communities, tour operators, investors, donors, civil society organisations and government were therefore challenged to re-evaluate their commitment to ecotourism and to work towards achieving wider participation by all. Participation it was observed, should yield both qualitative and quantitative benefits, and help ecotourism respond to needs of all partners.

It was also reiterated that the ESOK Eco-rating scheme, a pioneering voluntary certification scheme, was the way forward in branding ecotourism as a distinct product. The participants wanted the scheme to help address the problem of “white-washing” where conventional tourism uses ecotourism in its promotion material without regard to ecotourism principles. There was concern that this can damage the image of a destination.

The conference further concurred that Kenya has some of ‘best practices’ in environmental conservation, product innovation and community participation. Notable among the ‘best practices’ include: contribution by tourism businesses to conservation of species and ecosystems and widespread use of sustainable technologies like solar power, wind energy and dry toilets to reduce environmental impacts. Others are the introduction of a new brand of activities for the ecotourist as an alternative to the mini-bus-game-viewing image, emphasis on quality.
Among other principles, ecotourism puts emphasis on close interaction between visitors and communities. The objective is for visitors to learn and appreciate local people and their cultures. This it has been argued would lead to conservation of local cultures. However, there is concern that if this interaction between visitors and communities is not properly regulated, it can lead to degradation of the very cultures that attract visitors. This threat is particularly real where communities recreate culture purposely to benefit from the presence of visitors. Such practice dilutes culture by interfering with local/traditional calendar of events and timing of activities leading to misrepresentation of specifics. Critics have referred to this as over-commercialisation of culture.

In Kenya’s south coast, one community is taking charge of its culture by setting standards for visitors. Kaya Kinondo Conservation and Development Group (KKCDG), formed to protect Kaya Kinondo forest, offers tours to the forest as part of its income generating activities. Yet the mijikenda community consider the Kaya forests, found along Kenya’s coast, as sacred. They have used sites within these forests (kaya) to commune with their ancestors since time immemorial and continue to do so today. So how has KKCDG managed to maintain the sanctity of the forest while exploiting it for economic gain through ecotourism?

According to Hemed Mwafujo, a manager with KKCDG, ‘one way of minimizing threats is to uphold traditional rules and regulations’. The community should not adjust its calendar/activities to suit the visitors; instead the visitors need to adjust to adhere to community rules and regulations. In the case of KKCDG, the elders have stipulated a set of rules that visitors must adhere to. For instance entry into the Kaya is restricted to specific days according to a traditional calendar, there is a stipulated dress code and there are no exceptions (no hats and headscarves allowed). Visitors cannot take anything out of the forest; neither can they access the sacred places - there are stipulated distances from the sites that they must observe. Breaking any of these rules attracts a fine equivalent to the nature of the offence and may lead to total ban of tours by elders. The guides (young) are careful not to anger the elders and ancestors; hence they will not allow any offensive/culture threatening behaviour within the Kayas. Indeed, Kaya Kinondo Conservation and Development Group is confirmation that communities can influence cultural tourism in their areas by setting cultural standards.

For details on KKCDG, contact Hemed Mwafujo at hemfujo@yahoo.com or kayakinondo@yahoo.com

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Retracing the Ecopath: 2005 Ecotourism Conference

Interpretation through training, certification and employment of local guides, and the preference of community/private partnerships to empower communities to benefit from tourism. Yet there was concern that ‘good practices’ were costly and if the costs could not be transformed to opportunities, then practitioners would get discouraged. ESOK, tour operators and marketing agencies were challenged to find means of transforming the costs of “best practices” to value products and package them to give Kenya an edge over its competitors in the global tourism market.

Finally the more than 100 ecotourism stakeholders from Kenya and beyond reaffirmed that ecotourism gives guarantee to visitors seeking a close encounter with nature that they can do so without impacting negatively on the environment and local communities.

Exhibition

To enrich the conference, ESOK had invited 10 organizations that promote recycling and use of renewable energy technologies in Kenya to exhibit their products. Participants got the chance to learn about different types of briquettes, posts and park benches made from recycled plastic, a variety of solar cookers and various types of dry/urine separation toilets. The solar companies present displayed solar solutions for powering lights, mobile phones, satellite phones, GPS units, laptops and other electronics that are used by tourists and in tourism facilities.

See page 3 for conference resolutions
Conceptualization of Ecotourism
- The conference noted that whereas there are many definitions of eco-tourism, the essence of eco-tourism is good business with social, cultural, and ecological responsibility operating in an ethical environment where the legislative framework was a necessary but not sufficient requirement.

Guidelines and Standards
- A national policy or an adoptive document on eco-tourism should be developed. This document should address key issues including facility development and standards, partnership, benefit sharing, marketing, conservation, training, and capacity building. This will streamline the operations of all current and future projects in Kenya. The document should also identify linkages between government and the community.

Community Participation
- The conference noted that participation should yield qualitative and quantitative benefits, which are essential to enterprise’s success.
- Participation should further respond to ownership needs, promote equitable sharing of benefits and enhance the tourism product quality.
- Participation should be negotiated from time to time in response to emergent needs and challenges. As a need driven process, participation is a means to realize specific needs.

Benefit Sharing
- It was observed that since the single largest input in ecotourism ventures is land and related resources (environment), benefit sharing must address restoring the quality of the environment.
- Benefit sharing should meaningfully involve all members of community including women and the youth and address intergenerational equity to avoid conflicts.
- Creating awareness on the need for long-term approach to investment and returns should be encouraged to avoid high expectations, and demand for immediate gains.

Community Empowerment
- The conference noted that empowerment should enable various groups in the society: women, youths and all age-groups, including vulnerable groups, to share in the benefits of the venture.
- Economic empowerment is only one form of empowerment. Others are cultural, spiritual and knowledge empowerment. The conference acknowledged all these forms and resolved that a good ecotourism venture should plan for all forms of empowerment.

Ecotourism Marketing
- Good marketing must be budgeted for in each year’s operation costs and it must be continuous.
- Maximizing visitor satisfaction and better service delivery provides a competitive edge over conventional tourism.
- Good marketing should strive to deliver and not over-promise. It should strike a balance between product quality and promise.

Partnerships in Ecotourism
- Partnerships play an important role in filling technical and/or financial gap facing communities.
- In view of the differences in levels of competencies between communities and private investors, communities should seek technical support during partnership bargaining process.
- Partnerships agreements should be flexible and avoid exclusive clauses in order to buffer communities against risks and vulnerabilities associated with rigid agreements.

Traveler’s Philanthropy
- The principal motivation for traveler’s philanthropy is the desire to make a difference in the communities they make contact with.
- The conference noted that while traveler’s philanthropy is important, it need to be structured, and administered through appropriate mechanisms that are accountable, and transparent, in order to achieve tangible results among intended beneficiaries.

Good Practices in Ecotourism entails
- Giving priority to locals in employment and capacity building.
- Good governance, transparency and accountability. These help build trust and ownership.
- Structured/ institutionalized, participation in away that each actor’s role is well specified and sustainable.

Threats to culture
- The conference noted that the exploitation of culture-based products has been aggravated by the lack of institutional mechanism for addressing collective bargain.
- This is made worse by the dispersed nature of the communities which hinder co-ordination of response, channeling of grievance, collective voice, and seeking solutions to this problem.

ESOK Role
- Come up with information/resource centre where communities and other stakeholders can make reference on all aspects of ecotourism.
- Maintain inventory of ecotourism sites and pursue possibility of developing an eco-circuit.
- ESOK should take the center stage in harmonizing the operations of the eco tourism establishments to ensure standards are observed.
- ESOK prioritize and assist in policy development in collaboration with Government.
- ESOK should assist in the marketing of community based ecotourism products.

Government’s Role
- Government should be proactive and lead from the front by creating enabling infrastructure that facilitate (ecotourism) responsible tourism development.
- Government should establish, jointly with ESOK, a department for auditing ecotourism ventures to ensure good practices and good governance in ecotourism projects.
Regional meetings concluded
The ESOK regional ecotourism workshops that began in November 2004 were concluded with the Maasai Mara workshop that was held on 19th – 20th August 2005. In all, 7 meetings were held in various parts of the country, including the coast, Kajiado, Taita-Taveta, Mid-Rift, Mount Kenya-Laikipia-Samburu, Nyanza-Western Kenya and Maasai Mara. In this exercise, ESOK met approximately 100 representatives of various community-based organizations around the country. This was in addition to other individuals and representatives of other organizations that promote tourism/conservation in these regions. Reports for these meetings are available at the ESOK Resource Centre.

ESOK awards ‘Eco-Warriors’
Malewa River Lodge, Basecamp Explorer and Mr. Joseph Mbugua of Thompson Falls Sport Camp & Hostel are this year’s winners of the ESOK Eco-Warrior Award. The awards were presented at the National Ecotourism Conference in Silver Springs Hotel, on 1st November 2005.

ESOK has introduced the Eco-warrior award to honour individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contribution to ecotourism and/or environmental conservation in Kenya. Each year, ESOK members will participate in the exercise by nominating the individual and organization they feel should receive the award. Nominees need not be ESOK members.

Isecheno Bandas now ready
The community-owned Isecheno bandas at the edge of Kakamega forest are now ready for occupation. The 6 bandas can accommodate a maximum of 18 people and are all built in the traditional Luhya hut design. Visitors can book through Let’s Go Travel (tel: 254-20-4447151/4441030) or contact the camp manager directly (254-0723 917079).

Journal challenge
ESOK carried out a survey on its members in April – June this year. We sent out questionnaires to all members seeking their opinion on the Society, the services it offers and ways that members felt they could be engaged more. From the survey, we learnt that community support programmes and the eco-rating scheme are dear to many members. Some members felt the need for ESOK to expand the responsible tourism campaign beyond the eco-rating scheme. That ESOK needed to be involved in disseminating eco-friendly practices to companies and industries in Kenya. One member challenged ESOK to initiate an ecotourism journal for Africa initiatives, ESOK invited some community group representatives to share its stand at the Adventure, Leisure & Sports Expo 2005. This was with the aim of giving them first-hand experience on such exhibitions. Among the groups that sent representatives include Netbon ecotourism group, Imbirikani group ranch and Thomson Falls Campsite & Hostel. Many visitors to the ESOK stand sought details on prices, exact location and contacts, indicating the need for communities to package their information well. The exhibition was held at Sarit Centre, Nairobi, from 8th to 10th July 2005.

More facilities Eco-rated
This year, four more accommodation facilities have acquired bronze certification in the ESOK Eco-rating Scheme. These include Oldonyo Wuas lodge (Kajiado), Kichwa Tembo camp (Maasai Mara), Bateleur camp (Maasai Mara), and Tassia lodge (Laikipia). A total of 28 facilities now hold bronze certification under the scheme.

New ‘forum’ marches on
The Nyanza Western Tourism Forum that was born at the ESOK Western Kenya workshop in March this year officially began operations on 28th July 2005. So far, the Forum has 18 member organizations, including Lake Victoria Sunset Birders, Kipsainia Wetland Conservation Group, Kakamega Weeping Stone, Kisi Soapstone Art and Craft and Green Development Group (who make various products using the water hyacinth in Lake Victoria). Others include Wildlife Clubs of Kenya-Kisumu, KWS Kakamega, National Museums of Kenya-Kitale and Gogo falls power station.

The Forum aims to bring these stakeholders together to enable them to package, develop and market their products jointly. “We plan to open up the western circuit and diversify Kenya’s tourism by moving away from the traditional beach and safari products,” an enthusiastic member said.

Contact them through Wildlife Clubs of Kenya’s Kisumu office, tel. 057-2024162

Saving lake Ol Bolossat
Thompson Falls Sports Camp & Hostel and the Kenya Wildlife
Service held the Lake Ol Bolossat Conservation Workshop from 4th to 7th October 2005. Members of the Kenya Wetlands Forum (KWF) and numerous district administration officials including the District Commissioner of Nyandarua district attended the meeting. Participants at the workshop felt that recognizing lake Ol Bolossat as a wildlife sanctuary could go a long way towards ensuring its future.

The little-known lake Ol Bolossat in Nyandarua district is the only lake in central province of Kenya. It has hippos and many bird and plant species. But it is threatened by cultivation agriculture and human encroachment.

Mr. Joseph Mbugua of Thomson Falls Sport Camp & Hostel winner of ESOK Eco-warrior Award is one of the people who have been involved in the efforts to save lake Ol Bolossat.

Need help from retired experts?
Senior Experten Service (SES) is a German non-profit organization that uses senior (retired) experts to offer training in various fields. These include environment protection, hotel and catering management, tour operators and other aspects of the tourism industry. The experts offer training, generally combined with actual problem solving, to enterprises (including small and medium enterprises), institutions, public authorities and private organization. Clients are expected to meet the costs of the assignment, but limited funds are available for clients who do not have the necessary means to pay. For more information, e-mail ses@ses-bonn.de or visit www.ses-bonn.de

Basecamp Wins
Basecamp Maasai Mara have been awarded the Responsible Tourism Award for 2005. The Award is regarded as one of the most prestigious international awards within its field. The award is initiated and managed by responsibletravel.com, World Travel Market (WTM), the Times and Geographical Magazine in the UK. The prize was officially announced during the World Travel Market event on 16th November 2005 in London.

Around 700 applicants were nominated and evaluated by a professional jury. The winners were selected for 12 different categories. In relation to conservation and community-based tourism - tourism in protected areas is regarded as one of the imperative award categories. Basecamp Maasai Mara emerged as the winner of this particular category for its pilot project, “Sustainable Development through Community Based Tourism”.

For more information contact Tina Frisk of Basecamp at tina@basecampexplorer.com

Support the ESOK Resource Centre
You can donate books and other relevant publications to the ESOK Resource Centre on travel/tourism and conservation. Our vision is to provide leadership in the knowledge and practice of ecotourism. Become a part of this vision. Call Philip for more information on Resource Centre.

Calling on recycling companies
ESOK is calling on individuals and groups/organizations that make products from recycled material to donate samples of such to the Resource Centre. These include products made from waste paper, recycled plastic, recycled glass, water hyacinth, sawdust, charcoal wastes, sugarcane bagasse and coffee husks among others.

We are putting together a collection of such products from all over the country. This is with the aim of enriching our resource centre – we want members to learn as much as possible when they visit ESOK.

If you would like to contribute samples of your products to this unique resource centre, or you know an individual or group engaged in such business, contact Philip (tel. 02-2724403/2724755; e-mail: info@esok.org).

ESOK E-letter
Every month, ESOK produces an electronic newsletter that is sent to members and some selected organizations. These e-letters contain news on the society, its members and other issues of interest in tourism and conservation. To receive a copy, send your request and e-mail address to Philip at info@esok.org.

A new way to pay your membership
All ESOK membership subscriptions are due at the beginning of each year (January 1st). And you do not have to keep paying your subscription every year: you can pay for a two-year period and enjoy our services up to December 2007!
**Environmental Impact Assessment**

--- by Philip Murithi ---

**What is environmental Impact Assessment?**

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic and objective examination conducted to determine the effects a programme, activity or project will have on the environment. EIA also encompasses the development of mitigation measures to address these impacts and suggested approaches for implementation, monitoring, and auditing.

**Which projects require EIA in the tourism industry?**

All new projects require an EIA. These include major changes in land use, activities, and structures that are out of character with their surroundings and establishment or expansion of recreational areas. Projects requiring EIA appear on the second schedule of the Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act (EMCA), 1999. EMCA can be purchased from Government Printer, Nairobi at Kshs 630.00. Further details on the actual EIA process are available in the Legal Notice No. 101 on Environmental (Impact Assessment and Audit) Regulations, 2003, also available for Kshs 200.00.

**When should an EIA be carried out? Who should do it?**

EIA is undertaken at the initial stages of project development. There is a register of more than 300 individual experts and firms of experts authorized to conduct EIA studies. The register is a public document that can be inspected at NEMA on payment of Ksh 200.00.

**How much does it cost? Who pays?**

There is no standardized charge for carrying out EIAs. The total cost mainly depends on the scale and complexity of the project. It is the project proponent who pays for it.

**What is the procedure in undertaking an EIA**

For any projects listed in the second schedule, an expert registered by NEMA prepares a Project Report that the project proponent submits to NEMA. After review, NEMA either approves the report and issues an EIA license, or requests the proponent to undertake an EIA study. In the latter case, license is issued after the EIA study report has been reviewed by NEMA and relevant lead agencies.

What if, after submitting the report, NEMA takes too long to respond?

The law allows project proponents to proceed with their undertakings if they do not hear from the Director-General (NEMA) within three months of submitting their reports.

For one acquiring or selling a facility, is the license transferable?

Yes it is. But only in respect to the project for which it was acquired. In such a case, both parties have to notify the Director-General jointly within 30 days.

What happens after the EIA license has been acquired?

The project owner/operator is expected to implement the Environmental Management Plan (EMP). The EMP is a product of the EIA study that identifies significant adverse impacts, monitoring indicators and mitigation measures. Every year, the owner/operator is expected to submit a report – called environment audit (EA) report – to NEMA describing how the project conforms to the EMP and other sound environmental management practices.

Why should people assess the environmental impacts of their activities?

- It promotes sustainable development by ensuring that our activities are environmentally sound.
- It is a tool for decision-making; it enables one to identify, evaluate and choose among alternative locations, designs and operations.
- It promotes participation as the process calls for the involvement of local communities and other agencies. Such people offer invaluable contribution to a project’s design, implementation and sustainability.

EMCA states: “Every person in Kenya . . . has the duty to safeguard and enhance the environment.” It is our responsibility to consider the impacts of our actions on the environment.

We appreciate the assistance of Jane Kahata, an environment and natural resource management consultant, in putting this information together. She can be reached at jkahata@yahoo.com

*Ecotourism Society of Kenya* Newsletter – Issue No.11
KAZAKHSTAN: taking tourism away from the cities

by Bernard Kitheka

Although Kazakhstan has unique wildlife, scenery and culture, most tourism in the country is business-related travel and is restricted to Almaty, the country’s commercial capital. Outside this, and other cities, there are hardly any tourist accommodation facilities.

But now, the Kazakhstan Tourism Association (KTA) has come up with a plan to expand tourism into the rural areas. The association has laid out an elaborate multi-level strategy to develop community-based tourism in selected destinations in rural Kazakhstan.

The first step in this strategy involves identification and authentication of potential ecotourist destinations in the country. For a destination to ‘pass’ there must be a legitimate local group or organization, a specific tourist product (culture, wildlife, recreational site or areas of notable natural beauty) and people willing to provide various tourist services.

Next, a needs assessment of the selected destination is carried out. The results of this assessment are then used to develop a training program. This ensures that the training program is tailored to suit the services to be offered at that destination.

An ecotourism specialist conducts the training. It entails imparting skills for accommodation management, tour guiding, horse riding, taxi services, interpretation, art and craft, music, dancing, etc, according to the needs of that particular community.

For what has been achieved so far, the response has been overwhelming. Visitation to these destinations has increased, especially by the expatriate community living in the cities and people on short stays in Kazakhstan. There is also an increasing demand among wealthier, urban Kazakhstani tourists to take a respite from the city or as a way of reconnecting with their roots. They associate rural Kazakhstan with authentic Kazakh culture. The affluent ‘urbans’ also recognize the value of the local people to help them discover unknown areas in this vast country.

One service that has benefited from this approach is the provision of home stay accommodation in rural Kazakhstan. This involves a visitor, the ‘ecotourist’, staying with a rural Kazakh family in a family house, a Yurt (traditional summer hut used by shepherds) or a flat. The lodging is either part of the main family house or a separate entity. The hosts manage their business and perform all household duties including tidying the rooms and preparing food. To guard against unhealthy competition, different home stay providers choose a coordinator amongst themselves, who in most cases does not provide accommodation but is paid a percentage of the collection.

The main challenge to community-based tourism in Kazakhstan is the vastness of the country. Tourists have to commute long hours by road or rail. There is also a lot of work to do to lobby the government to give tourism higher priority. But there is progress in many areas. The KTA has for instance set up an Ecotourism Information Center (EIRC) in Almaty to advice, link, and market the destinations.

Mr. Kitheka is a Kenyan currently serving as a community ecotourism advisor with the Kazakhstan Tourism Association. He can be reached at mkitheka@yahoo.com
Turtle Bay Beach Club has won the 2005 Energy Management Award in the Hotel Sector. The award was presented on 30th October 2005 at Hotel Intercontinental.

The Energy Management Award is a GEF-KAM project that aims to promote good practice in the use of energy within the industrial and hotel sector. We asked Mr. Chris Magero, Turtle Bay’s Community and Conservation Coordinator, what made Turtle Bay win. “Regularly monitoring the amount of energy we use through the hotel, and finding new ways to reduce our consumption. We also educate guests on what we do and carry out training through all departments to educate them on energy conservation.” Turtle Bay holds a bronze certificate in the ESOK Eco-rating Scheme.

Campi ya Kanzi wins Skal

2005 has been a fine year for Kenya’s Campi ya Kanzi. First there was news that Campi Ya Kanzi had managed to be a finalist in the 2004 World Legacy Awards. These are global awards that Conservation International and National Geographic Traveler magazine give to leading examples of nature and culture heritage protection in tourism industry. Campi ya Kanzi was a finalist in the category of heritage tourism, owing to its efforts to promote the culture and welfare of the local Maasai community.

Now the ‘Camp of Hidden Treasure’ has been declared this year’s winner of Skal International Ecotourism Award. And one of the things that the judges considered while awarding the prize is the report that ESOK prepared for Campi ya Kanzi’s bronze certification in the ESOK Eco-rating Scheme.

ESOK participates in Nairobi Show

ESOK took part in the Nairobi International Trade Fair from 26th September to 2nd October 2005. It was a time for us to share knowledge on ecotourism with the many Kenyans who attended the show from all parts of the country. “Very interesting and encouraging”, “good work being done” and “I would like to join you” were some of the remarks that they put down after calling on the ESOK stand.

The future of Kenya’s tourism is bright: many secondary school students took time at our stand as they sought advice on careers in tourism. We thank the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife for allocating ESOK space within their stand.

Join ESOK Now...

There are three categories of Membership as follows:

1> Corporate - 5,000
2> CBO - 1,000
3> Individuals - 1,000

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

Include the following details:
Name, Name of Organisation (Corporate & CBOs), P. O. Box, Postal Code, Town/City, Telephone, Fax and Email address.