

Developing & Marketing a Sustainable Maasai Village Tourism Experience in Kenya

Final Report

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1. Project Objective(s):

The project aimed to transform the then unsustainable 'Kipas (Enkereri) Maasai Village Tourism Experience', located to the Western end of the Masai Mara Game Reserve, into a sustainable, responsible, marketable, tourism experience by:

Objective 1 - Significantly increasing the economic benefits from tourism to the local community.

Objective 2 – Developing a quality village tourism experience that encourages genuine cultural exchange.

Objective 3 – Providing UK tour operators and destination suppliers with a sustainable cultural tourism excursion to responsibly market to their clients.

Objective 4 – Disseminating good practice and lessons learnt from the project to enable other community tourism ventures to improve the sustainability of their businesses.

2. Activities:

Project activities from May 2006 – July 2007 included:

- Desk research to provide a background and history of community-based tourism development in Kenya (Appendix 1).
- Production of a briefing paper on why Kipas (Enkereri village) has failed (Appendix 2).
- Initial exploratory workshop and interviews with local community at Enkereri village, plus meetings and workshops with the 4 other tourism villages operating in the same area (Hardrock, Olonana, Enkutoto, Ilkinye).
- Face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders in Kenya including:
 - Managers of all 6 safari lodges/camps in the project area (Mara Triangle)
 - CEO of the Mara Conservancy
 - Maasai landlords who 'officially' own the land that several of the villages are situated upon in the Mara Triangle
 - MD's and tour managers of the leading tour operators and ground handlers in Kenya
 - CEO and Chairperson of KATO (Kenya Association of Tour Operators)
 - Managers of First Choice Kenya and their ground handler Somak
 - A&K in the UK
 - Serena Hotels Group in Kenya
 - Senior Deputy Director of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism & Wildlife
 - Ecotourism Kenya
 - SEMADEP (Maasai community development organisation)
 - Network Co-ordinator of KECOBAT (Kenya Community Based Tourism Network)
 - KWS (Kenya Wildlife Services)
 - 4 driver/guides from Kenya's leading tour operator/ground handler - Somak

- Divisional Officer, Divisional Office of the President (Lolgorian Division) – local government office in the project area
- A series of seminars and workshops with in-destination tour operators and ground handlers in both Mombasa and Nairobi organised for the project by First Choice Kenya and their ground handler Somak.
- Community meetings with all 5 villages collectively.
- Presentations (jointly with Maasai representatives from each of the 5 villages) at 3 Mara Conservancy Lodge Managers' Meeting organised by the Mara Conservancy.
- Numerous community capacity-building workshops and training sessions, including:
 - **Understanding the tourism industry**
 - **Business record keeping**
 - **Business structures**
 - **Accounts / book keeping**
 - **Banking systems**
 - **Marketing**
 - **Revenue distribution**
 - **Community development projects identification & planning**
 - **Customer service**
 - **Health, hygiene and sanitation**
 - **Long drop toilet construction**
 - **Cultural tours development**
 - **New crafts development**
 - **New cultural product development**
- Media coverage in the UK and Kenya.
- Production of interim report (Appendix 3).
- Survey with visitors to the 5 villages (Appendix 4).
- Physical product development in villages (curio market and cultural tours, along with development of new curios and cultural product).
- Disseminating lessons learnt from project via SE.MADEP, KWS, Ecotourism Kenya, tour operators (in both UK and Kenya), KATO, and Maasai cultural tourism villages in the Maasai Mara on the Narok side (Sekanani).

3. Outputs:

3.1 Product development

a) **Market input** - a visitor survey with 140 visitors to the 5 villages was carried out pre- and post- product development to assess visitors' views on the village tourism experience (Appendix 4). Product development options were also discussed with lodges, tour operators and ground handlers in Kenya so that their concerns and requirements were also taken on board.

b) **Supplier input** – the results of the visitor survey and tourism industry consultation were analysed in workshops with villagers and plans for product development were drawn up.

c) **Improvements to existing cultural tours** - quality, Maasai Village tourism experiences have been developed for visitors at all 5 villages based on genuine cultural exchange. Each village now has a 'Cultural Tours Manager' who is responsible for delivering an enhanced cultural experience in the village. All have worked with their Cultural Guides to improve the quality and scope of the interpretation of Maasai life provided to visitors to the village, along with making the tours more participatory.





The curio market experience has also been improved, with the women now sitting aside from their market stalls and showing visitors how to carry out beadwork the Maasai way. This has totally changed the atmosphere of the markets, visitors now being free to browse rather than being made to feel uncomfortable by previously so many 'hungry eyes' focused on them, willing them to buy something. The newly appointed 'Curio Market Manager' also now explains the bartering system to visitors, and encourages them

to participate in this cultural practice whilst at the curio market. The visitor survey shows clearly that visitors now feel more comfortable when visiting the village curio markets, rather than before when they felt pressured to buy things (not surprisingly when the only income the villagers were formerly retaining was from the sale of curios). Not surprisingly, the villagers have hence since an upturn in curio sales of circa. 20%. Enkereri village has built 2 long-drop toilets in the village for use by visitors, along with supplying hand washing facilities. All other villages are set to follow Enkereri's lead and have received training in long drop construction.



d) **New cultural product developed** – a new 'Maasai Evening Excursion' is currently being piloted at Enkereri Village in collaboration with CC Africa's Kichwa Tembo Tented Camp. This excursion runs just one evening a week so as to minimise impacts on village life (as takes place at the busiest time of the day for the Maasai). Clients are brought to the village by camp vehicles at 6pm in time to see the cattle coming back to the manyatta for the evening, and the cows being reunited with their calves, women milking, etc. This is totally different to the daytime cultural tour that is already marketed widely in Kenya. There is no visiting of Maasai houses or selling of curios – just the opportunity to learn about the special relationship between the Maasai and their cattle (which are absent during the daytime tours). Visitors then sit by the campfire, watch the sun set over the Mara, and the



Maasai warriors participate in traditional dancing. Visitors are encouraged to join in. Women and children are present, but sit a little back so as not to cause disturbance to clients. Soft drinks are available. These excursions are an alternative to the 'staged' Maasai dancing performances that many of the safari lodges run, being in a genuine village setting. Once fine-tuned this excursion will be marketed to all lodges in the area for a fee of \$20 (so the fee structure ties in with the new lodge voucher system).

Lodges will be advised to market for \$25 so they can give their drivers an incentive to sell if desired.

e) **New curios developed** – using traditional Maasai beading skills, the women have developed a selection of new products for the Western market – beaded dog and cat collars, leads, and contemporary necklaces. These are for sale in the curio markets in the villages, and directly to retailers in the UK. TVC has sourced orders for the villages for such products, and a business model is being developed with the Ujamaa Centre in



Mombasa as the exporter through their KICK Trading arm. This hence cuts out the exploitative 'middleman' in Kenya, ensuring that the producers receive a very fair price for their products.

3.2 Capacity building

The 5 villages have been equipped with to operate and develop successful tourism a series of workshops and seminars (see Activities section 2 for a full list of workshop subjects covered). The success of these workshops in achieving their objectives is high. The community are now operating their tourism businesses effectively and have achieved a sense of empowerment from their new founded knowledge and understanding. This is evidenced by:

a) The 5 villages uniting to form the 'Mara Triangle Maasai Villages Association'. This was a very important step in the empowerment process. Previously the 5 villages had been locked in competition with each other for tourist business, and as a result the driver guides were able to play one village off against another to keep the villagers 'in line'. The Association meets every 2 weeks, has a written constitution, and consists of elected representatives from each of the 5 villages. The Association has been instrumental in ending the exploitation of the Maasai by the tourism industry's driver guides.

b) The Maasai now having an in-depth knowledge of how the tourism industry works and the part they play in this as a supplier. They are also now aware of the tourism supply chain and how UK tourists find their way to their villages. Again, this knowledge was pivotal in the Maasai realising that the 96% commission structure imposed by Kenya's driver guides was not the industry norm, and also that there was an inherent demand for cultural tourism product by



overseas visitors to Kenya. Previously they had believed the driver guides rhetoric in that they had to press gang visitors to go to their villages.

the necessary skills enterprises through

- c) All 5 villages now keep Visitor Comments books and actively encourage visitors to write in these at the end of their visit. These are then shown to the lodges that send clients to the villages during the villages' monthly marketing visits to all lodges in the area. Each village has elected a Marketing Manager to carry out these visits to the lodges. Enkereri's Marketing Manager has similarly travelled to Nairobi to meet with KATO in order to promote their village tours.

- d) All 5 villages now keep daily records on visitation and translate these into monthly visitor records and accounts once a month. For the first time the villages are able to report to all village members on how many visitors they receive each month, from which lodges/operators, how much income they receive from tour fees, how much from the sales of curios, etc. Previously they had no idea how much they were benefiting (or losing!!!) from tourism. All villages elected one of their members to be the village's 'Financial Manager' who now carries out all the book keeping, raises invoices on the lodges, chases late payments, etc.



- e) All villages have now opened a bank account into which tour fees are paid by the operators each month, and they are operating these accounts well. Previously, none of the villagers understood how the banking system in Kenya worked, and now they know how to interpret their monthly statements, pay in and withdraw money, etc. This has increased the transparency of the tourism businesses amongst all village members and is a key facet of the new payment system preventing the driver guides from taking the community's money.
- f) All villages have appointed a 'Customer Services Manager' who is responsible for the overall customer experience whilst in the village – from the cleanliness of the pit latrines, to the disposal of the cow dung (and flies!) inside the manyattas.
- g) All villages have agreed community development projects that they wish to undertake



over the next 3 years from monies received from tourism. Hardrock, Enkutoto, Ilkinye and Olonana Villages wish to combine resources to build a primary school along with a local dispensary, and to build pit latrines in their villages to improve the health of the community. Enkereri wished to install a

borehole, increase the capacity of its small school and construct pit latrines, again to reduce the incidence of diarrhoea and typhoid in the village.

- h) Members of the community are so empowered that they are already sharing their new knowledge with neighbouring Maasai communities, and participating actively for the first time in Ecotourism Kenya organised community tourism workshops.

3.3 Marketing

Responsible and effective marketing of the villages is now being carried out by a multi-stakeholder partnership comprising the community, safari lodges, KATO and tour operators. All safari lodges in the area now actively market the cultural tours to their guests at reception, in bedrooms, and at client welcome meetings. KATO has been appointed as the Association's marketing agent in Nairobi and Mombasa and actively promote the sale of tickets for cultural tours to the 5 villages to

all of its members. The leading tour operators in Kenya now market the tours to their clients 'upfront' as an optional excursion, purchasing tickets from KATO to pass on to their clients. These tickets promote a 'Code of Responsible Behaviour' to visitors whilst in the village (developed by the villagers) and hence the villages are now experiencing less negative impacts from tourism e.g. inappropriate dress, farting in the village, etc.



3.4 Equitable Benefits

For the past 30 years the great majority of Maasai manyatta businesses have been exploited by the industry's driver guides. Unbeknown to visitors, whilst they are being shown around the village by their Maasai cultural guide, the driver guides take back all the visitor entrance fees paid directly by visitors to a village elder, pocket on average 96\$ each visit, and give the villages back just 300KS (circa. 4\$). In the month from 18th June – July 17th 2006, 4 villages participating in the project (Enkereri, Hardrock, Ilkinye and Enkutoto) received 554 visitors, each paying a circa. \$20 tour fee. Of the \$11,859 fees collected during the month, the villages retained only \$813, the remaining \$ 11,046 being taken by the driver guides. For details on the issue, and reasons why this is happening, see the project's interim report (Appendix 3).



Through negotiations facilitated by TVC between the community, safari lodges, KATO and tour operators in Kenya, the community for the first time in over 30 years of operating cultural tours in their villages is receiving equitable returns from tourism. Additionally, new tourism income streams have been identified and developed e.g. evening cultural excursions at Enkereri village and the direct sale of curios to the UK by all villages.

The lodges in the area now sell excursions to the villages upfront in the lodges, and take payment from the clients direct. No money now changes hands in the village (except for the sale of curios) and hence it is now impossible for the driver guides to take back visitor entrance fees from the villagers as they did previously. A voucher system has been developed, and only clients with a valid voucher issued by the lodges can gain access to the village for a cultural tour. Once a month the villages invoice the lodges for the value of the vouchers collected, and this is paid directly into each village's bank account. The full \$20 tour fee paid by each visitor now accrues to the Maasai, compared to just 300KS (circa. 4\$) per vehicle (containing on average 5 clients i.e. \$100 of business) previously. Each bank account has 3 signatories elected by fellow villagers, and hence a

very transparent, and accountable payment system has been developed. Since this new system was implemented on September 1st 2006, the villages have earned over \$30,000 from cultural tours (up to the end of April 2007), an 800% increase on the same period in the previous year. Furthermore, from July 1st 2007, KATO has begun promoting a new ticketing system for visits to the 5 villages to its members. Again, clients hand in this ticket to the village to gain entry. The villagers receive 15\$ per ticket sold - KATO retaining 1\$ as a handling fee, and the tour operators 4\$ (20% commission, of which the villages have recommended that half of this is paid to the TO's driver guides as an incentive to promote the tours) – paid directly into their bank accounts each month. Data on ticket sales will be sent to each village each month along with the breakdown of tour operators purchasing these (detailed data as yet to be supplied by KATO for the first month's sales, but early indications are that tickets are selling well).

3.5 Best Practice

This final report (and the interim report) highlights the lessons learnt in turning around a failing community-tourism venture. Additionally, a briefing paper on why Kipas (Enkereri village) has failed has been produced (Appendix 2). Both are aimed at disseminating best practice in this area for use by other community projects/destinations. As such both reports will be available on the Travel

Foundation and TVC websites.



TVC has also written an article for Ecotourism Kenya that will be published in its quarterly magazine on the lessons learnt, along with several press releases sent to the media in the UK and Kenya. Many media articles have hence been published on the project (both online and offline), along with inclusion in a BBC2 primetime documentary entitled 'Should We Really Give Up Flying'. Several media angles are currently being pursued including a visit by a freelance journalist to the project later this year.

Importantly, dissemination to other Maasai villages in Kenya has already begun through joint meetings with KWS, SEMADEP, TVC and the Mara Triangle Maasai Villages Association. TVC and representatives from Enkereri village have already shared the lessons learnt from this project with the 20 Maasai villages running cultural tours on the Narok side of the Mara (Sekanani).

4. Impacts:

The project has achieved all of its objectives and more. Impacts include:

1. Significantly increased benefits from tourism accruing to the local community (800% increase on the same period last year) and more equitable sharing of benefits (community now receives 100% of tour fees from lodge-generated business, and 75% of tour operator-generated business through KATO).
2. Increased visitor satisfaction with excursions (100% of clients surveyed via the visitor survey said that the excursions met or exceeded their expectations), and increased cultural exchange (as evidenced by visitor survey results and format of newly developed, participatory cultural tours in the villages).
3. All lodges now brief their clients on the do's and don'ts when visiting the villages to minimise their impacts, along with these being published on the back of visitor entry tickets. Along with the new equitable fee and payment structures, these excursions are hence now being marketed responsibly.
4. Other communities (Maasai villages on the Narok side of the Mara) and community tourism development organisations (SEMADEP, Ecotourism Kenya) have already taken on board the lessons learnt from this pilot project and have adopted them in their own work with communities.

5. The current cultural tourism product has been enhanced and new product developed that gives these villages a marketing edge and increased visitor satisfaction at the same time.
6. Villagers are empowered and have the skills, tools and knowledge to operate their tourism businesses on a sustainable basis into the future.
7. The excursions are now marketed by the lodges and tour operators in Nairobi and Mombasa, with formal supply agreements now in place.
8. Villagers now, for the first time in over 30 years of running tourism businesses, feel that they are part of the tourism industry in Kenya.
9. The villages are already seeing the fruits of the increased benefits from tourism – Enkereri village has expanded its community school to 2 classrooms and has now employed 3 teachers, it has started adult education classes, has built long drop toilets, has constructed a rain water harvesting system, commissioned a survey to assess the potential for the construction of a borehole in the village, and has sent 2 of its bright young stars to college for further education.



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10. The project is already being well disseminated both in the UK and Kenya through the media, tour operators and NGOs.

5. Challenges:

- a) It became apparent after the initial exploratory meetings with the villages, that the key issue influencing economic benefits from tourism accruing to the local community was the blatant exploitation of the Maasai villagers by the tour operators' driver/guides. The initial project plan to focus predominantly on Kipas Village was hence abandoned, and all 5 villages in the area were included in the project. This meant a dramatically increased workload within the same project resources!! Formation of the Mara Triangle Maasai Villages Association, bringing the villages together, helped to overcome this.
- b) The hostility of the driver guides towards the consultants was a personal threat up until very recently, as the driver guides are 'losing' a great deal of money. This has gradually been overcome by discussions with driver guide representatives, through the support of tour operators and the travel industry at large, the disciplining of disruptive driver guides by their employers, media exposure of the issue, and in awarding them 10% commission on the sale of tickets through KATO.
- c) Some tour operators and lodges being less supportive than others e.g. Little Governors. Trying to encourage some operators to embrace the new scheme was difficult, and a 'carrot and stick' approach had to be adopted with these including in a minority of cases media 'name and shame' tactics. In the main, however, the majority of operators have been incredibly supportive, and by promoting the 'leading stars', this has encouraged others to follow.
- d) Land right issues – some of the villages occupy land owned by Maasai landlord elites, who as soon as the money started flowing to the villages tried to become the new 'driver guides'! The strength of the Village Association in staying united has to a large extent overcome this issue, along with keeping one step ahead in terms of strategy (ensuring signatories on bank accounts are the right ones i.e. non corruptible), and in one case going to the courts to get the land re-designated to the local community, the rightful, ancestral owner before the government gazetted the land and awarded to Maasai elites in the run up to elections. This issue is still live and is being fought with the aid of a Land Rights NGO in Kenya.

6. Broader implications:

The success of the project in overturning over 30 years of exploitation of the Maasai by the tour operator's driver guides was unexpected by many in the industry in Kenya. Many people and organisations had tried to address this widespread issue before, but failed. The success can be attributed to working at the problem from both ends – on the ground with the community (capacity building and awareness raising) and with the tourism industry in Kenya (putting in place a transparent and workable payment system and securing formal supply agreements). TVC was able to facilitate dialogue between both parties, having both 'hands on' community development and tourism industry experience.

The broader implication of this project is that the tourism industry in Kenya wishes to roll it out nationally, so that all Maasai cultural tourism businesses benefit equitably from tourism. The project has achieved much media, community and industry attention in Kenya, as it has addressed a high profile issue in the country.



7. Long term sustainability:

The project's outputs will continue to be realised in the Mara Triangle into the future, as the community are now empowered and skilled in running sustainable tourism businesses. Importantly, the systems that have been put in place to handle the tour fees of tourists visiting the villages are robust and transparent. The new Village Association is effective and driven. The consultant will need to keep a 'technical eye' on the project for the next year, working with the community to address any issues that may arise until the new system is well cemented and adopted by the tourism industry at large in Kenya. This is really critical as the new system is less than a year old and is trying to overturn over 30 years of exploitation in Kenya of the Maasai. Some ex-beneficiaries will hence be keen to see it fail, and this young sapling needs to be nurtured to grow strong. It has such far-reaching implications for the economic well being of many other Maasai communities in both Kenya and Tanzania that it should not be allowed to falter.

8. Replication potential:

There are tremendous opportunities to replicate this project in other areas of Maasailand in both Kenya and Tanzania, along with Samburu, where the same issues are present. TVC plans to submit a proposal to the Travel Foundation to expand the project's reach to firstly the Narok side of the Masai Mara (Sekanani) where 20 such tourism villages operate, and then into Amboseli and Samburu. Maasai facilitators to drive this expansion have already been identified in Enkereri Village, and they will work in tandem with TVC to hold workshops with the community initially in the Sekanani area when funding is secured. Thereafter, it is planned that this expansion into other areas of Kenya, and into Tanzania, be done predominantly by the Maasai themselves, hence capacity building of individual Maasai facilitators to deliver this expansion is planned, subject to the provision of funding.



Acknowledgements:

TVC would like to thank the Travel Foundation and its members for funding this project as part of its external grants scheme, and their Programmes Manager, Wendy Moore, for her invaluable advise and input throughout. Without such support, the outputs achieved from this initiative to date may not have been possible, as it is always a struggle to secure funding for such 'responsible tourism' projects involving communities.

TVC would also like to thank CC Africa for its on-going support in providing discounted accommodation to the project team at their Kichwa Tembo Tented Camp in the Mara Triangle, and in particular to their Stanley Ole Mpakany for his on-going advise and support on the ground in moving the project forward.

Sincere thanks are also extended to First Choice, in particular to their ex Manager in Kenya, Jon Hilton, and to First Choice's ground handler there, Somak (Effie and Shadrack a BIG thank you for all your support and enthusiasm for the project), who supported the project logistically and operationally in both Nairobi and Mombasa and opened doors for meetings with the major tour operators in Kenya.

Special thanks are also extended to Fred Kaigua, Chief Executive of KATO (Kenya Association of Tour Operators) and Peris W-Mukaru, KATO'S Ticketing Manager, for their invaluable help and assistance in understanding the issues and for all their hard work in getting the new private operator ticketing system up and running.

TVC would like to thank Timothy Oloo of Serena Hotels who facilitated the initial contact with the villages whilst he was working as Naturalist at Mara Serena Safari Lodge. Thanks are also extended to Resiatio Patiat-Martyn of MCDO (Maasai Conservation & Development Organisation) for facilitating communication between TVC and the Maasai villagers during the community workshops and meetings.

Brian Heath, Chief Executive of the Mara Conservancy, has been a big supporter of this initiative from the start, and gave the project critical access to the project area's Lodge Managers at formal Mara Conservancy meetings. Abdulaziz Abdalla, Product Development Manager for Pollmans Safaris, was another individual who showed great commitment and passion for the project and helped in moving the agenda forward.

Michael Koikai, Senior Warden of the Masai Mara Nature Reserve, and James Lesaloi of the Maasai community development NGO SEMADEP, were instrumental in facilitating links with Maasai villages on the Sekanani side of the Masai Mara, and the resultant sharing of 'lessons learnt' that ensued.

Thanks also go to the Born Free Foundation in Kenya for access to their project vehicles and drivers to carry out the project work in the Mara – thanks to their driver George for his very cheerful company, and skilled 4WD driving (!), during June 2007's visit.

Special thanks are extended to my husband Manny, who endured many sleepless nights during the early phases of the project when I was away from home and the initial negative driver guide reaction to the project was kicking in. Also to his technical support to the project, especially in facilitating health, hygiene and sanitation workshops, along with the construction in the villages of long drop toilets!

Finally, sincerest thanks are given to the Maasai people living in the Mara Triangle. Their commitment, dedication, application and drive to make this initiative a success is testimony to the hardships they have endured, and the inequitable benefits they have received from their tourism businesses, over the last 30 years. It has been a genuine pleasure and honour to have worked with them in tackling this issue, and to have been accepted so whole-heartedly into their lives and homes. Special thanks are extended to Ben Rramet and Ben Longisa of Enkereri village for their wisdom, cultural insights, and facilitation of the work in all 5 villages. We have started a journey together that will continue for many years to come - until all tourism manyattas in Maasailand are receiving equitable benefits from their tourism enterprises. We have taken our first steps along this road.

Supporting materials:

Appendix 1 - Background and history of community-based tourism development in Kenya

Appendix 2 - Briefing paper on why Kipas (Enkereri Village) has failed

Appendix 3 – Project interim report

Appendix 4 – Visitor survey results