



# Ecotourism Society of Kenya

Bringing together Tourism, Conservation & Communities

## Sustainable Ecotourism and Local Communities: Cooperation, Compromise or Conflict?

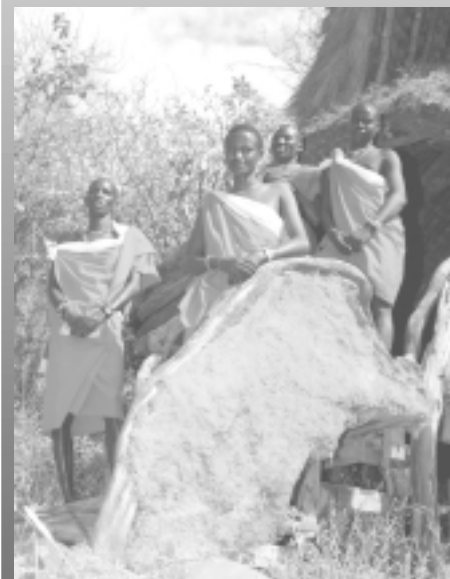
by Roselyne N. Okech

Local communities are significantly vulnerable to the deleterious impacts of tourism development, particularly indigenous cultures as they directly experience the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. Disruption to established activity patterns, anti-social behaviour, crime and over-crowding caused by tourism development can also have a negative impact on local lifestyles and the quality of life of both indigenous and non-indigenous communities. Consequently, ecotourism has the potential to create support for conservation objectives in both the host community and the visitor alike, through establishing and sustaining relationships between the tourism industry, local communities, and protected areas.

As social and environmental benefits are essentially interdependent, social benefits accruing to host communities as a result of ecotourism may have the result of increasing overall standards of living due to the localized economic stimulus provided for by an increased visitation to the site. Similarly, environmental benefits accrue as host communities are persuaded to protect natural environments in order to sustain economically viable tourism. The tourist industry, on the other hand, seeks a healthy business environment with financial security, a trained and responsible workforce, attractions of sufficient quality to ensure a steady flow of visitors – who stay longer and visit more often as well as a significant return on investment.

A number of reasons why local communities may consider ecotourism include a desire to be part of strong growth in tourism generally and see the potential of catering for special-interest tourism (niche markets), an awareness of

**“...ecotourism has the potential to create support for conservation objectives in both the host community and the visitor alike...”**



Owners and Staff at Il'ngwesi Lodge

the high value of natural attractions in the locale, empathy for conservation ideals and the need for sustainable tourism and a desire to responsibly rejuvenate the local tourist industry. However there are conflictual issues expressed by representatives of host communities to tourism development and generally fall into a number of interrelated categories.

These include the lack of opportunities for involvement in decision-making relating to ecotourism; inadequate responses from governments when administrative or legislative mechanisms have been established to involve them in such decision-making; the lack of financial, social and vocational benefits flowing to these communities from projects that commercially exploit what they regard as their resources; the need to establish better tools for evaluating socio-cultural impacts and ensuring this is completed over the more emphasized environmental impacts on the natural environments which are usually of more interest to the outside investors and conservation groups; impacts on community cohesion and structure as well as the rapidity of tourism development that in many cases significantly accelerates social change.

These concerns embrace a wide range of issues relating to the management of natural resources adjacent to these communities. The central issue is the inadequate levels of participation perceived by these communities in the management of what they regard as their traditional domains. In view of the significance of wildlife conservation on its own and its tourism value, wildlife-human conflicts will remain a permanent problem in the neighborhoods of protected areas. As such, the role of policy is to reduce the conflicts to a

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**It is a well-known fact that travel is a form of dialogue.**

Recent trends however indicate that many travellers are on a defined mission to make a difference to the destinations they visit: "they have the best of intentions" according to social movement experts. It is these good intentions, which if deliberately stimulated, will prompt travellers to give. This is the idea behind traveller's philanthropy. Philanthropy is generally defined as an impulsive act sparked by desire to help. Traveller's philanthropy begins with a personal connection between a traveller and a people, event or place. The business of tourism moves millions of travellers annually giving it the greatest potential to mobilize traveller's resources for conservation of destinations and rural (community) development. This is because tourism brings these millions of travellers into contact with needy communities and threatened destinations and cultures.

Like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), traveller's philanthropy is a social movement. It is more than a business issue; that is why it requires

# The Untapped Potential of travellers

by Judy Kepher-Gona

tourism businesses must incorporate traveller's philanthropy in their management systems if it is going to succeed to benefit the destinations they promote. Many tourism businesses have tried to be philanthropic organizations, but their efforts have been limited to their profit margins. The situation can be even

more challenging for ecotourism ventures whose profit margins are perceived to be marginal.

But tourism businesses need not go it alone, they can tap into traveller's philanthropy to achieve their corporate social responsibilities.

Turtle Bay Beach Club has had an experience with traveller's philanthropy and they share their experience with our readers. See page 8

for details. 📧



## About Kenya Equator Initiative Programme

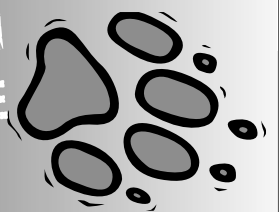
### Linking community projects throughout Kenya

*The Equator Initiative is a UNDP-led partnership programme that highlights, connects, supports and champions community-level development projects that conserve and sustainably use biodiversity while at the same generating income and alleviating poverty.*

The Kenya Equator Initiative Programme (KEIP) is pilot national programme that will not only champion local initiatives but also build local and national capacities; incorporate local knowledge into policy discussions and decision-making processes; reduce duplication and encourage cross-organizational collaboration thereby increasing the effectiveness and impact of development efforts in Kenya; and, widely publicize the grassroots approach to biodiversity conservation in order to increase public awareness of the importance and impact that communities have on environmental conservation, sustainable development and the realization of the MDGs.

For more information contact Jen Reynon <jen.reynon@undp.org> 📧 or Tel 254 2 622710

QUESTION FROM THE WILD



## Communities & Conservation

In the recent past, community-based conservation has gained popularity compared to the conventional protected area concept. In particular, it is believed that Community Wildlife Management (CWM) will provide answers to the riddle of conserving wildlife corridors that are in private land and managing human/wildlife conflicts. What do our readers say about this issue of CWM and human/wildlife conflict in general?

Send your views to: <esok@wananchi.com> 📧

# Our Community Projects

## KAKAMEGA ISECHENO BANDAS

The Kakamega Isecheno Banda project is a project of the Kakamega Environment Education Programme (KEEP), supported by ESOK with funding from UNDP Environment program. The banda project was one of many potential ecotourism initiatives identified by KEEP after a feasibility study that was conducted by KEEP and Nature Kenya. During the last two years ESOK has worked with KEEP to plan for implementation and come up with appropriate design for the bandas.

ESOKs approach to community ecotourism is three-fold. It emphasizes good environmental practice, including compliance with legislation, economic viability to ensure sufficient income generation, and effective involvement of all stakeholders/ beneficiaries



Construction of Bandas kick off at Kakamega Forest

for continuity. Therefore, ESOKs first task in implementation was to ensure the bandas were developed in compliance with the new Environment Management and Coordination Act (1999). ESOK provided support with the EIA process and has now received notification from the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) approving the Isecheno Bandas project. ESOK has also supported the process of acquiring a lease agreement

between KEEP and the Forest Department and this is at an advanced stage. Other support provided to KEEP includes re-writing of their constitution, training in CBO governance, introduction to the business of tourism, benefit sharing schemes and financial management. More training is planned in customer care and marketing/promotion. The bandas, now in early construction stages, will be ready for use by December 2004. 📧



## UASO CULTURAL CENTRE

The Umoja Uaso women group is based at Archers Post in Samburu district. Amongst other initiatives, the women group owns and runs the Uaso Cultural Centre en route to Samburu Game Reserve. ESOK identified the group in 2002 and has been working with the group since then to uplift the standards of the product and services offered by the centre. Effort has also been put in improving governance and enhancing accountability by the leadership. The aim of the project is to



A renovated hut at Uaso Cultural Centre

revamp Uaso cultural centre, to match ecotourism cultural standards by rehabilitating the bomas, equipping the tourist shop and training the members on governance, guest care and cultural packaging. Ultimately, the long-term goal is to offer competitiveness in a

fast growing tourism destination and establish a stable source of income for women of this area.

With just a few of the huts rehabilitated, the centre is already recording improved business and the group is optimistic that things will get even better once the

rehabilitation, training and stocking of shop is complete. The increased earnings can be attributed to improved appearance of the centre, improved record keeping and good group governance.

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# ESOK NEWS

## Our Projects

- The ESOK Eco-Rating Scheme
- Educating Communities To Participate In Ecotourism
- Ecotourism Inventory
- Community/Private Sector Mentorship Program
- Promoting Energy Efficiency In Hotels/ Lodges
- Community Ecotourism Projects
- Information Gathering and Dissemination to Industry & Other Stakeholders



## Incoming Committee

At an AGM held in March 2004, a new committee was elected to oversee the operations of the society. Still headed by Jake Grieves-Cook as chairman, the other committee members include: Maurice Anami, Alan Dixson, Mike McCartney, Joseph Muongeri, Adam Jillo and Chris Marshall. Anjali Saini, a long serving member of the committee and founder member of ESOK, did not avail herself for re-election due to personal commitments. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Anjali for her sincere service to ESOK during the last four years. Visit <[www.esok.org](http://www.esok.org)> for profiles of committee members

Environmental (Impact Assessment and Audit) Regulations 2003 (Legal Notice No. 101). We urge members to get copies of the Act and the legal Notice to acquaint themselves with the provisions of these two important documents. In the meantime, the ESOK committee is making effort to initiate dialogue with NEMA on the issue of environmental audits with a view to having ESOK registered as official auditor of lodges/hotels.

## Legal Register

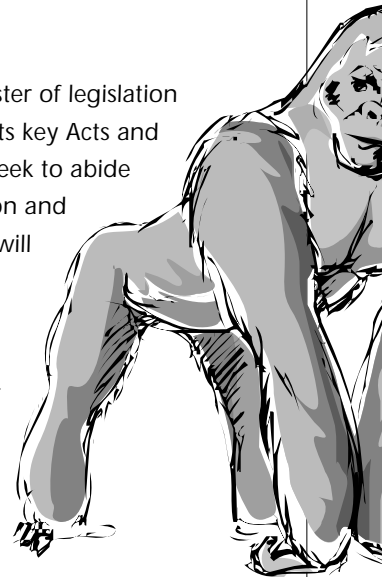
We have put together a legal register of legislation relevant to the hotel industry. It lists key Acts and Codes that a hotel/lodge should seek to abide with at all times before construction and during operation. This document will be available at a fee to members beginning July 2004. We are grateful to Aru Inamdar-Willets for her support in putting this register together.

## Regional Ecotourism Seminars

We are planning to have regional ecotourism workshops in more than six focal areas countrywide. These focal areas include Kajiado, Mara/ Narok, Coast, Western/Nyanza, Taita Taveta, Naivasha/ Nakuru, laikipia/Samburu, Mt Kenya. The purpose of these workshops will be to get an update on the status of ecotourism in Kenya while providing opportunity for local communities to share experiences and interact with NGOs, donors, investors and academics.

## Ecotourism Inventory

We will soon embark on a survey of community ecotourism initiatives in Kenya. We invite all those with information on such initiatives to share with us so that we capture as many initiatives as possible. Contact Joseph at ESOK with your information or for details.



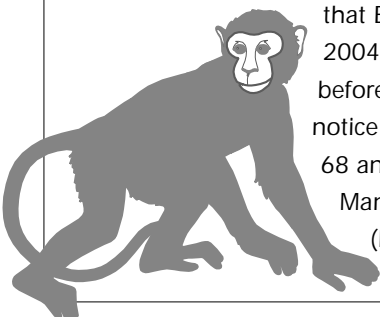
## ESOK Eco-rating Scheme- Moving Towards Excellence!

ESOK recently held a workshop for managers of lodges that have received Bronze rating under the ESOK Eco-rating scheme. The workshop was meant to prepare them for the big move towards Silver rating. The 'move towards excellence' workshop attracted some 20 participants from lodges and general ESOK membership. Similar workshops will be held throughout the year as part of ESOK's support to certified lodges/camps under the ESOK Eco-rating scheme and to create awareness on global trends in sustainable tourism and travel.

For information on how to apply for certification or join ESOK, contact ESOK on <[esok@wananchi.com](mailto:esok@wananchi.com)> or call 2724755 / 2724403

## Environment Audit Reports – NEMA Notice

A notice issued by the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), in January 2004 reminds all concerns that Environment Audit reports for 2004 must be submitted to NEMA before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004. This notice was given pursuant to sections 68 and 69 of the Environment Management and Coordination Act (EMCA), 1999 and the



# ESOK Briefs

## Energy Conservation in Hotels/Lodges

A new energy conservation initiative facilitated by Energy Alternatives Africa (EAA), and supported by GEF and Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) is designed to benefit hotel/lodges by offering training to technical staff of hotels/lodges. The purpose is to move towards optimum consumption of energy. EAA is consulting with ESOK on how best to collaborate with tourism industry to realize benefits for hoteliers. More details will be availed to members as soon as an understanding is reached.

## Saving our Forests

ESOK donated seedlings worth Ksh 18,000 to help in the afforestation program in Kakamega forest. The seedlings were purchased from local CBOs running tree nurseries and presented to the Forester at Isecheno Forest station to supervise the planting exercise. If you would like to donate seedlings to Isecheno Forest Station, please contact Judy at [esok@wananchi.com](mailto:esok@wananchi.com) or call for details.

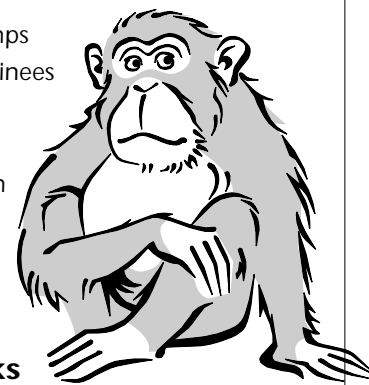
## World Legacy Awards

Campi ya Kanzi has been selected as a finalist for the World Legacy Award. The award is supported by Conservation International and The Traveler of the National Geographic Society. Campi ya Kanzi was among the first lodges to apply for and receive Bronze certification under the ESOK Eco-rating scheme. See <[www.wlaward.org](http://www.wlaward.org)>

## Community Mentorship- Malewa River Lodge sets the pace

Malewa has responded to ESOK's pilot community mentorship programme and trained members of Kakamega Environment Education Program (KEEP), on the use of Finamore builder in construction. The two trainees participated in construction work at Malewa River lodge and are now using the skills acquired plus the technology, in construction of Isecheno Bandas at Kakamega Forest (see pg – for more information on Isecheno Bandas). We

are looking for lodges and camps that can take-in community trainees on customer care, camp management, basic catering, record /bookkeeping and room management. Also needed are centres that can offer training on art & craft making.



## U. S. Peace Corps seeks collaboration with ESOK

A representative of the U. S. Peace Corps from New York recently visited the ESOK offices to discuss possibilities of collaboration between ESOK and the U.S. Peace Corps-Kenya. The U. S. Peace Corps is keen to provide volunteers to hand-hold community groups that are in the process of initiating nature /tourism related micro-enterprises especially ecotourism.

## ESOK Chairman acknowledged

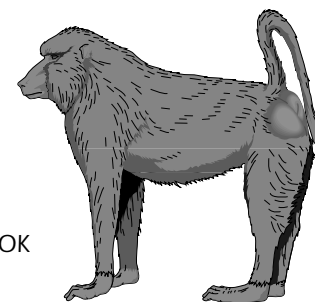
Jake Grieves-Cook, the chairman of ESOK, was recently honoured for his efforts in promoting and defending destination Kenya at the height of negative travel advisories issued against the country in 2003. The 'Top Tourism Promoter' award is an initiative of the Kenya Association of Hotel Keepers & Caterers. Jake was particularly lauded for his efforts in lobbying embassies to drop the advisories and for mobilising support from leading tour operators abroad to put pressure on their various governments to drop the advisories. BRAVO!

## New ESOK members

The following tour operators and facilities have joined ESOK in the year 2004:

- Sopa Lodges
- Discover Kenya Safaris
- Turtle Bay Beach Hotel
- African Tropical Safaris
- Fin Razel Tours
- African Secrets Limited
- Voi Wildlife Lodge

For more information on all ESOK member visit <[www.esok.org](http://www.esok.org)>



## Contacting you?

Make it easy for us to find you  
Have your contact details changed? Have you moved offices or are you about to move? Please send us e-mail with your new address, including your physical location, post box details, telephone, fax, e-mail and website as applicable. Remember to include area codes for post box addresses as announced by Posta Kenya in July 2003. ☺

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# Sustainable Ecotourism and Local Communities

tolerable level. This involves dealing with problem wildlife and devising mechanisms to allow local people to derive direct benefits from wildlife-based tourism. Such an approach is likely to encourage the residents of those areas to conserve the fauna and the flora.

It has been observed that communities located near major attraction sites, such as national parks and reserves and archaeological and historic sites, should have the opportunity to participate in tourism related to the attraction. These communities can provide hotels, restaurants, shops, transportation and guide services and other tourist facilities and services. Also, they can be employed in management and operation of the attraction feature. Concrete financial benefits are obviously an important part of such a partnership. Most important, local communities must have a final say about how much and what kind of tourism develops in their areas.



Staff at the Sarara Lodge

This new partnership should be based on a commitment to hire local residents as managers in protected areas and ecotourism operations. In addition, programs for providing credit for rural

enterprises should be initiated or expanded so that more local entrepreneurs can develop ecotourism-related businesses. It could also mean offering 'on-the-job' training and scholarships to tourism and park management schools, leasing rather than buying land from local residents, and purchasing more goods and services for ecotourists locally.

Therefore, the sustainability of nature-based tourism over the longer term depends on the support of local communities, especially in wildlife areas. Sustainable development is based on the ethic of care for the whole community of life now and in the future, and emphasizes that development must be people-centred and conservation-based. This approach rests on improving the quality of individual human lives through providing health care, education, and

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## about ESOK

The Ecotourism Society of Kenya (ESOK) was founded in 1996 to provide a unique forum where members would come together to understand the concept of ecotourism and use this knowledge to improve performance in line with the principles of ecotourism. Today, the society provides a center of reference in development of standards for good tourism



practice and ecotourism education in Kenya. Its activities revolve around promoting sustainable practices, empowering communities to participate in the business of tourism and creating awareness on ecotourism and conservation. In general, our activities aim to:

- Promote communication and education about Ecotourism issues.
- Provide an information and resource network for visitor's residents, tour operators, resource managers, planners, educators, government agencies and other

professionals.

- Promote a visitor industry that is environmentally and culturally sensitive.
- Promote community-based, sustainable tourism that benefits local residents.
- Enhance visitors' experiences through effective interpretation by developing codes of practice
- Promote resource conservation.
- Encourage repeat visitations, and longer stays.
- Provide continuing education and professional development opportunities. 📞

## JOIN ESOK NOW ...

There are three categories of membership as follows:

- 1> Corporate – Ksh 5,000
- 2> CBO – Ksh 1,000
- 3> Individual – Ksh 1,000

To join, send your cheque to:  
Ecotourism Society of Kenya.  
P O Box 10146, 00100- GPO,  
Nairobi

Include the following details:

Name or name of organisation (Corporate & CBO), P.O.Box, Postal code, Town/City, Telephone, Fax and E-mail address.

# ECO-RATING Providing Sustainable Choices for Holiday

Going on holiday? You can now choose from the growing list of environmentally sound and responsible lodges/camps, thanks to the ESOK Eco-rating Scheme. More than twenty (20) camps/ lodges have been awarded Bronze certification since the launch of the scheme, about fifty- (50) facilities are in the process of applying while many more are making enquiries on participation. Many of the Bronze qualifiers will soon be eligible to apply for Silver rating, which signifies progression of practices towards excellence. So next time you take a holiday, visit one of the below listed lodges/camps and support their initiatives towards sustainable tourism.

- Tortilis Camp
- Olonana Camp
- Basecamp Explorer
- Duma Camp
- Kicheche Mara Camp
- 1920s Cottars Safari Camp
- Saruni Safari Camp
- Rekeru Tented Camp
- Kizingo Lodge
- Mombasa Serena
- Lewa Safari Camp
- Borana Lodge
- Ilngwesi Lodge
- Lollidaiga Farm House
- Kojja Starbeds
- Loisaba Kiboko Starbeds
- Loisaba Lodge

- Elsas Kopje
- Sarova Shaba
- Malewa River Lodge
- Kampi Ya Kanzi

- Turtle Bay Beach Club
- Shompole Lodge
- Cheli & Peacock- Mara Bush Camp 📍



Jake presents a Certificate to Micheal Dyer of Borana Lodge at the end of an Eco-rating Workshop

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## Sustainable Ecotourism and Local Communities

economic advancement, and on empowering local communities to manage their environment and resources effectively. A significant contribution to ecotourism's global following has been its potential to deliver benefits to communities remote from centers of commerce, benefits that do not involve widespread social or environmental destruction.

Roselyn is a member of ESOK and can be contacted at Maseno University or by Email: [rnokech@yahoo.com](mailto:rnokech@yahoo.com) 📧



One of the Dinning areas at Soito Cottage

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## UASO CULTURAL CENTRE

But beyond the nice looking huts, improved management and good customer service, a centre like Uaso requires other ingredients to survive. They need to continuously provide a quality product, have means to reach potential visitor or enter into promotion agreements

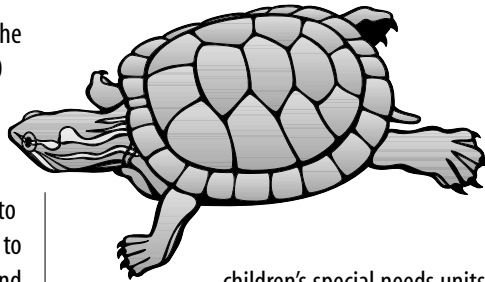
with tour operator, agree on systems for sharing benefits, and ensure the involvement of all group members in key decisions to avoid internal strife. The challenges faced by Uaso Cultural Centre, and which are faced by many other community ecotourism initiatives, confirm that ecotourism "is not just a good thing to do for communities" it is a business like any other, and requires comprehensive business strategies to survive. 📧



Dilapidated hut made with mabati/tin/polythene paper

# the experience of Turtle Bay Beach Club, Watamu \_\_\_\_\_ by Jacqui Kaye

Community work at Turtle Bay Beach Club on the North Kenya Coast started approximately 10 years ago when guests approached the management with requests to help various needs in the community. Guests are often aware just how wealthy they are compared to the locals and they want to use this wealth to help others. Since the guests were only around temporarily, a co-ordinator was required to oversee the appropriate use of funds. The hotel management agreed to the visitors' requests and the Turtle Bay community office was born.



children's special needs units, provision of desks and materials for schools and many more. The hotel also works in close collaboration with local conservation organisations, such as A Rocha Kenya and Watamu Turtle Watch.

The growth of the department was initially stimulated and funded largely by the guests. The hotel did not set any specific "social objectives" as the management saw the hotel's role as that of facilitating the community work. But there was the added benefit that guests supporting a project are more likely to return to check on progress. Marketing of the community work was minimal and in fact one guest commented that the office was Turtle Bay's "best kept secret".

Turtle Bay community projects have included the building of five schools, two clinics, a mobile clinic and ambulance, three libraries, wells, in addition to supporting two orphanages,

Whilst core funding of the community projects comes from the guests, Turtle Bay provides the base. This base consists of an office and the services of a Community Co-ordinator, without which a lot of the work would be almost impossible. In addition the hotel supports many of the projects with donations of labour, materials and transport as well as subsidising the food and accommodation for the key donor co-ordinators. These alone amount to nearly Ksh 500,000 per annum.

In broader, nationwide terms, Turtle Bay Beach Club is also very active in sponsoring at fundraising events for many charities around Kenya.

Of course, hotels are not normally in the business of community development and naturally some challenges have been experienced along the way. The hotel has learnt that projects that are attractive to guests (such as sponsorship of individual children) are difficult to implement, lack any form of means testing and are very time consuming. They are also not the most responsible way of assisting the community to develop in the long term, as they tend to encourage dependence on aid from foreigners rather than stimulating the community to advance themselves. This fact has always been a very difficult and delicate point to explain to guests, many of whom have already decided how they would like to help. The hotel is trying to involve guests in more effective projects by sending out advance information to guests before their arrival, and is contemplating developing a slide show as a non-confrontational method of explaining how best community projects operate.

The greatest challenge has been channelling guest funds to projects that are well run. This involves diplomatically explaining to guests why their preferred support systems are not sustainable. Sometimes projects can turn sour and communicating this to guests can have demoralising effects if not properly handled. Even worse for guests is a situation where they realise that some of the locals may have actually taken advantage of their support.

However, and to Turtle Bay's credit, the management recognises that the benefits of supporting the local community and conservation far outweigh the costs. 📧

\* Jacqui Kaye is a Community and Conservation Co-ordinator at Turtle Bay



## Eco-news from Malewa River Lodge

- 3 runners from Malewa River Lodge recently participated in the Safaricom Lewa Marathon - raising money for community conservation.
- Visitors can now cycle through the conservancy on 'state of the art' Australian mountain bikes and enjoy the scenery and plentiful wildlife - no need to be confined in a vehicle.
- Wind driven turbines will soon supply sufficient water throughout the

conservancy.

- Wind generator will soon supply power to the offices and computers.
- Vocational training is offered for communities using the 'Finnimore building technique' - rammed earth rondavels.
- Partnership with Canford school from the UK is ongoing - Mwega Primary School is nearly completed through this partnership.

Send in your eco-news to [esok@wananchi.com](mailto:esok@wananchi.com) 📧