

# Nomination for UNDP Equator Award

## Kasigau – 5 Villages: (CBO)

Tsavo, Kenya

*5 community-owned 'bandas'*

### Nominated by the African Wildlife Foundation

#### Initiative Description and Innovations

Surrounding the unique Mount Kasigau in the Tsavo District of Kenya are a number of relatively small and isolated rural communities. With the assistance of The African Wildlife Foundation's Conservation Service Center program these communities have committed themselves to participating in an exciting conservation program in partnership with Savannah Camps & Lodges Ltd, that is aimed at not only securing a wildlife corridor between Tsavo East and Tsavo West, but at its core is the conservation of the unique cloud forests of the mountain itself.

The aim of the Kasigau Bandas is to generate a small but significant community income by means of revenue from basic, clean and healthy visitor accommodation that is owned operated and hosted by the community members. International volunteers pay to come to stay in the huts and participate in community service and conservation projects. Volunteers experience the factors that affect the lives of rural Africans, and in particular, of those living on the boundaries of conservation areas in a semi-arid environment. Volunteers and local people work together to enhance both the standard of living and the environment for the local people.

Community owned and operated accommodation is complete and in use in the 5 villages surrounding the base of Mt. Kasigau - Rukanga, Jora, Bungule, Kiteghe and Makwasinyi. Each Banda consists of 2 twin rooms and a small adjoining public room / kitchen constructed in traditional "village style" of Tsavo - brick walls and thatch roof and furnished equally simply. No motorized transport is available, and supervision of volunteers from neighboring Taita Discovery Center is limited to "on request" or emergency assistance only.

#### Poverty Reduction

This deal has significantly benefited the 800 poor households living in these five villages. Not only are they receiving significant cash incomes, but also benefit from reduced livelihood vulnerability (though diversification of income sources), employment opportunities and significant governance and empowerment. Tangible benefits include:

- The Kasigau village companies earned a net profit of \$38,000 last year from their partnership.
- More than 15 local people are employed in various capacities by the facilities, earning an average of \$1,000 p.a.

- Bursaries provided are enhancing education and training opportunities to otherwise marginalized people, including 15 bursaries to secondary school, 5 bursaries to wildlife management school and one bursary for an admission to Moi University for a degree in wildlife management and tourism.
- The business management and governance training provided to the elected board and shareholders has changed perspectives and contributed to better management of the affairs at community level. The community members as a result of intensive training and catalytic exchange tours are demanding increased accountability.

### **Biodiversity Impacts**

Mount Kasigau is an isolated atoll of the Taita Hills, a region of unparalleled biodiversity, home to more endemic species than any other region of Kenya. It is largely unexplored, unprotected and, unlike the rest of the Taita Hill, which is in jeopardy of extensive destruction & degradation, Mt Kasigau, by virtue of its incredible geological isolation, is largely untouched. Mount Kasigau is the northern limit of the Eastern Ark Mountains (Recognized by IUCN and WWF as Worldwide Hot Spots) and is home some of the last intact and undisturbed eastern arc forests, where there are 453 forest species of vascular plants of which at least 13 are thought to be endemics.

This forest is not only home to endemic species but is also a critical dry season water source for the wildlife species in Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks (Africa's most elaborate park system). Key threats include such charcoal burning, uncontrolled logging, commercial firewood harvesting among others.

### **Partnership**

The five villages lease their bandas on an exclusive basis to Savannah Camps & Lodges Ltd for an annual lease fee of \$20,000 accelerating at 10% p.a. in dollar terms. The current contract is for 10 years. Savannah Camps & Lodges Ltd. is a Kenyan registered Tour Company with a turnover of \$6m p.a. and dedicated to working with communities to develop responsible tourism that finances conservation of critical wilderness lands.

### **Sustainability**

The Kasigau bandas are running well with every indication that they will be financially and environmentally sustainable:

- The significant level and equitable distribution of benefits received by the community is an important factor
- The commercially successful nature of the bandas means that the high levels of occupancy are likely to be maintained
- Significance of the land to the integrity of the Taita-Taveta ecosystem, especially in terms of safeguarding the wildlife corridor between Tsavo East and Tsavo West parks.

## Facts & Figures & Contact Information

Location	Taita Taveta District of Coast Province, Kenya
Area	25,000 acres
Access	By 4X4 35km off Mombasa road from Maungu town
Cost	\$30 per night per person
Activities	Game tracking, mountain climbing, agro-tourism, anthro-tourism.
Local Population	800 households in the five villages, with total population of 4,700 people.
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References	1) Steve Turner  P.O. Box 48019 Nairobi, Kenya  Tel # 254-2-331191 or 222075  E-mail - <a href="mailto:eaos@africaonline.co.ke">eaos@africaonline.co.ke</a>  2) Mr. Basil N Mwakiringo, MP P.O Box 92825, Mombassa, Kenya. Tel: 011-492373 Fax:02-336589