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Message from the Executive Officer

Edith Alusa-Bosire

Reflections.....on new beginnings.

New beginnings are as exciting as they are challenging. I relish challenges and Ecotourism Kenya is an exciting new beginning for me.

The significant achievements of Ecotourism Kenya have largely been made possible through the eight years of dedicated service of my predecessor, Judy Kepher – Gona. Hers are indeed BIG shoes to fill, but I love shoes! We wish her well as she moves on to break new ground.

Cheers to your new beginning Judy!

The end of the year is suddenly here, bringing with it the knee jerk reaction of taking stock of the year that was. The beginning of the year though a blur to many has had a very vivid impact on the Kenyan economy in general and the tourism sector specifically. Many of our members have had to change the way they do business in the short term and seriously think about how to proceed in the future. The good news is that the tourism sector has demonstrated the will and capacity to bounce back. Ecotourism Kenya’s growing membership has been pivotal in the change process simply by sticking to their vision and mission.

Vision: to be a leader in the knowledge and practice of eco-tourism

Mission: to effectively link communities, tourism and conservation for sustainable development in Kenya.

Dear members, I am happy to join Ecotourism Kenya as we wind up this year and look forward to starting the new year with you and taking on the challenges presented to the industry by climate change and issues related to sustainable development.

Seasons greetings,

Edith

Edith Alusa-Bosire has a ten year background in environmental management having worked in engineering and climate change consultancy conducting EIA’s and audits as well as training. Her formal education is in geophysics and biology with postgraduate masters studies in environmental management and applied environmental economics.

Message from the Chairman

When I joined Ecotourism Kenya several years back, I wondered what effect this single organization was having on the way tourism was being practiced throughout Kenya. Could the candle we were holding really light up a whole country?

After being a member for a while and now as chairman of the board, I have come to the firm conclusion that we had an effect... indeed A BIG EFFECT! And it has all been made possible by the approach that the organization has taken. Two aspects of Ecotourism Kenya’s approach have stood out:

First, the organization has focused on those interventions that have potential to affect the whole tourism industry. One such intervention is the Eco-rating Scheme, a certification programme that recognizes and awards the efforts of hotels, lodges, bandas, camps, etc in conserving the environment and promoting the welfare of local communities. The idea is to give every tourist accommodation facility a chance to participate, learn and apply the best practices of sustainable tourism. This wide focus, you will agree, is important because as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) noted in one of its publications, “the greatest improvements in the tourism industry will be brought about by influencing change through the mass tourism market.”

The Eco-rating Scheme has been growing rapidly over the years and I am happy to announce that due to demand from neighbouring countries, the programme has now expanded to other countries in East Africa, with four facilities from Tanzania and Zanzibar now on board. We are confident that the programme will keep growing and expanding, remembering that a study on UK consumers found that when choosing a holiday company, care for the environment was an important consideration for 87% of consumers while the holiday benefiting local people was an important consideration to 76% of consumers.

The second aspect is that Ecotourism Kenya pursues a collaborative approach in all its activities. On one hand Ecotourism Kenya works closely with tourism stakeholders in both the public and the private sector, including the Ministry of Tourism and Kenya Tourist Board (KTB). On the other hand, the organization itself is a collaboration as it is made up of individuals, companies and community-based organizations that are committed to practicing responsible tourism. Each of these almost 300 members in effect holding a candle in the different areas where they live and work.

With a rapidly growing membership and expansion of programmes to East Africa and beyond, it is actually now not about lightning up Kenya but the whole of Africa!

I would like to end by inviting you to join us light Africa by becoming a member of Ecotourism Kenya, or contributing to our efforts by sharing your ideas, time, skills or funds.

Adam Jillo
Chairman - Ecotourism Kenya
GREEN TINTED GLASSES
constructed wetlands

No-one can be oblivious of the impending crisis which threatens our lifestyle, livelihood and very existence. Water in its various forms is becoming more problematic as each day passes (too much, too little, too dirty...). One can regularly see reports of water issues throughout the country, in April 2008 there were floods by Lake Victoria whilst simultaneously droughts in Tana River as a result of the late arrival of the long rains. Contamination of groundwater near cities and industries renders water toxic and unusable. How can we manage this fickle resource? How can we protect that which we already have from the multiple pressures of a rising population? How can we encourage people to start taking responsibility for the impact they have on the environment and work towards reducing this? In short, how can one make waste water treatment a more attractive and economical activity?

A housing estate on the outskirts of Mombasa may have come up with a winning solution to this dilemma. The estate was constructed throughout the 70s and 80s and offered affordable, good quality houses in a model environment. The years, however, took their toll and a lack of maintenance resulted in areas becoming dilapidated, particularly the drainage system. For years, blocked drainage lines overflowed, insufficient soakpits took the brunt of the waste and the estate became associated with unsanitary conditions. Lots of expense, lots of trouble and lots of unhappy residents.

In October 2007, the developers brought online a system which solved all of these drainage problems. A series of gravel beds and plant filled ponds were constructed and by creating a beautiful and diverse environment, they also succeeded in cleaning up their waste water. Not only that, but the system produces a huge quantity of biomass which is then used in a nearby biodigester to create methane for cooking school dinners!

The ponds form a “Constructed Wetland System” which utilises natural processes, in particular aquatic plants, to reduce the nutrient content of the water. The nutrients are actually a result of human waste products, but in the eyes of a hungry ecosystem, food is food. Nutrients are taken up, given out, digested and transformed by a number of processes within the system without the need of any artificial additives or use of energy. Pathogens are reduced by UV radiation, predation and simple sedimentation within the ponds. If nature is given the optimum chance to perform, amazing results can be obtained; in this case, a final effluent which is safe to discharge to the local water course (within the NEMA consent values). Not only that, the unpleasant and unsanitary environment which existed before has now become an oasis supporting a diversity of flora and fauna. Waste water that was formerly viewed as a problematic issue has now become a resource as it may be used for other site activities, such as irrigation, building and clearing blocked pipes. If the wetland is not working in an optimal fashion, failure is slow, non critical and will not require any exotic spare parts.

Why isn’t everyone doing this then? Well... in a lot of cases they could be, using something along similar lines specifically adapted to each site. Ponds create areas of great beauty, but do take up space which is not always available. In such a case, a series of gravel beds may be incorporated into the design (known as reed beds) as these are more space efficient. The ponds attract a great diversity of wildlife, most of which are of benefit to the system, although problems may be encountered if this includes large animals and predators. A number of imaginative techniques exist for keeping these visitors away, although the most basic is to provide an alternative point of access for the animals to drink from (using the recycled water). At a number of
Green Tinted Glasses ... cont

lodges, being able to provide clean recycled water year round for wildlife has even been the main focus. This is one of the projects at Campi ya Kanzi in the Chyulu Hills.

Ecotourism Kenya and NEMA have realised the benefits these on-site systems can contribute in terms of protecting the environment and have recognised them accordingly (one can gain points towards EK eco-rating scheme). As with any construction, they do require an EIA and there will be some design restrictions based on each particular site. They offer an environmentally friendly way to attain the discharge to environment standards (NEMA – Third Schedule Water Quality Guidelines, 2006). The systems are relatively new in Kenya, but have been well tested internationally with a plethora of research to support them (see box). Their maintenance requirement is little more than gardening and the tropical conditions in Kenya encourage beneficial bacteria to work even faster.

Many countries, especially in Asia, have been carrying out similar practices for hundreds of years whereby wastewater is seen as a valuable resource from which marketable products may be obtained (fish, fertilizer, animal fodder etc). This has happened to such a degree that wastewater may be purchased or even fought over! We shouldn’t go this far, but we can start to complete the nutrient cycle between humans and the land rather than continuing to pollute. All of you who call yourselves environmentalists, it’s time to start looking at wastewater through green-tinted glasses!

Where can you see Constructed Wetlands?

- The Carnivore Restaurant - Nairobi
- Eden Project – UK
- Centre for Alternative Technology – UK

Sarah de Mowbray is a director of GreenWater Environmental Water & Sanitation Solutions GreenWater designs, builds and offers consultancy on reed beds, constructed wetlands and all aspects of water management.

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Eco-rating Scheme goes East African

Due to rising demand from hotels, lodges and camps outside Kenya, the Eco-rating Scheme has expanded to cover the whole East Africa region. Four facilities have already been certified from Tanzania and Zanzibar and other applications are expected shortly. The Scheme’s expansion has received coverage in different media including the Business Daily newspaper of October 8, 2008 and the official website of the Kenyan Embassy in Washington, DC (www.kenyamba.com).

As a result of this growth, we would like to congratulate the following facilities for attaining Bronze Eco-rating:

1. Chada Katavi (www.nomad-tanzania.com)
2. Fundu Lagoon Resort (www.fundulagoon.com)
3. Greystoke Mahale (www.nomad-tanzania.com)

For further details on the scheme, visit www.ecotourismkenya.org

Karibuni!

Small Medium Enterprises Today supports CBOs

For the next eight months, the publishers of Small Medium Enterprises Today will be providing Ecotourism Kenya (EK) with 50 copies of each issue of the magazine. The magazine is published monthly and contains information that is tailored towards supporting the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) including those in the tourism industry. EK would like to share the magazine with 50 CBOs that meet the following requirements: (a) have an existing tourism enterprise, (b) are ready to collect/organize the collection of their copy from EK offices each month, and (c) are able to give feedback on the magazine when required. If you are interested in this offer, email philip@ecotourismkenya.org
Eco-Tourism has many parts and many faces. It can be seen from the nature of the operations themselves and the experiences that the tourists have. Eco-Tourism involves everything from the conservation of cultures and eco-systems to the actual experience of true wilderness and appreciation of our common humanity and interdependency with our environment.

No matter the different aspects, our industry is all about people. And typically the people who first come to mind are the paying clients, as they are the ones who literally bring in the business. However if we turn our attention to look within the industry then we see the ‘other’ people, the ones who are providing the service that makes everything possible. It is the staff working in the hotels, lodges and camps and the people in the surrounding communities that this article focuses on.

I recently had the honour of participating in the first ‘global business conference for LED lighting In Africa’ and sharing my experience of how ‘Lighting Africa’ can make a difference. Lighting in Africa has never before been directly addressed as an issue in itself nor has it been tackled at a high level. This conference was part of a long term program to transform access to light for the people who live off-grid in Africa, developed and implemented by the World Bank (WB) and its private sector arm the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

The conference was a showcase for renewable power & lighting technologies, most of which utilise solar power and LED lighting. Discussions were held to identify both the opportunity that lighting presents for making a difference in the continent and also to assess the obstacles to access and adoption of suitable technologies by the people that could benefit the most.

‘Lighting Africa’ presents an opportunity for bringing appropriate and affordable renewable energy power and lighting technologies to the people who make the Eco-Tourism industry tick. It will be possible to bring power and light into the homes, schools, clinics, and actually into the lives of the people who work in the industry and the communities that the industry works and is an integral part of.

The solar revolution is well underway, with the majority of eco-lodges operating using direct solar wind power to generate emission free electricity. What is yet untapped is the potential that the industry has to reach out to bring clean, bright and safe electric light into the lives of the tens of thousands of people who work within or alongside the many eco-powered camps, lodges and hotels.

We have links with suppliers of low-cost equipment that can light up people’s homes and small businesses and also have projects underway installing solar systems to provide power and light in schools and clinics. Possibly we can develop ways of financing community solar power and lighting schemes through revenues generated by Eco-Tourism businesses, client donations and community payments to form an integral part of the community development that we all value so highly.

It is, sometimes grudgingly, agreed that ‘experience is the best teacher’, and seeing something for ourselves can teach more than through a thousand words. Well, the Eco-Tourism industry has been educating and inspiring thousands of clients, staff and communities by providing positive examples of how solar power and lighting can work. With the introduction of appropriate, affordable and attractive technologies these people can step out of the shadows and into the light.
Upcoming Events:

- Event: Travelers’ Philanthropy Conference – One Month to go!
  Date: 3rd – 5th December 2008

Registration is ongoing for the 2008 Travelers’ Philanthropy conference which will be held at Ngorudo Mountain Lodge, Arusha, Tanzania. The theme is “Making Travelers’ Philanthropy Work for Development, Business, and Conservation”. For latest updates and information visit their website www.travelersphilanthropy.org or send emails to Whitney Cooper, CESD Washington, D.C on wcooper@ecotourismeds.org.

Ecotourism Kenya is proud to be a partner and sponsor of the event.

First EcoStorm in Africa
- Event: Eco Storm Masai Mara
  Dates: 17th – 20th November 2008

The EcoStorm team welcomes you to this first EcoStorm in Africa – an adaptive, accessible and practical global resource for sustainable destination development. The event takes place at Basecamp in Masai Mara. Workshop program, schedule available on www.eco-storm.net.

Questions? Contact the Programs Coordinator Tina Frisk tina@basecampexplorer.com +254 766 998

EcoStorm is hosted jointly by Basecamp Explorer Group and Ecotourism Kenya

News Flash
Cultural Village Foundation (CVF) is going to launch Tourist 4 Development: Second Episode Kenya on the 12th November 2008 at the WTM World Responsible Tourism Day in London. This edutainment TV series is intended to promote responsible tourism experiences and projects taking place in East Africa: Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania. The first episode was filmed in Burundi.

The episode has been produced in partnership with Ecotourism Kenya, with the participation of Laikipia Wildlife Forum, Il Ngwesi Community Lodge, Kitengela Glass, Maasai Centre for Field Studies, Amboseli Maasai Cultural Village, Amboseli Maasai Community Campsite, SNV South Rift Portfolio, Turtle Bay Beach Club, Kipepeo Project, Local Ocean Trust, Watermu Turtle Watch, and Apocalypso Productions.

Eco Talks
Awareness creation and information dissemination is one of the major tenets of Ecotourism Kenya. Throughout the course of this year, we lined up a series of talks to enhance member’s interaction and networking while at the same time creating a forum where members engage in dialogue and share information that enhance their responsible tourism practices. A short summary of each of the 2008 Eco talks is provided below:

April:
‘Finding the balance with market forces – our environment and their perceptions’ was facilitated by Dr. Mordecai Ogada, the manager of Kenya Wildlife Trust. The gist of the presentation was that if sustainable development is to be achieved, there is need to consider the actual effects of all ‘eco-friendly’ investments, rather than simply getting them due to the hype or market demand. In the tourism industry for instance, constructing lodges with deadwood is considered eco-friendly but even deadwood hosts insects and birds and thus this has a negative impact on the environment. Additionally, having a swimming pool in a semi-arid environment may have a negative effect on aquifers if it extracts excess water from a water-scarce area. The deduction was that those wishing to make such eco-friendly investments should not just consider perceptions but they should undertake scientific evaluation of the actual effects before they engage in them. There is need to challenge those who have made such investments to ensure that they have the right motive for doing it. This way, rather than bequeath future generations’ carbon credits and bio-fuels, we will leave them a healthy environment.

May:
‘Investing in People in Ecotourism – Examples from South Africa’ was the topic for the month of May where the facilitator, Judy Kepher-Gona, formerly Executive Officer -EK, took the participants through her experience in SA where she had been appointed to assess the finalists for the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. She meticulously took the participants through the distinguishing factors between Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Investment and Investing in People. CSR was described as a one-off event such as a cleaning exercise while CSI is a planned activity that may take a longer term after which the company detaches itself and leaves the communities to run the implemented projects on their own. Investing in people in ecotourism usually involves the company making long term commitments such as setting a certain percentage of their profits to carry out certain projects that have distinct characteristics such as: training of both staff and community members; intervening in the social programs of the communities; conserving culture by promoting art tours and generally uplifting the livelihoods of the community by building their capacity in entrepreneurship that will feed them and their children to come and in the process dissuading the dependency syndrome.

June:
‘Investing in People in Ecotourism – Kenyan Examples.’ As a continuation of the May talk, the manager of Kichwa Tembo Tented Camp Maasai Mara, Niall Anderson took the participants through their investor in people initiatives in Kenya made possible through the CC Africa Foundation. He explicitly enumerated the projects they had started with the communities including training in conservation and entrepreneurial projects such as chicken rearing, bee keeping, growing of vegetables to supplement the milk and meat diet among the Maasai Community and growing of woodlots to deter the logging of firewood for cooking as had been the case previously. A total of 7 schools have been established at different localities within the Mara region by the Africa Foundation which has also built a dispensary that offers free medical treatment but charges minimal fees for the drug prescriptions.
July:
‘Building market access for SMEs and CBTS’ talk was facilitated by Anjali Saini, an environmental consultant dealing with energy efficiency and sustainable tourism issues. Anjali had been involved in a study under the Government of Tanzania Private Sector Competitiveness Project to review 300 plus SMMEs in the country that needed accessible business support mechanisms to encourage and escalate their growth. The main aim of the study was:
• To help reduce the cost of doing business;
• Increase the capacity of the local private sector to participate in domestic and international markets;
• Build access to appropriate financial services.
Further details of this presentation are available from Anjali Saini on email anjali.saini@yahoo.co.uk

August:
Aru Willetts, an Environmental Consultant lead the participants through the ‘challenges and opportunities posed by the New NEMA regulations on waste management for camps and lodges’.
The Regulations stipulate that anyone who transports waste requires a waste transportation license. This applies to all waste that is generated by a facility, and includes both non-hazardous and hazardous waste. Vehicles that are used for waste transportation must be registered with NEMA which does not have specifications for the types of vehicles that can be used, but has indicated that the vehicles should be enclosed, or the waste has to be covered or contained. Trucks delivering supplies to the camps and lodges cannot be used to transport waste. The regulations seem to contradict the 3 R principles of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle which the eco lodges are advised to adhere to.

September:
‘Travelers’ Philanthropy - is it a voluntary transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor nations?’ Dr. Fred Nielsen from Tanzania and Dr. Lars Lindkvist of Basecamp Maasai Mara lead an animated discussion on the distinguishing factors between charity work and TP as an investment and asked the participants this million dollar question- if you are presented with a USD 1,000,000 for TP activities, would you take the money and deliver results? It emerged that there is need for proper systems and structures in place together with long term planning for conservation and development to take place.

EK Participation in the Newcomers Orientation Seminar at the US Embassy
On Thursday 18th September 2008, EK represented the members at a reception party organized for new comers to the mission at the US Embassy in Gigiri. We used the opportunity to distribute our Green directory and other products to the participants who included the US Ambassador to Kenya among other dignitaries. Following this interaction, we expect to receive a number of applicants for membership and other collaborations.

UNWTO/Kenya Tourism Week
Ecotourism Kenya participated in week long activities to mark the World Tourism Day held at Malindi on 22nd – 27th September 2008 under the theme “Tourism Responding to the Challenge of Climate Change”. As part of the events, a half day workshop was held to examine the causes of climate change and challenges facing the Kenyan tourism with a focus on coastal tourism as well as highlighting the preparedness and mitigation measures by tourism players including the communities against impacts of Climate Change at the Kenyan Coast. Collins Obura, the Conservation Co-ordinator at the Turtle Bay Beach Club took the participants through the experiences of hotels to the effects of Climate Change by outlining the practices TBBC has put in place to adapt to the challenges. Other activities that took place were tree planting, cleaning up of the Bus Park and a beach football tournament.

Congratulations to our New Corporate Members!
Ecotourism Kenya is proud to welcome these new eco-friendly members who have joined the organization since January 2008. We are glad to be associated with you and appreciate your support.

1. SafariLink Aviation
2. Baobab Beach Resort, Mombasa
3. Spanafric Safaris
4. Africa House Safaris
5. Mihon Destinations Management
6. The Mara Online Ltd
7. Mara West Camp
8. All Seasons Safaris & Tours
9. The Banana Box Company
10. Courtesy Hotels
11. Medina Palms
12. International Hotel and Tourism Institute
13. Sayari Africa Ltd
14. Governors Camp Collection
15. Mwebe Resort Management Ltd
16. Malewa Wildlife Lodge
17. Zoor Tours & Safaris
18. Victoria Safaris
20. SDV Transami Kenya Ltd
21. Eastern & Southern Safaris Ltd
22. Wonderlink Adventures
LOW-COST construction options for community-based tourism

by Philip Murithi

Many Community Based Organizations (CBOs) aspire to offer tourists accommodation services either in the form of cottages or a lodge but are deterred by the high costs associated with construction.

In an effort to address this challenge, Ecotourism Kenya and Malewa Trust undertook a training exercise which involved exposing members of three CBOs to some of the options available for constructing low cost tourist accommodation facilities. The training was carried out at Malewa Trust, Naivasha, on 30th August 2008.

It was a day for members of Kijabe Environment Volunteers (Kenvol), Ilparakuo Community Group and Kauti Cultural Centre & Campsite to witness various building techniques that maximize the use of appropriate technologies and locally available materials to keep construction costs down. These include the use of interlocking stabilized soil blocks (ISSB) that use wet soil as their main raw material and the Finnimore construction technique that uses a rotating shaft attached to a vertical pole to build circular mud walls. Finnimore is the technology that was used to construct Isechono Bandas in Kakamega (an EK project).

It emerged that CBOs can reduce costs at all stages of the project cycle. At the planning phase, communities can save costs by first having visitors use the area on which the cottage or lodge will be built as a camping site. Visitors’ comments and other observations made during this trial period are then used to gauge the area’s suitability, ensuring that the community does not spend money building structures at a site that visitors will not like.

During construction, using locally available materials is an important cost-saving measure as it eliminates the high costs that are associated with transportation of construction material. And in addition to regular repairs, maintenance costs can be reduced by ensuring that grass-thatched structures have a roof that slants at an angle of 45° and above. This minimizes water retention thereby increasing the lifespan of such roofs.

Costs can also be saved when developing promotional material for the new facility. Communities should for instance avoid having information that changes regularly like costs in the main brochure. Such information should rather be printed as separate sheets that are given out together or inserted in the brochure. This way, a change in the price does not call for reprinting of the brochure.

At the end of the day, it was clear that the three groups had learnt a great deal.

“We were able to open up our minds,” a representative of Kenvo wrote soon after the training. “We have a clear picture of whatever we are expecting which we could not have had before the visit to Malewa.”

“The exposure visit was very informative,” added Major (rttd) Sila Mutungi from Kauti group. “It exposed us to one of the cheapest and best way of putting up a cultural centre and campsite by making cheap bricks which can be used not only for selling but for building water storage tanks for domestic use and small scale irrigation.”

Ecotourism Kenya continues to seek similar opportunities for other CBOs that wish to construct low-cost tourism-related facilities. For Kenvo, Ilparakuo and Kauti though, there can be nothing better than to heed the words of Major Sila: “It is upon us all who had the opportunity to explore Malewa to ensure that the visit was not just an outing.”

For more information on this article, email philip@ecotourismkenya.org

Would you like to be featured on this page? email info@ecotourismkenya.org or call Philip on 2724403
Campi ya Kanzi, a community based lodge located in the pristine Chyulu Hills ecosystem covers a conservancy area of 2,500 acres within the Kuku Group Ranch which borders the Chyulu National Park to the East, Tsavo West National Park to the South and Amboseli National Park to the West. The lodge is one of the only two Gold Rated facilities in the Ecotourism Kenya certification scheme and can accommodate 16 guests in the 8 double tents. To attain this level of certification, the lodge has been evaluated for practices that demonstrate superior and replicable levels of excellence in responsible tourism in the areas of sustainable resource use, environmental conservation and socio-economics investment. Below are excerpts of some of the excellent practices found in Campi ya Kanzi in each of these areas:

Sustainable use of resources
1. Application of a planned approach to resource management including having policies to govern the storage and use of scarce resources such as water and energy
2. Use of renewable sources of energy; solar energy provides 80% and 20% from two standby generators for all heating and power needs at the camp
3. Energy conservation measures in place including the use of energy saving bulbs, AAA washing machines and dishwashers and use of eco friendly charcoal made from coffee husks as cooking fuel.
4. Presence of water conservation measures including harvesting rain water, use of dual flush toilets, aerators on taps and showers, central laundry with AAA washing machines to regulate and minimize water usage in tents
5. Through collaboration with visitors and staff in promotion of sustainable resource, total water usage at the camp is at an average of 62l/per person (both guests and approximately 50 staff). This is done by providing both written and oral instructions on how visitors can support the camp’s sustainable resource use programme.

Environmental conservation
1. Significantly safeguarding the increased diversity of flora and fauna in the ecosystem by employing full time scouts to patrol the area to reduce poaching
2. Formulation and implementation of numerous organizational policies and programmes to ensure minimal impacts on the environment and local communities arising from any aspect of the camp’s activities.
3. Establishment of the Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust (MWCT) among other programs to offer compensation for loss of livestock to wildlife and therefore reduce the human-predator conflicts.
4. Increasing the land available for wildlife by encouraging the community to set aside land for the creation of privately funded wildlife conservancies
5. Discouraging unsustainable farming and water diversion which threaten the harmony within the ecosystem by offering employment in exchange for non-farming and pursuing for the creation of protected wetlands where farming is taking place.

Social-Economics investment
1. The Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust (MWCT) has significantly increased the number of local people receiving benefits through employment, predator compensation, scholarships, building of schools and providing supplies and teacher’s salaries, building dispensaries and provision of medical supplies.
2. Involvement of the local Maasai in every step of the lodge’s development, from construction to operation and decision making.
3. Inclusion of a USD 40 from guest charges as conservation fee which is paid directly to the MWCT.
4. Setting aside vast majority of profits from the camp which go directly into MWCT and re-invested to promote the well being of the community.

Campi ya Kanzi’s Mission Statement: “To protect and preserve the Maasai wilderness, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Tsavo/Amboseli eco-system”

Did you know that the Eco-rating Scheme has gone regional!

Would you like to be featured?
The Featured Eco-rated Facility is a new column of the EK Newsletter. It is available for eco-rated lodge/camps only. If you would like to be featured in the next newsletter, email info@ecotourismkenya.org
Enhancing communities’ participation in tourism through

Promotion of Sustainable Cultural Tourism

The tourism industry plays a key role in the Kenya Economy, as one of the leading foreign exchange earners last year (2007) it earned approximately US$ 800M. This income was accrued from 1.8 M tourists who visited the country. In terms of employment the industry accounts for about 500,000 jobs both directly and indirectly. To expand the industry horizon there is need to diversify the product base from the traditional, beach and wildlife products to others such as cultural tourism. The tourism sector has been unveiled as one of the six key drivers towards the government achieving Vision 2030, which is an economic development plan aimed at transforming the country into a middle level income country by 2030. The vision’s objectives will be achieved through aggressive marketing campaigns in the source markets, incorporation of niche tourism products such as cultural tourism, birding, sports, conference tourism and ecotourism, re-branding of existing products and building of three resort cities (one in Isiolo and two at the coast).

Maasai Mara and Amboseli destinations are located in the South Rift Region of Kenya and are frequented by a substantial number of tourists each year. The destinations are popular with tourists because of the big five, rich Maasai culture, Mt. Kilimanjaro next to Amboseli National Park and the annual wildlife spectacle of wildebeest migration in Mara. Despite the high volume of tourist of arrivals in these destinations, local community participation has been low and consequently minimal benefits accrue to the community. 52% of the population, living adjacent to the parks and reserves, live below the poverty line.

Challenges facing Cultural tourism in Mara & Amboseli

Despite the richness of Maasai heritage in the two destinations, the potentials of sustainable cultural tourism have not been fully exploited. Currently, the culture is being marketed informally in the cultural villages next to the major tourist attractions. The challenges facing development of sustainable cultural tourism includes; lack of product standardization, absence of sector regulation, limitation in business orientation among local communities, presence of inefficiencies in the cultural tourism value chain (cultural tourism in the destinations is worth Ksh. 416 M but the locals earn less than 20% of the revenue) and lack of appropriate marketing channels. This has translated to low tourists’ satisfaction and the Maasai community being exploited by intermediaries due to inefficiencies in the cultural tourism value chain.

The Maasai culture is popular with tourists visiting Kenya and if well packaged and creatively marketed it can increase the benefits and earnings to the community living next to these tourist attractions. This is well illustrated by a successful cultural tourism pilot project pioneered by Transmara Cultural Village Association (TCVA), through the support of The Travel & Tourism Foundation. The cultural villages have partnered with the adjacent hotels; the tourists pay cultural village excursions to the hotels that remit the earnings at the end of the month. The communities have also received capacity building in guiding and packaging the cultural display. The project is successful and tourists are relatively satisfied with
the value for money paid for the excursion while on the other hand the community’s is earnings have increased substantially.

Interventions in developing sustainable cultural tourism
Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) in collaboration with other organizations; African Conservation Centre, Local Authorities, Kenya Wildlife Service, Wildlife Clubs of Kenya and other organizations have embarked on a journey aimed at facilitating the development of sustainable cultural tourism in Mara and Amboseli. This entails facilitating product development, provision of market based solutions, advocating for an enabling environment and equity in earnings sharing from cultural tourism. The specific activities aimed at achieving the objectives of the interventions include; exposure exchange visits, training of cultural guides, embedding commercialization, formation of self regulating cultural village associations and incorporation of an appropriate marketing strategy.

Noting that the majority of cultural villages mainly by default rather than by design, have been working in isolation and engaging in unhealthy competition, SNV in collaboration with other organizations organized an exposure visit of the cultural village representatives to Arusha, Tanzania. The exposure visit involved 26 cultural village representatives from Maasai Mara (including Trans Mara); Amboseli and Samburu tourism destinations. The representatives were able to visit and hold discussions with the Esilalei women’s cultural boma - who through the support of African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) Tanzania have been able to establish a working relationship with the tour operators and have well designed and organized selling shop for their curios. The group also visited the Mtu Wa Mpu cultural village project. This Project has been able to bring together all the tour guides in Mtu Wa Mpu into an association and brokers business deals with tour operators for tour packages. The exposure visit, inspired the cultural village representatives to initiate the formation of associations to coordinate and manage cultural villages/tourism. This is ongoing and different actors are supporting the cultural villages to form the associations.

The cultural village guides ("lecturers") play a critical role in interpreting and guiding the tourists in the cultural villages. However most of the guides lack adequate tour guiding and customer care tips that will ensure that the tourists get a quality experience of the Maasai culture. SNV contracted Wildlife Clubs of Kenya to develop a tailor made training module, do the actual training, coach and mentor the guides. The topics covered included; introduction to tourism; the role of tour guides in tourism; role of communities in tourism development; principles of bird/mammal identification; cultural tourism; customer care in tour guiding; importance of communication etc. In October 2008, SNV and WCK did an evaluation of the training to aide and inform in replicating the training in other destinations; Amboseli, Samburu and Mid Rift regions.

Conclusion
There is need to diversify tourism in Kenya by spicing the traditional products (beach and wildlife) with our cultural heritage. Cultural tourism if well packaged can play an important role in empowering economically local communities living next to conversational tourism attractions.

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