of origin, and their capability to transfer knowledge and expertise.

**Key Themes:**

- **Theme 1: Why Tourism?**
  - **Tourism is an economic development tool.** It can be highly impactful in creating jobs, attracting investments, and promoting infrastructural development, however it is also very challenging to do effectively.
  - **Tourism promotes diplomacy.**
  - **Tourism is a powerful business activity.** As a “demonstration sector,” tourism can lead in innovation and be replicated broadly. It helps to develop the private sector through its many linkages, while also being particularly inviting.
- **Theme 2: Challenges**
  - **Defining tourism-who is in control here?**

- In many countries, it is unclear who is in charge of the tourism sector, as parts of it falls under various ministries and departments. This only causes delays and confusion and nothing gets done.
  - **Volatility**
    - The tourism sector is often among the first to be gravely impacted by disasters, (i.e. Ebola crippled the tourism economies of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, but also had ripple effects that were felt even in Southern Africa).
  - **How to measure success**
    - People often look to measure success in the tourism industry in the short-term. However, tourism should be looked at as a motion picture, not a snapshot.
  - **Limitations to enabling environments, finance, and infrastructural development** can negatively impact the growth of the tourism sector.
- **Theme 3:**
    - **Diaspora can bring their expertise and experience to promoting tourism sector development by:**
      - Transferring knowledge to locals within the tourism sector
      - Pooling together their resources
      - Utilizing their networks as leverage (i.e. working with the U.S. government or large donors lends credibility that can help cut through some red tape)

**Best Practices/Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- Engage local communities (and governments) early and often
- Set clear goals and expectations upfront with all partners
- Invest in baseline data collection!