Studienkreis
für Tourismus und
Entwicklung e.V.

Presse-Information
Nr. 02/2024

Michael Kajubi Receives »TO DO Award Human Rights in Tourism«

Ugandan Foundation protects and supports marginalized population groups | Michael Kajubi is a mentor and supporter of unprejudiced encounters and cooperation in tourism

Seefeld, 09.02.2024 – The entrepreneur, business coach and founder of the McBern Foundation, Michael Kajubi, will receive this year's »TO DO Award Human Rights in Tourism«. He will be honoured for his many years of commitment to disadvantaged, marginalized and persecuted groups of the population– especially youths and elderly members of the LGBTQIA+ community. The organisers of the award recognise the work done by Michael Kajubi which has impacts that reach far beyond the tourism sector.

In 2013, Michael Kajubi founded McBern Tours & Travel, a tour operator specialized in nature-related travel. From the beginning, his vision has been to enable guests from all over the world to enjoy the country's natural beauty. He set out to create jobs and safe spaces for Ugandan youths and elderly people who are systematically excluded from society because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, their social status, a physical/cognitive impairment, or their age.

Inclusion as a guiding concept

To realize his vision, Michael Kajubi set up a foundation which, among other sources, obtains its funds from the proceeds generated by his travel business. The foundation incessantly works to create non-discriminatory spaces and jobs for people living on the margins of Ugandan society. By working with the travel company, as local guides or as tourism service providers, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, in particular, get opportunities to lead self-determined lives and to earn their livelihoods themselves. This empowerment is made possible by the McBern Foundation which provides education and capacity building for disadvantaged people, guidance, healthcare services, etc.

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Uganda is one of the countries that have passed the strictest laws against queer people worldwide. The Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023 even includes the death penalty for homosexual relationships or acts in certain cases. In addition, the rights of young, often disadvantaged people and elderly citizens are restricted in Ugandan society. Many of them suffer from systematic deprivation.

Commitment and Community Empowerment

The jury of the "TO DO Award Human Rights in Tourism" decided to honour Michael Kajubi for the following reason: "Faced with many obstacles and disadvantages in Ugandan society, Michael Kajubi's unrelenting spirit stands out as a beacon. He has made positive change, not least within the LGBTQIA+ community, and especially the Ugandan tourism sector, which goes far beyond his activities as a tour operator. His courage, dedication, and firm commitment to diversity, equal rights, and inclusion are inspiring and contribute significantly to making the world a safer place where diversity is accepted as enriching and common. He defends these values with tireless enthusiasm and steadfast commitment."

The Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung) has awarded the "TO DO Award Human Rights in Tourism" annually since 2017. It honours initiatives, projects, and individuals that have made outstanding efforts to protect and respect human rights principles along the entire touristic value chain. Claudia Mitteneder, Managing Director of Studienkreis: "All over the world, tourism thrives on human encounters that are open, respectful and as unprejudiced as possible, irrespective of people's social status, religion, world view, or gender identity. For a European player in the touristic value chain it is quite easy to make such an unreserved statement without being challenged. In a country like Uganda the situation is different – almost life-threatening. Michael Kajubi and his travel company audibly and incessantly stand up for the equal participation of all people in society, in economic activity, politics, and culture. By supporting vocational training, by creating safe spaces for disadvantaged people – and at the same time by inviting the

global LGBTQIA+ community to travel to his country though it may not be safe for them – Michael firmly stands for the values of a humanistic and fully inclusive society. We are pleased to honour him for this leadership with our award".

The “TO DO Award Human Rights in Tourism“ is awarded annually by the Institute for Tourism and Development in cooperation with the Roundtable Human Rights in Tourism, the Swiss Foundation for Solidarity in Tourism (SST) and the tour operator Studiosus. It is not possible to actively apply for this award. Potential award winners are identified by an expert jury which then assesses their efforts. The award ceremony takes place at ITB in Berlin.

The award ceremony of the »TO DO Award Human Rights in Tourism« will take place on 6th March 2024 at 6:00 pm on the eTravel Stage in Hall 6.1 of ITB Berlin, followed by a reception. In addition, we will honour the two winners of the »TO DO Award Socially Responsible Tourism«.

Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung at ITB 2024: Hall 4.1, stand 201

Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung (Institute for Tourism and Development) focuses on development related information and education in tourism. In this context it brings out publications, organises international contests, offers training and seminars for people employed in the tourism sector, carries out tourism research and consultancy, and is involved in dialogue on issues related to tourism development.

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