ACHIEVEMENTS OF EK’S COMMUNITY OUTREACH/TRAINING PROGRAMME

Ecotourism Kenya’s Community Outreach programme offers tailor-made services for community groups such as: training, business planning, marketing and promotional services to existing and potential Community Based Tourism enterprises (CBTE’s) with the aim of integrating them into the mainstream tourism in Kenya whilst seeing that they continue conserving the natural areas from which they operate. The focus here is on community owned, managed or run tourism enterprises in the different tourism regions in Kenya. Ecotourism Kenya sees ecotourism related activities as a tool of bringing social and economic benefits to the local community as well as a tool for promoting conservation of biodiversity.

Ecotourism Kenya has been offering these services since 1996. Within the Community Outreach programme, Ecotourism Kenya currently maintains and services the largest database of CBTEs in Kenya to date. The programme has successfully executed several projects towards supporting CBTEs in Kenya.

A chronology of the achievements within the Community Outreach Programme is highlighted here:

2018-2022 Community engagement efforts within the GreenTour Kenya Project. The activities included capacity building with facilitation in identified areas, match-making with tour operators and attendance to key events such as the Magical Kenya Travel Expo and the Gorilla Naming Ceremony.

2017: SUS-TOUR conducted a collaborative innovation workshop on 16-17th February 2017 in Nairobi with the aim of providing further skills for the development of sustainable, marketable, high quality community created products, and services. The attendees included County Government Representatives, Tour Operators (TOs), Community Based Tourism Organizations (CBTOs), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The marketing Guidelines for CBT was launched during the workshop.

2016: EK alongside its SUS-TOUR project partners conducted a training of the trainers’ session (ToT) in Nairobi and Eldoret on the 5th-6th June 2016 and 9th-10th June 2016 respectively. The participants of the ToTs included various tourism stakeholders including micro small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs), that is, community-based tourism organization and tour operators, and the trainers, that is, county experts and university lecturers. The training of trainers aimed at mainstreaming sustainable models of Community Based Tourism (CBT) development in which Tour Operators and CBTOs would collaboratively develop business plans and marketing strategies, and embed business principles in CBT development and operation from the beginning. A total of 57 trainers and 30 MSMEs participated in the ToTs
2015: EK and its project partners Federation of Community Tourism Organizations (FECKTO) and Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSCP), Germany receive a grant from EU through UNDP, UNOPS and UNEP in a Switch Africa Green Project. The project title is Enhancing sustainable tourism innovation for community empowerment in Kenya (SUSTOUR)'. The project has the objective of development of sustainable tourism in Kenya through promoting customer-oriented innovation and marketing community-based tourism (CBT) to foster improvement in rural livelihoods and conservation of culture and the natural environment.

2011: EK participates in the training of CBTE representatives in integrating business skills into ecotourism operations in their tourism enterprises in a Workshop organized by IUCN and Private Safaris.

Ongoing yearly (publicity): EK continuously prominently profiles community based tourism enterprise projects through our website (changes every month), high quality 100% eco-friendly printed Ecotourism Kenya Guide and Green Directory which remains a definitive guide to locally available sustainable goods and services. The Green Directory is a pioneering publication in the region and a useful resource. A regularly printed newsletter has a dedicated slot for profiling a community based enterprise. Circulation of all the publications mentioned above is local and international using the marketing events visited by Kenya Tourist Board (KTB), events visited by EK and her members. The publications are also available online through the website and the e-newsletter.

Ongoing yearly (marketing support): As part of its ongoing activities, EK continuously runs an advice service where communities can call in (or send a text and be called back) and receive advice on how to improve their activities and practices. EK also regularly informs her members of various funding opportunities available and provides support for proposal writing.

EKs website also receives amongst the highest number of hits in Kenya’s tourism industry. As part of supporting CBOs, EK offers a free listing for CBTEs on its website and has a section for featuring a CBTE on its homepage, which is updated regularly.

2010 – 12: EK initiates a capacity building and Market enhancement project supported by UNDP – Small Grants Programme (SGP) for 7 CBTEs running tourism enterprises in various sensitive natural resources including a forest and mangrove ecosystems.

2010 – 11: EK and EK members contribute to the formation of the Federation of Community Tourism Organisations (FECKTO) in Kenya of which EK now seats on the board.

2010 – 11: EK conducts the first ever Marketing Strategy for Community Based Tourism Enterprises in Kenya through funding from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, Sustainable Tourism for Elimination of Poverty Program (UNWTO-STEP)

2010: EK gets into a partnership agreement with Strathmore University to support the Community Outreach Program in Capacity Building and Training of CBTEs.
2010: EK wins the prestigious Africa Investor Award for Outstanding Investment in Community Based Tourism. This was an award presented after various community based organizations around Africa were evaluated.

2010: EK facilitates 20 CBTE representatives through funding from the African Conservation Centre (ACC) from various regions in the country to attend the 2010 Eco-warrior awards ceremony as an extension of the CBTE and mainstream tourism linkage strategies.

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2009 – 10: In collaboration with the Kenya Tourist Board (KTB), the Community Outreach program was engaged in various partnerships to support different CBTEs including Ol Makau Cultural Centre (in Kitengela) and Amboseli Community Campsite (in Amboseli).

2009: EK facilitates 10 regional representatives of CBTEs in Kenya to attend the Biennial National Ecotourism Kenya Conference.

2009: EK organized a marketing awareness and mentorship workshop for 80 CBTEs in Taita Taveta Region where players from the mainstream tourism industry which included, government institutions and private investors in the tourism sector, offered first hand advice and training support to existing CBTEs and fostered linkages with the local CBOs to continuously support their efforts long after the workshop.

2009: EK and EK members participate in discussions that lead to the drafting of the Community Based Tourism Framework by the Ministry of Tourism with assistance from the Commonwealth Secretariat.
2008: EK facilitates 15 representatives of East African CBTEs to attend the Travelers Philanthropy Conference held in Arusha in December.

2008: EK participates in developing an edutainment TV series to promote responsible tourism experiences and projects in Kenya through the Tourism for Development (T4D) project.

2008: EK facilitates an exposure visit for Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO) on constructing low-cost construction and other appropriate technology for CBTEs.

2008 – 10: EK is part of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, Sustainable Tourism for Elimination of Poverty Program (UNWTO-STEP) Project Implementation Committee, which provided capacity building, market enhancement and infrastructural development support to at least 21 near market ready and market ready CBTEs from various regions in the country.

2007-8: EK conducts customized training sessions for 4 CBTEs in Amboseli region under an SNV-funded programme named ‘Market Access Enhancement Programme for Communities in Amboseli and Magadi Regions’.

2007: EK carries out 7 “Regional Ecotourism Workshops”, discussing market access enhancement strategies with representatives of more than 100 Community Based Tourism Enterprises (CBTEs) all over the country. (It emerges from a survey conducted during these workshops that only 18% of these CBTEs in Kenya at the time are “market ready”.)

2005: Eight regional ecotourism workshops held to promote ecotourism and more than 200 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) engaged in conservation and tourism are reached.

2004: Regional surveys conducted to identify existing/planned ecotourism initiatives in the country. (approximately 170 enterprises found at various stages of market-readiness)

2003: EK implemented two UNDP-financed projects namely Isecheno bandas in Kakamega forest and Uaso Cultural Centre in Archer’s Post. Both of the above projects are currently performing well and over the years have benefited from ongoing interactions with EK as members.

2001: EK signs funding agreement with UNDP for promotion of ecotourism and conservation of biodiversity through income generating initiatives. The Community Outreach program is initiated through a survey of areas with potential for ecotourism.