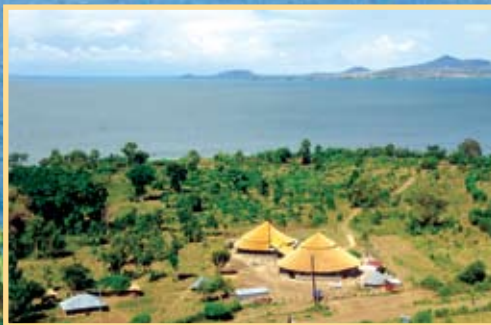


MANAGING COMMUNITY PROJECTS

TARA and the Abasuba Community Peace Museum



ÉCOLE
DU PATRIMOINE
AFRICAIN

Gladys Nyasuna-Wanga and Gloria K. Borona
Foreword by Alain Godonou





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ÉCOLE
DU PATRIMOINE
AFRICAIN

ABASUBA COMMUNITY
PEACE MUSEUM



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

In cooperation with



World Heritage
Centre



Safaricom
FOUNDATION



COVER

Background image: View of Lake Victoria from Nzenze Island; **Top left:** Taxi boat near Rusinga Island, Lake Victoria, **Top right:** Painted concentric circles at a rock art site, Mfangano; **Bottom left:** The recently constructed Abasuba Community Peace Museum on Mfangano. In the distance is Rusinga Island; **Bottom right:** Mfangano Island Camp;

This page: Museum thatching in progress.

List of Acronyms

ACPM - Abasuba Community Peace Museum
EU - European Union
NMK - National Museums of Kenya
TARA - Trust for African Rock Art
TTF - Tourism Trust Fund

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The Community

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Partners

To the Tourism Trust Fund and European Union for providing funding to this unique community project; this demonstrates your commitment to diversify Kenya's tourism offerings. Safaricom Foundation for your kind assistance for this project and for your continued partnership with TARA. EPA - Ecole du Patrimoine Africain, for your contribution towards the ACPM and for funding this publication. The Ministry of Tourism, Kenya Tourism Board, the French and US Embassies in Nairobi for your friendship and moral support. Lorna Abungu for your continued assistance and all the pro-bono work you continue to do for ACPM, not only as an Advisory Board member, but as a friend of the museum. Philip Okello, the architect, who put Jack's dreams onto paper and designed the museum complex, for your dedicated service that went way beyond what you necessarily had to do. Francis Opiyo formerly of the Lake Victoria Tourism Forum (LVTF) for all your logistical and technical support during the project implementation. The National Museums of Kenya, our technical partner in this project, and especially Mwadime Wazwa for sharing his many years of heritage conservation and management expertise. We value the continued collaboration of all our partners in conserving Kenya's rock art heritage.

TARA

David Coulson, TARA's founder and Chairman, who first decided more than 10 years ago to search for rock art on Mfangano and initiated the chain of events that led to this project. Amolo Ng'weno, former Chief Operations Officer, for pioneering this community project and for believing in Jack Obonyo. To all TARA staff members and 'The Dawn of Imagination' exhibition attendants (2008), thank you for putting so much effort to see to it that this project reached its logical conclusion. We can only look forward to greater team spirit in the future.



About TARA

TARA, the Trust for African Rock Art, was founded in 1996 by photographer David Coulson under the patronage of renowned archaeologist, Mary Leakey, and author/conservationist, Laurens van der Post.

Based in Nairobi, Kenya, TARA is committed to recording the rich rock art heritage of the entire African continent, to making this information widely available and accessible and, to the extent possible, safeguarding those sites most threatened by both humans and nature, no matter how remote.

TARA achieves this through survey and conservation work, documentation, exhibitions, publications and community projects. TARA has documented rock art in 16 African countries and digitised 10,000 images that are now available online. It is estimated that over one million people have visited TARA's exhibitions in 12 countries. The organisation also works closely with communities in areas where rock art is found, in order to raise awareness of rock art as a fragile heritage resource, and to improve the lives of people in those communities.

Mission

To create greater global awareness of the importance and endangered state of African rock art; survey sites; monitor status; be an information resource and archive; and promote and support rock art conservation measures.



Some of the TARA
Team outside the Trust's
Nairobi headquarters



Nelson Mandela / Kofi Annan Statement about Africa Rock Art

“Africa’s rock art is the common heritage of all Africans, but it is more than that. It is the common heritage of humanity”. **President Nelson Mandela**

“The rock art of Africa makes up one of the oldest and most extensive records on earth of human thought. It shows the very emergence of the human imagination. It is a priceless treasure. And it is irreplaceable. But Africa’s rock art is not just about the distant past. It is about today and tomorrow as well. Scientists, historians, artists and students must be able to study and understand its significance for decades and centuries to come. Africa’s rock art is the common heritage of all Africans and all people. It is a cultural gift from our ancestors that can bring diverse people together - with pride and a common commitment to share it and preserve it.



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Yet, today, Africa’s rock art is severely threatened. Its future is uncertain. Perhaps the greatest threat is neglect. A lack of resources, combined with a lack of official interest, has left too many rock art sites unguarded against vandals and thieves. It is time for Africa’s leaders to take a new and more active role. We must save this cultural heritage before it is too late. Two initiatives are especially critical: educating our children, and engaging local communities. To Africa’s children I would like to say, you are the future of Africa. Study your proud history, and protect Africa’s rock art. I would also like to ask private businesses, foundations and individuals to contribute their expertise and resources. We at the United Nations will continue to do our part.

Finally, I am pleased to join my dear friend Nelson Mandela in supporting TARA, the Trust for African Rock Art, in its work to preserve this vital cornerstone of our world’s cultural heritage.”

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General United Nations (2005)

Introduction



Ten years after my first visit to Kenya, and shortly after starting work at TARA, I made my first trip to Lake Victoria and the provinces of Western and Nyanza. Like so many visitors to and inhabitants of Kenya, I had fallen into the trap of considering only the magnificent game parks and the stunning beaches and rich culture of the Coast for holidays. I knew from first-hand accounts that moving around Western Kenya was a nightmare due to bad infrastructure, and I also had the impression that there was nothing to see but a large, hyacinth-infested lake.

Then, in February 2007, I visited Suba District with my colleague, Gladys Nyasuna-Wanga to see the work done by the young founder of the Abasuba Community Peace Museum, Jack Obonyo. With the support of TARA, Jack and his museum were working to promote and protect the ancient rock art found on Mfangano Island and the surrounding areas.

What I found on that trip – apart from the devastated ‘roads’ – left me enchanted. Having visited more than 60 countries, it seemed that I had found a lost paradise. Had I been kept in the dark on purpose? Had the tourism bodies been deliberately hiding this treasure? Had the local population conspired to keep this amazing landscape rich with culture all to themselves? Had the ancestors cast a spell to protect the uniquely peaceful and serene nature of Mfangano?

While Mfangano Island and the surrounding areas of Suba – Rusinga, Kuoko, Kaksingri – are undoubtedly beautiful, life is perhaps not so dreamy for all of her inhabitants – some consider this the epicenter of HIV/Aids infection for the region; educational opportunities are limited and unemployment is rife. Life for many is a hand-to-mouth existence. And herein lies our dilemma? What could TARA do – if anything – in such circumstances? There is nothing in our mission about reducing poverty or improving people’s lives. Ours is to document and promote awareness of rock art and ensure its conservation. Would it make sense to develop tourism products for this area?

Frankly, I was conflicted about encouraging tourism. On the one hand, I wished to keep this treasure to myself and select family and friends. On the other hand, I believed that promoting responsible tourism could generate jobs and income and that it could help increase people’s pride in their heritage. This would, in fact, be the most effective means of conserving the heritage. People who know, love and benefit from their heritage would naturally be in the frontline to preserve and protect it.

Thus was born the ‘Project to Promote Rock Art Tourism in Suba District’. Our story is recounted by two of the key players, Gladys Nyasuna-Wanga and Gloria Borona. Our experience was a rich one – full of highs and lows, aggravations and frustrations as well as immensely satisfying achievements, both professional and personal. This was not, by any means, the world’s first successful community project. But I do think it constitutes a worthwhile case study in the field of cultural heritage. For TARA it has become a model upon which to conceive similar projects – Kakapel and Lokori in Kenya, Kondoa in Tanzania and Nyero in Uganda. This publication also gives us an opportunity to publicly acknowledge the many people and institutions who contributed treasure and toil to achieve a shared objective – improving the lives of people in Suba District through the promotion of rock art tourism.

With many thanks,
Terry Little



Foreword



Using a few ancient rock art paintings as a starting point, how can we revive the life and soul of a beautiful, yet remote, island community where the young people share the same aspirations as those in similar circumstances around the world: to get to the capital, or at least the closest city?

This is the challenge that the founders of the Abasuba Community Peace Museum have succeeded in addressing on Mfangano Island, in Lake Victoria in Kenya, and is what this book talks about.

A great deal of passion, devotion and commitment, along with solid thinking and a fair measure of goodwill, have been the primary ingredients for this success.

The Abasuba Community Peace Museum is an example of new museums that are totally involved in the lives of the communities around them. It is, as well, one of the answers to the famous question that African museum professionals asked themselves in the 90s: “What Museums for Africa?”

The Abasuba Museum is in itself a resource of immediate value: a community gateway, a gathering place, a destination for budget travellers, a place that offers programmes with schools and with elders... the Abasuba Community Peace Museum is all of this at the same time, and more.

I am pleased that EPA – the School of African Heritage – can be among the many partners whose goodwill has accompanied this formidable initiative, especially thanks to our ‘Museums in the Service of Development’ programme with the support of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I would like to thank the authors of this publication, Gladys Nyasuna-Wanga and Gloria Borona, and the entire TARA team, to have taken the time to make this experience available to others.

Alain Godonou
Director, School of African Heritage – EPA

The publication of this book was generously supported by EPA with funds from French Ministry of Foreign Affairs





The sun setting behind Nzenze Island, sacred island of the Wasamo Clan, seen from Mfangano Island

Lake Victoria is the largest lake in Africa and the source of one of Africa's mightiest rivers, the Nile. Its northern shores are situated just below the Equator and three countries – Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – share its waters. Looking out from the shores, visitors have the impression of being at the edge of an ocean, for it is impossible to see the far side. Many islands punctuate this vastness, most of them in Uganda and Tanzania, although a few are on the Kenyan side. Two of these, Mfangano and Rusinga, with their adjacent shores, provide the nucleus of Suba District. The largest island, Mfangano, rises steeply from the great lake, a hunched-over giant, cloaked with green vegetation. Its rocky backbone rises over 300 metres (1,000 feet) above the lake and is exposed as tall red cliffs in some places. The shore is edged by black rocks with overhanging fig trees, beaches with black volcanic sand and narrow strands of reeds.

The people reside in homesteads along the narrow shoreline and on the steep slopes of the mountainous island. They are primarily fishermen and small-scale farmers growing maize, millet, cassava, beans, and fruit, and rearing cattle, goat, sheep, duck and chicken. Hedges of yellow-flowered *Thevetia peruviana* bushes border many homesteads, and wild morning glories abound in fallow fields. Beautifully painted canoes can be seen lined up on the beaches or at work out on the lake. While a road network and electricity supply are the latest arrivals on Mfangano, the people of Mfangano mostly get around by boat, bicycle and motorcycle taxi.

Narrow paths wind up the steep slopes of the island. The land is rocky and the soil shallow, but a stunted dry forest of olive and associated trees survives on the higher slopes. On the south-eastern side, the climate is drier and the plants tend to be bushy and thorny, including *Acacia*, the invasive *Lantana* bush and its indigenous cousin *Lippia* (*Phyla canescens*). To the north and west there is a little more rain and a more diverse forest. Mfangano Island is called Ivangano by its Abasuba inhabitants. The name Ivangano, which means 'Reconciliation', was given to the island after a 17th century feud among the local community was resolved by a reconciliation ceremony. Since that time, the Abasuba promised to live in peace and to leave a legacy of respect for the values of reconciliation and forgiveness as a means of promoting peace within their own community and beyond.

This region is the site of many ancient migrations and is the setting for a number of rock art sites. Rock art makes up one of the oldest and most extensive records of human thought on earth. It also represents some of the earliest human artistic expressions. Found all over the world, it is richly represented in the Lake Victoria region and particularly in Suba District. The art here was created long before the Abasuba people arrived (roughly two centuries ago). In some cases it has retained power and importance in Abasuba culture and this has helped protect it from damage and oblivion. Several sites are available for visitors to view.

More general information about rock art in East Africa can be found in a guidebook: *Rock Art in East Africa* (TARA, 2005), available at the Abasuba Museum or by contacting TARA.





Main picture: Elders discuss the ancient paintings at Mawanga rock art site, Mfangano;
Inset: Close-up showing several sets of red and white concentric circles





Kwitone rock shelter on Mfangano. These concentric circles are believed to have been painted by Twa hunter-gatherers over 1,000 years ago, and were used by the local communities for rain-making ceremonies until recently



THE PEOPLE



Benta Ochieng' holding Nile perch

Suba District is predominantly inhabited by the Abasuba, a Bantu-speaking people believed to have originally migrated from Central Africa centuries ago. The name 'Suba' means 'the people who are always wandering'. As a result of assimilation and intermarriage with the Luo, a Nilotic group that is predominant in the larger Nyanza region, the Suba culture has come under pressure and the language was listed in UNESCO's Red Book of Endangered Languages in 2003.

The rock art, however, pre-dates these migrations and is thought to be the work of ancestral hunter-gatherer people, sometimes known as Twa. Nonetheless, the Abasuba long ago embraced the art as part of their own heritage.

The Abasuba community is divided into 14 clans, each having different ritual responsibilities, such as rain-making or ritual cleansing. In Abasuba culture, male circumcision is important and only those circumcised were allowed to go to war or to enter sacred sites.

The majority of Abasuba make their living along the shore from fishing; the catch is consumed locally and also exported to major towns in Kenya and also to Europe. Further inland they are agriculturalists; Suba District is well known for its fruit production, especially oranges and bananas. Living along the water, with a developed system of water transport, the Abasuba people are highly mobile and often move throughout the Lake Victoria region, engaging in fishing and trade.

Despite its remote location, Suba is changing and adapting to modern technologies. Iron-sheet roofs are replacing the traditional thatch, which is more difficult to maintain and for which it is increasingly difficult to find sufficient grass. While television and mobile phones are common in Suba District, many places along the mainland shoreline can still only be reached by boat.



THE CASE: TARA AND ABASUBA COMMUNITY PEACE MUSEUM

Project Background

In 2000, TARA's Executive Chairman, David Coulson, was on one of his exploratory survey trips, this time to a small island on Lake Victoria, Mfangano Island. He had seen a dot on an old map indicating that rock art existed somewhere on the island. With no GPS coordinates, this may have seemed like a wild goose chase, but he undertook the trip anyway.

On arrival at Mfangano Island, he took a boat and stopped at several villages to ask community members if they had ever seen any rock art on the Island – the people looked puzzled! David sketched the sort of art that he expected to find on the back of an envelope and eventually a young man came forward saying he knew of such a painting at the top of one of Mfangano's beautiful hills. He followed his guide up a steep hillside for some 300 metres and they arrived at a wonderful site which he later discovered was called Kwitone. Based on this success David got in touch with a friend who was working for a short time at Mfangano Camp (Musiara) and encouraged him to search for more sites. Not long afterwards this friend (Adrian Babault) called him with the news that he had been taken to a wonderful cave which we later heard was called Mawanga. All this was very exciting and David longed to learn more about the paintings and was anxious to talk to some of the elders on the island.

Several years after this first recording and after a few more subsequent visits to the island, David's prayers were answered when a young man from Suba, Jack Obonyo, visited the TARA offices in Nairobi. He had heard about David's visits to the island and about TARA and this marked the beginning of a successful relationship between TARA and the Abasuba Community Peace Museum (ACPM). (See Jack's story on page 15)

The ACPM is among the first community museums in Kenya, thanks to the initiative of its Founding Curator, Jack Obonyo. Upon marriage to his wife, Lilly, Jack's father gave him a plot of land on which to build and settle his new family. Instead, Jack's

Community members during TARA's 2005 visit to Mfangano





TARA Executive Chairman, David Coulson, US Ambassador, William Bellamy, signing the funding agreement, 2005. Looking on is Hon. Najib Balala

strong desire to protect and promote the unique culture of his people, the Abasuba, led him to build a small community museum on the plot. He began to collect artefacts, and to carry out research on Abasuba culture; he also liaised with local elders and the youth to encourage the protection of the nearby rock art sites. Jack officially transferred ownership of his plot to the Suba County Council in 2007, thereby confirming his commitment to the community.

Jack, through the museum, mobilised the communities living around the rock art sites and helped them to organise site management committees that would be responsible for management of each site. Jack's enthusiasm and determination were infectious. Within months of meeting Jack, Amolo Ng'weno, then TARA's Chief Operations Officer, visited the ACPM and the Suba rock art sites. Amolo then sought funding from the US State Department through the US Embassy in Kenya for development of basic tourism infrastructure around the Mfangano rock art sites. The US Embassy granted TARA US\$ 29,500 for the promotion of rock art tourism in Kenya, including Suba District.

In August 2005, a high-powered delegation including the Minister for Heritage, Hon. Najib Balala, US Ambassador to Kenya, William Belamy, the US Embassy Cultural Attaché, Aruna Amirthanayagam, and the chairman of the Kenya Tourism Board, Jack Grieves-Cook, visited Mfangano Island to officially open the rock art sites to the public.

After opening of the rock art sites to the public, there was a need for more resources to develop a larger museum and community centre, signage, as well as piers and docks in order to enhance visitors' experiences at the sites. At the time, the Kenyan Government was making efforts to develop a Western Circuit for tourism, so TARA saw this as an opportunity and subsequently submitted a proposal to the Tourism Trust Fund (TTF) for a community project with five interrelated objectives.

The news of approval of a 14.5 million Kenya shilling (US\$ 210,000) grant by the TTF was received with great excitement at TARA and within the Suba community. Finally the treasures of Suba District would be made available and marketed for tourism! Anticipation and expectation were high among the community members as TARA prepared to implement, together with the Abasuba Community Peace Museum, its biggest community project ever.



Jack's Story

The ACPM is a community-based museum that I initiated and founded. I was motivated by an article in one of the local newspapers in July 2000. The article was about a UNESCO report on endangered languages, and the Abasuba language was topping the list. I realised that my community, the Government and the private sector needed to do something in order to preserve this dying, unique language. I also realised that there was a need to come up with a place where the material culture of the community could be kept, documented, exhibited and stored for future generations.

After having the idea, I found out about the Mennonite Central Committee of Kenya (MCKK), a Canadian organisation that promotes the use of African peace traditions. One of its programmes, the Community Peace Museum Programme (CPMP), has as its main objective to encourage local communities in Kenya to use their traditional ways of solving conflict rather than the modern ways that often seem not to work. This programme was being spearheaded by Dr Sultan Somjee, formerly of the National Museums of Kenya. My small museum was humbled to receive the support of about US\$600 through this programme. Back on Mfangano Island, I started mobilising the community through the help of the area Chief, Mr. Patrick Lumumba, and clan elders. I visited all parts of Suba District to record an accurate history of the Abasuba people. Through the help of the local administration, I registered the museum as a self-help group with a membership of eight elders. At the same time, my father decided to give me the land at Ramba Village that he had put aside for me to settle my family when the time came.



Jack Obonyo (left) with community members during the commissioning of the pier at Wakula Beach



My family members helped a lot in the construction of the first museum building and the six cabins (bandas); they also provided food for the builders, and we went fishing at night to get fish that we could use the next day as food for the volunteers. I decided to donate some of my own clothes as a way of paying some wages in kind. I was motivated because this museum would help in the preservation and conservation of both tangible and intangible heritage of the Abasuba people, ensuring that our identity, in danger of being lost, is proudly restored. The museum was also to be a centre of dialogue and conflict resolution for the community.

In early 2002 our museum began a financial downturn, as we did not have enough money to renovate the bandas that were collapsing. The museum artefacts that we had collected and placed at the museum could not be preserved well due to lack of knowledge of preservation techniques. In 2004 the problem was at its climax; all the bandas had fallen down and everybody in the village felt that we had squandered donors' money and that all my donors had run away. I remember one day, one of my friends told me "Jack, this museum project has failed. Why don't you go to Nairobi and look for another job rather than wasting your time here?"

I first read about TARA in a local newspaper bought by my wife, Lilly, in March 2005 – it had an article on TARA's exhibition at the National Museums of Kenya (NMK). So I went to the Nairobi Museum to see the exhibition. When I reached the gallery, I saw an image of the Kwitone rock art site, which is found on Mfangano Island where I come from. I was excited! After this I made an appointment with Ms. Amolo Ng'weno (TARA's COO at the time) at TARA's offices in Karen.



Jack (holding a book)
and community members
welcoming guests at the
opening of the Museum

I managed to find the directions to Nandi Road in the Karen suburb of Nairobi, and during my first meeting with David Coulson, TARA's Executive Chairman, and Amolo Ng'weno, I felt that my museum problems had managed to find the right doctors, and TARA was encouraged that they would be able to work with us. This was followed by a visit by Ms. Ng'weno to Suba. After a meeting with the community, she was very impressed and agreed to sign a partnership agreement with us. The most interesting part of this agreement was that it was signed on a boat called Oteko (Luo word meaning 'strong') in the middle of Lake Victoria. This was the starting point of the rebirth of the current Abasuba Community Peace Museum. Since then, we have enjoyed the support from TARA and organisations like the European Union, the US Embassy and many others. Our museum staff, including myself, has benefited from various training programmes.

The most important part of this story is that I have managed to build the first Community Peace Museum in Kenya that is recognised and managed by the community as their own; it is also recognised by the National Museums of Kenya.

– Jack Maurice Obonyo

Through TARA's assistance Jack successfully obtained a post-graduate diploma in Museums and Heritage Studies through the Robben Island Training Programme, South Africa, in 2006. He also participated in the Africa 2009 Regional Course of Conservation of Immovable Heritage in Mombasa in 2007. These courses have built his capacity to spearhead the management of the Abasuba heritage and strengthened his networks within the heritage sector.



Jack addressing school children in preparation for the opening of the new museum

PROMOTION OF ROCK ART TOURISM IN KENYA

Engravings and paintings on stone are found throughout Africa and represent an important element of universal cultural heritage. Kenya, being on a confluence of migration routes and cultural traditions, possesses an interesting variety of rock art, some of it possibly dating back as far as 4,000 years. The tradition of rock painting and engraving has continued until the recent past – and many sites are still in use for sacred or ceremonial purposes.

Tourists who are interested in culture, art and history would certainly be interested to visit rock art sites and learn more about our rich and complex past. Until 2005, however, tourists were largely unable to visit rock art in Kenya, as the sites were unrecorded or unknown. At best, they were inaccessible, lacked interpretive information and were unprotected from vandalism and uncontrolled, irresponsible tourism. Even now that a few sites have been opened to visitors with TARA's support, local tourists are quite uninformed about rock art and the important place it has in our national heritage. Foreign tourists, who visit rock art sites in Europe, Australia and North America by the millions every year, are equally uninformed about rock art as a potential attraction during their visits to Kenya.

In 2004, TARA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the NMK for the conservation of rock art in Kenya and the promotion of related tourism in a responsible manner. TARA is now working to promote rock art tourism with the NMK, and community organisations near rock art sites, including the Abasuba Community Peace Museum. Against this background, TARA applied for funding from TTF through the EU to promote rock art tourism in Kenya.



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Community members and school children during the official opening ceremony of the new museum



PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

Project objectives are the roadmaps that lead to the desired destination in project management. The goal of this project was to promote rock art tourism in Suba District. To achieve this goal the project had five interrelated objectives:

- Increasing local awareness of the heritage
- Conservation of the heritage
- Marketing and promotion of the heritage
- Development of infrastructure
- Improving community livelihoods

INCREASING LOCAL AWARENESS OF THE HERITAGE

Increasing the community's awareness is critical in enhancing understanding and developing heritage management skills. Sometimes communities are not aware of the existence of heritage (including rock art) in their midst. If they are, they may not fully know how they can harness those resources for their own benefit. To achieve this objective, TARA embarked on a series of capacity-building initiatives. The key component of these was the 'Community Engagers Workshop'.



Participants at the Community Engagers Workshop, Mfangano, 2008

The Tara Engaging Model

Before the implementation of the Suba project, TARA held an internal workshop at our offices to get staff views on how to successfully implement the project. In the proposal and budget we had made provisions for training workshops to create awareness among the local community about their heritage, and build the capacity to manage tourism for their benefit. As we discussed the awareness creation training workshop, TARA Board member, Dr. George Abungu, was passing by. Listening to our discussions, he suggested that what we wanted to do was to engage the local community rather than train them. That was an eye-opener for us, and this concept has changed the way TARA approaches community capacity building in all our projects.

Community ownership for any project is critical for sustainability and support of the project during the implementation phase. In endorsing TARA's work, the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan said "...two initiatives are especially critical; educating our children and engaging local communities". In TARA's experience, conservation of rock art – as with other heritage – is achieved only when community members are on board. It is only then that they become active participants in the management of the resources in their localities.

TARA's engaging model deviates from what we know as a training workshop: the facilitators and participants engage each other and share knowledge and experiences, resulting in a mutually enriching exchange. This model encourages both participants and facilitators to learn from each other, compare notes, discuss and come to a common understanding. The rationale is that the community has a wealth of knowledge about their own heritage, and are therefore better placed to suggest local management strategies and involvement mechanisms that work better than those that are imposed from 'outside'.



Gladys Nyasuna-Wanga during a session at the Suba Engagers Workshop



Community Engagers Workshop

One of the first project activities implemented was a 'Community Engagers Workshop'. The participants, drawn from the five divisions of Suba District, were community representatives selected by the ACPM board members from these regions. The workshop participants and facilitators received valuable insights from each other regarding heritage, tourism, the proposed project and community involvement. At the end of the workshop, each of the five groups was required to develop a workplan of how they would go about creating awareness within their local communities over a two-week period. The 'engagers' then went back to their communities and held sensitisation forums reaching approximately 3,500 community members in schools, churches, barazas¹ and even at beaches. Each group produced a report as a tool for monitoring and evaluating the project. The five-day workshop culminated with the groundbreaking ceremony for museum construction, and the participants of this workshop played a major role in preparation and entertainment. The 'Community Engagers Workshop' and the colourful groundbreaking ceremony all happened at the height of Kenya's post-election violence in January 2008. There was a high profile guest list, but most cancelled due to an unsure security situation. We nonetheless decided to proceed with the planned activities, not least because of donor pressures to finish the project within a stipulated timeframe and community expectations, but in our belief in the importance of the project, and also to show solidarity with the local community.



Participants receiving tokens of appreciation at the end of the Engager's workshop

¹ Local meetings mainly called by the chief or other local government officials

CONSERVATION OF THE HERITAGE



EIA focus group discussion with fishermen at the museum beach

TARA's mission embodies the conservation of Africa's fragile rock art heritage. To achieve this, a conservation and management plan was developed for all the sites on Mfangano. This, coupled with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) recommendations, will aid in the preservation of these sites in the years to come. The rationale of both documents rests on prudent utilisation of resources to promote development that is truly sustainable.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION OF THE HERITAGE

The sustainability of the project relies to a great extent upon the successful promotion of the attractions of Suba District as tourism offerings to both local and international tourists. Alongside efforts to conserve sites and develop infrastructure, strategies were developed to promote rock art and to carefully market the rock art sites as tourist destinations as well as a resource for education and research. Marketing is an all-encompassing activity, which in this case involved product conception, packaging and delivery.

The making of a brand (and its logo)

Successful branding of ACPM is crucial for a stable and respected institutional identity and for the long-term promotion of the museum. Developing a logo was a challenge because the ACPM incorporates many different aspects: rock art, Abasuba culture, peace and reconciliation. To strengthen the brand, we needed to create a strong logo. Looking at all the rock art images from Suba District, several variations were produced and discussions were held – the final logo unanimously agreed upon is image of the concentric circles of Kwitone. This icon has been incorporated in all the promotional materials produced during the project.

Development of Abasuba Logo

SUBA MUSEUM SYMBOL DEVELOPMENT



Typeface options:

1. ABASUBA COMMUNITY PEACE MUSEUM
Abasuba Community Peace Museum
2. ABASUBA COMMUNITY PEACE MUSEUM
Abasuba Community Peace Museum
3. ABASUBA COMMUNITY PEACE MUSEUM
Abasuba Community Peace Museum
4. SUBA MUSEUM SYMBOL DEVELOPMENT
SUBA MUSEUM SYMBOL DEVELOPMENT
5. ABASUBA COMMUNITY PEACE MUSEUM
Abasuba Community Peace Museum

Color options:



Jack Oborpu

P.O. Box 321 Mbita - 40305 Suba Tel: 0723 888 405



This project is assisted by funding from the European Development Fund provided through the Tourism Trust Fund. The TTF is an initiative of the European Union and the Government of Kenya

PROMOTING ROCK ART TOURISM IN KENYA

Abasuba Community Peace Museum

Groundbreaking Ceremony, Mfangano Island, Lake Victoria–Kenya

31st January 2008

In Partnership with



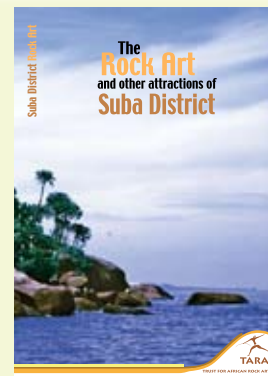
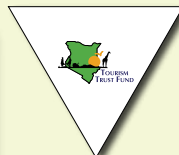
Suba Promotional items

Clockwise: Banner, booklet, stickers, bunting, postcards, poster, flyer

ROCK ART
& OTHER ATTRACTIONS OF SUBA
LAKE VICTORIA, KENYA

ABASUBA COMMUNITY PEACE MUSEUM
www.abasuba.museum
Tel: 0723-394086 / 0724-422933

THIS PROJECT IS ASSISTED BY FUNDING FROM THE EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT FUND PROVIDED THROUGH THE TOURISM TRUST FUND. THE TTF IS AN INITIATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE GOVERNMENT OF KENYA.



HISTORY OF THE ABASUBA COMMUNITY PEACE MUSEUM

The Abasuba Community Peace Museum is among the first such museums to be built in Kenya, thanks to the initiative of its Founding Curator, Jack Obonyo who upon his marriage to Lily, was given a plot of land by his father to settle his new family. Jack's burning desire to protect and promote the unique culture of his people, the Abasuba, led him to build a small community museum. He began to collect artefacts, and carry out research on Abasuba culture. Following his meeting with David Colson of 'TARA - Trust for African Rock Art' some years ago, he liaised with local elders and the youth to encourage the protection of the nearby rock art sites. He later on transferred the ownership of his plot to the Suba County Council in 2007, thereby confirming his commitment to the community.

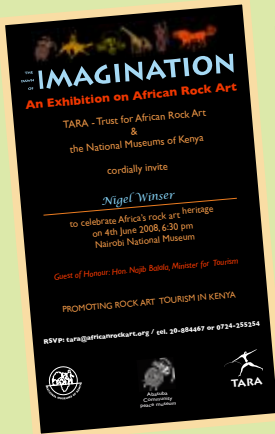
Established in the year 2000, the museum works to promote and protect the cultural and natural heritage of this small and endangered community. The museum works very closely with TARA and the National Museums of Kenya to protect and manage the nearby rock art sites. It also serves as a centre for the promotion of traditional methods of peace and conflict resolution.

The construction of the Abasuba museum and community centre has been supported through a grant for promotion of rock art tourism in Suba District which TARA received from the European Union-funded Tourism Trust Fund in 2007. Development of tourism infrastructure was one of the key objectives of this one year project. In addition to construction of the community centre and museum, it also included development of basic tourism facilities, capacity building, installation of signage at the rock art sites as well as construction of piers and docks at the various site beaches.

Contact:
Mfangano Island, Lake Victoria, Kenya
Tel: 0723-394086 / 0724-422933
info@abasuba.museum
www.abasuba.museum



Gala night



In March 2008, we combined the official opening of TARA's 'Dawn of Imagination' exhibition at the Nairobi National Museum with the launch of our 'Rock Art Tourism in Kenya' project. We used this opportunity to engage 15 tour operators about rock art as a new offering for both local and international tourists. The TARA exhibition showcases rock art in Africa, including that of Suba District, including a 15-minute video to create greater levels of awareness on rock art and tourism. The event featured musicians, singers and food from Western Kenya and was attended by many TARA supporters and several ambassadors, ministry officials and other high-level people.



Hon. Otieno Kajwang' shares a light moment with the ACPM Board members at the Gala night, hosted at the Nairobi National Museum



Media Coverage

Prior to the opening of this exhibition, TARA was hosted on two local radio stations, Capital FM and East FM, to discuss African rock art and the tourism potential it holds. During these shows listeners were invited to call in and participate in quizzes on rock art and this was well received. At the same time, we were hosted by the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), the national broadcaster, for an entire programme on their show, 'Good Morning Kenya'.

Product development

The project also saw the production of a variety of merchandise bearing the Abasuba logo including t-shirts, pens, bags, keyholders, mugs, postcards, fabrics and tyre covers. Some of the products included the tagline 'Been to Suba?'. The products were created mainly as promotional give-aways but they have also been produced for sale in the Rock Art Shop at the Nairobi Museum and are by far the most popular items.

Top right clockwise: T-shirt, ladies top, Tyre cover, sun hat, cap, mug, pen;
Below: Visitor carrying a tote bag



Online presence

To enhance visibility, Lorna Abungu designed a simple website for the ACPM. The website gives basic information about the project, the Abasuba people, the tourism offerings and details on how to get there: www.abasuba.museum

It is worth noting that tourism projects require huge investments in marketing to have a sustained impact and penetrate the tourism market in a significant manner. Tourism and marketing are not TARA's expertise, which is why it is so important for us to partner with tourism bodies and other related organisations. While much has been achieved, much still remains to be done.



ACPM website homepage

International workshop – Innovative Museum Marketing



Workshop participants at the new museum

The ACPM was honoured to host the first Anglophone technical workshop in the framework of EPA's 'Museums in the Service of Development' programme which took place in Nairobi and on Mfangano Island in September 2008 on the theme: 'Improved Marketing of the Museum: Development of innovative products'.

Eighteen participants assembled at the Nairobi National Museum for the first day, and then the workshop continued at the ACPM for four days. The participants, who came from 11 countries (Botswana, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Niger, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), discovered through a dozen presentations, their colleagues' experiences in the area of public programmes and marketing. On the basis of experiences and concepts presented, four working groups developed suggestions on different topics applicable to the ACPM.

"The practical group work enabled us to develop four programmes for the Abasuba Community Peace Museum. We left them with 'homework' to do and to implement. But it will also be very useful to us: we will be able to develop practical programmes through this. Also, the importance and the value of the workshop were in making contacts: we are starting a new type of museum and we don't have reference points, so we need to share with others, even if they don't specialise in fishing".

- Cássimo Marajo, Manager, Fisheries Museum, Mozambique



DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure development was the largest component of the project. It included a museum and community centre, boats, piers, docks, signage as well as pathways, railings, toilet and shower facilities

The Museum and Community Centre

Jack Obonyo had initially constructed a small iron sheet-roofed hut with mud walls – this is the structure that housed the ACPM since its inception. Scanty artefacts lay strewn on the floor of the ‘museum’ while a majority of the artefacts collected had long been returned to their owners owing to concerns of lack of proper display or storage facilities. If this museum was to attract more artefacts and visitors, then the structure needed major improvements.

Initially envisaged was a fairly small and basic structure that would serve as a museum and perhaps house a small office for the curator. However, as the thought process developed it became clear that there was a need to have space for community interaction in addition to the museum. This space turned out to be a community centre complete with a restaurant and seminar facilities, which now acts as the sustainability component of the museum due to its potential to generate revenue.

The construction process began with numerous discussions with the architect – Philip Okello of Urban Designs Associates – who went back and forth with various designs until the final design was approved by the community and the TARA Board. The project envisaged the use of local materials to the greatest extent possible for a number of reasons: to embrace eco-friendly standards, to engage local people in the supply of materials, to reflect cultural traditions in the area, and to promote traditional knowledge in building construction.

In January 2008, at the height of Kenya’s post-election violence, the Abasuba community, TARA’s staff and Board members and the community defied all odds to conduct a groundbreaking ceremony of the museum and community centre. It was then that we fully realised that the Abasuba people were unique and truly peaceful. TARA staff from different communities, including areas that were considered ‘enemies’ at the time, were warmly welcomed to the island without any hint of hostility or mistrust. Mfangano justly lives up to its name as an island of peace.



After the groundbreaking, progress on the buildings was fast. The contractor began work and moved with haste to beat the 6-month construction deadline that had been set. Construction faced several hitches mostly caused by the skyrocketing cost of goods and transport as a result of the skirmishes in other parts of the region. This was in addition to burdensome bureaucracy and delays in the release of funds by the donor, which stalled construction work for several months and made the process extremely frustrating (see Construction Meeting, page 42). The commitment of the community and frequent monitoring visits by the architect and the TARA project team ensured the progress and completion of the building. We engaged an artist, Moses Otieno, to paint rock art from the island and other parts of Africa in the restaurant and community centre, to add aesthetic appeal to the buildings as well as to raise awareness on the existence of rock art in other parts of Africa among visitors and the local population.



29



Creative touches
on the new museum

The two buildings were finally completed, just in time for the Official Opening held on 17th October 2008. The ACPM acts as the gateway to the heritage of the Abasuba people through three key themes: the rock art of Suba District, the Abasuba heritage, and peace and reconciliation traditions. To fulfil the peace mandate, there is a section dedicated for meetings of the Abasuba Council of Elders, the supreme organ of community governance, which leads traditional methods of reconciliation during conflicts. Acquisition, inventory, and labelling policies were developed by Lorna Abungu in close consultation with Jack Obonyo, which will go a long way in managing and expanding the museum's collections. It was a long journey, but the results left the community, as well as the European Union, Tourism Trust Fund and TARA, excited and pleased.



Top: Old museum building;
Bottom: New museum building



Piers and Docks

The construction of roads on the island is a very recent development, and so the main access to the museum and the sites is by boat. Landing on the shores of Mfangano by boat was always a tricky affair: removing shoes, folding up trousers or hoisting skirts, wading through the water to the beach or even catching a piggy-back ride from waiting beach attendants!

Construction of piers and docks was done mostly by local carpenters and coordinated by Jack Obonyo. This undertaking has been greatly appreciated by members of the community, who can now comfortably use the piers instead of wading through the waters. The Beach Management Units in the various localities have agreed with the Museum to take responsibility for the maintenance of the piers and docking areas.



Top left: Old pier; **Bottom left and middle:** New piers



Signage

Signage development and installation was a mix of technical and artistic abilities and was an extremely intriguing process that yielded excellent results. When developing the signs, we wanted to tell a story for each site that visitors could enjoy as they make their way.

The information on the signs includes geographical features, historical happenings, the environment, the culture of the people and other interesting tid-bits. Details on the signage development process are discussed on page 34.



Boats

The project invested in two boats – a small speedboat and a large, traditional wooden one – since this is the main mode of transport to, from and around the island. The boats were instrumental in project implementation and are intended to generate income for the museum after project completion. The speedboat is crucial in ferrying visitors to

and from the island and the wooden boat serves to transport large groups of people as well as supplies and other bulky items.



© Terry Little

IMPROVING COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS

The all-encompassing objective of this project was to improve the living standards of the community. Throughout the project, care was given to ensure the community members were given priority for employment and in the supply of labour and construction materials. In the long term, it is foreseen that the benefits of this project will flow to the community through the museum in various forms (see *Community Perspectives on Page 48*).

Top Left:
Old signage;
Top Right:
New signage;
Bottom Left:
Speed boat;
Bottom Right:
Wooden boat



Authors (Gladys and Gloria) and the lead designer (Nathaniel) on their way to Mfangano

SITE VISIT STORIES

These stories are narrated by the authors, based on their experiences during the project implementation period.



Signage reconnaissance trip

The Signage Adventure

G. K. Borona

From the very beginning this looked like it would be one of the most daunting tasks of the project. It was more of an issue of approach other than anything else. An officer at TTF had suggested that we check what has been done at Mida Creek in Mombasa and borrow from that example. We thought of taking a trip down to the coast to check this out but in the end it was not possible.

Instead, we undertook a reconnaissance trip to the Kenya Wildlife Service's Safari Walk at the Nairobi National Park, to see the kind of signage that they have. After this trip a concept was developed, which guided the implementation of this activity.

During one of our trips back to Mfangano, we walked up to the Kwitone rock art site, outlining where the signs would be placed and the kind of information that would be on the signs. This exercise took a full day and we didn't even make it to Mawanga rock art site, which is a shorter distance from the lake shore. It was during this trip that it was unanimously agreed that wooden signs, while more eco-friendly, would not even last a year because of the weather and the termites. We settled for metal signs painted in green, so as to blend with the environment.

Back in Nairobi we identified a supplier for the signboards and stands among the Jua kali² artisans along Nairobi's Ngong Road, who promised to do a good job. TARA's lead designer, Nathaniel Owuor, also began the design work. A total of 45 signs were developed in three types: interpretive signs, directional signs and welcome signs. In addition, dustbins were developed for each trail and the museum compound. The stands were delivered within two weeks as agreed. The consignment looked quite huge once it was delivered to the office. The next step was branding the signs with the writings and artworks, and it was at this point that all hell broke loose!

² Local artisans who work on metal under the hot sun



The sign artist did a test on the signs, and on applying and removing the vinyl stencils, some of the paint came off. The supplier had not primed the metal surfaces before painting, a process I only learnt about after the damage had been done. I called the supplier, who reluctantly agreed to redo the job. This took about two weeks, after which the sign artists were back at it again. We still encountered problems of peeling paint, so the sign artists had to prime and paint the signs yet again. On the whole, the job took close to three weeks.

The next stage was to pack the signs for transport, and this was done using foam and craft paper - a process that took two full days. The signs were ready for transportation to Suba and we hired a lorry to deliver them to Mbita, after which they would be loaded into a large wooden boat to Mfangano Island. We loaded the lorry until about midnight in the pouring rain and mud, and then wished the crew a good journey the following morning. Their journey began by getting stuck in the mud (while I was not a witness, I was told that somebody said a prayer and the lorry moved!), and there were numerous problems with the police along the way. To crown it all, the driver took a longer route and arrived at Mbita 13 hours later, at around 10pm. Jack had organised for a group of community volunteers to help offload and pitch the signs the following day.

The journey across the lake with the signs was an adventure. Crossing the rough lake in the night with a huge consignment of signs and over 20 youths in the boat was the stuff that action movies are made of. The volunteers began setting up the signs in earnest the following day, with the signs near the museum being erected first, as well as those of the Kouko site on the mainland. The next day the signs of Kwitone and Mawanga were set up. After a host of logistical problems, the Kwitone and Mawanga signs were eventually pitched by 7pm, having started at 7am. Even this was not without its problems – carrying the signs up the hill to the site, as well as cement, sand and water -- It was a demanding job!

On returning from Kwitone, we noticed that the signs on the route back were mostly erected the wrong way around. The signs were designed with an ascent and descent route in mind. The descent route had several problems. This was later rectified in an exercise that took another full day. Finally, what looked like a 'mission impossible' was a mission accomplished!





3 Painting 1st coat
Using Sadocryl Auto paint



2 Metal Priming



4 Final Coat of Paint
Using Sadocryl Auto paint



5 Sign writing



6 Packaging
Using kraft paper and foam



7 Transportation to site



8 Sign planting



9 Signage at site

The Signage Adventure

FABRICATION

1

Visit to the 'New Site' that Never Was - G. K. Borona

Having carried out the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessments) for all the other rock art sites – Kwitone, Mawanga and Kuuko – it was now time to investigate a new site. From what I had heard, the site in question was not easily accessible. We had just finished assessing the impacts for Kuuko and got into the boat, which was to take us to the beach, from where we would walk up the hill to the new site. We landed at the Kitenyi Beach, a fairly busy one, with fishermen going on with their business and traders selling various wares. Two American tourists joined us.

The ascent began at about 11am. The momentum was good, save for one of the EIA experts who had injured his leg in the earlier gruelling treks to Kwitone. He wore jeans, which were rubbing against the wound and making it worse, but he was determined to keep moving.

As we climbed, the sun was getting hotter and hotter, not to mention that the hill was quite steep. People were tired and everyone was trying to look for the nearest shade to rest and catch their breath. That was the trend as we continued, until at some point somebody asked, "Are you sure we will ever reach?" Jack was quick to point out, "We are very near". This was beginning to feel like a journey with no end, and amazingly Jack's mother, who had accompanied us, was in the lead. Talk about adaptation to the environment! Those of us who were not used to such terrain were panting and sweating profusely.

After what seemed like an eternity, we finally arrived at Jack's home at the very top of the hill. The site was "very near" from there, we were informed. With that assurance we did not waste much time. Jack picked a panga (cutlass) and in my mind I said "Let the games begin!" This was going to be an adventure of a lifetime by any standards.

The descent towards the site began without much ado, but as we continued people began grumbling. The 'route' was characterised by bush, long grass and thickets. As we proceeded, it got steeper and steeper! We had to clutch onto twigs and branches and the long grass for support. Looking further down, we could see the lake and there was a possibility of tumbling down to the lake if we did not hold onto whatever was in close proximity. I must admit that none of us was dressed appropriately. Most of us had on short sleeved t-shirts and the tourists... well, they wore shorts and sleeveless tops. All the scratches from the bushes, thorns and God-knows-what-else, made the experience truly one-of-a-kind.





Sandy beach on one of the granite islands

“Are we near?” somebody shouted. “Very near” Jack responded. Meanwhile Jack was ahead clearing the path with the panga and we were following closely in single file. Eventually it reached a point when one of the tourists, almost in tears, cried out “I can’t move any further!” “We can make recommendations from what we have seen so far and the first recommendation is to have railings to this site!” declared the EIA experts. That marked the end of the descent, and everybody turned and walked back. “I have never seen anything like this!” somebody said.

When we arrived back at Jack’s home, lunch was ready. We all sat under the shade and ate the delicious ugali (boiled maize meal) and fish that was prepared for us, and we relaxed for a while. There was still quite a journey back to the beach so we started our descent in earnest. This was easier, maybe because of the satisfactory lunch or the familiarity of the route. Finally, we arrived at the beach and boarded the boat to the museum. That evening we lit a bonfire and grilled a large Tilapia fish, which everyone enjoyed. Despite the aborted trip to the new site, it was a wonderful day.



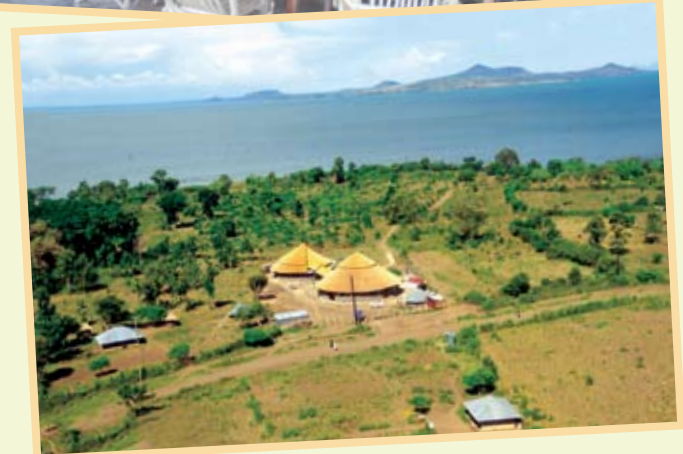


Construction of the Abasuba Community Peace Museum

Top left, anticlockwise: Architect's model of the museum building; TARA Chairman, David Coulson at the ground breaking ceremony, 2008; construction of the foundations and the pillars;

Facing page, top left-anticlockwise: Construction of main roof beam; thatching the roof; finished structure; aerial view of the finished structure; restaurant area; museum project banner





Construction Site Meetings - G. Nyasuna-Wanga



Construction site meeting

Construction was one of the most challenging aspects of this project. Almost every two months we held construction meetings on site and these almost always left us, as clients, with a bad headache. Our contractor, like most in the business, had a way of touching raw nerves by proposing that his payments be increased due to the skyrocketing prices of materials or slight changes in the designs, or variances between the prices quoted in the Bills of Quantities and what he had actually spent. We were always up in arms trying to argue that this was a fixed contract and under no circumstances could the contractor

claim additional payment (we knew too well that the donor would give us no additional funding and there was no giving in to any such demands). This was the character of most construction meetings.

At one of these meetings we began to get the feeling that the contractor was completely overwhelmed and unable to complete the building within both the budget and the deadline. Despite threats of legal action and pursuing him with police, he just smiled (as he had annoyingly grown so accustomed to doing in such heated times) and said in his heavy Luo accent “Madam Gladys, I cannot finis (the ‘h’ was silent) these houses with that money, that money is too small, bringing materials to this hill (read island) is very expensive.”

At this point it dawned on us that we would need to take drastic measures to ensure that the building would be completed in good time and within reasonable limits of the budget. We brought in an external consultant, Douglas D’Costa, to act as Clerk of Works, which was needed but not assigned by the architects from the start; with concerted efforts from the Clerk of Works, the community and Jack, the buildings were reasonably complete before the official opening. Construction of the buildings was one aspect that overshot its original budget substantially, but when they were eventually completed – we breathed a sigh of relief.



Baptism by Fire - G Nyasuna-Wanga

Terry Little joined TARA in January 2007 and I had intended to give him a tour of TARA's community projects early in his stay at TARA. We therefore planned a visit in February to Suba and Kakapel, and this turned out to be one of my most intriguing trips to Suba. Jack had planned the itinerary which included arriving in Mbita, overnight at Jack's home on Mfangano, a visit to the 'new site', a walk from Jack's home to Kwitone rock art site, a night at Rusinga Lodge, a visit to the Tom Mboya Mausoleum, and a visit to Ruma National Park before proceeding to Kakapel in Western Kenya – all in 3 days.

Terry and I left Nairobi on a morning flight to Kisumu, and then proceeded to Luanda K'Otieno in time to catch the ferry to Mbita. Jack was waiting for us at Mbita, where we arrived at about mid-day and took off straight away, briefly through the Bird Islands and on to Soklo Beach, from where we would need to climb up the mountain to Jack's home. It was already about 4.00pm and it was therefore refreshing to learn that Jack had organised a lunch of fried fish and brown ugali for us at the beach. Jack led us to one of the beach kiosks, characteristically dim-lit with the enticing smell of fried fish mixed with the smell of raw dagaa (Lake Victoria sardine) spread out on nets to dry on the beaches. We were starving and when our delicacy was served, our hands were washed by a Ugandan woman who knelt down (it is a common practice in Uganda for women serve their husbands and important visitors while kneeling, as a show of respect). I later came to learn that ugali is not one of Terry's favourites, but on this day nothing gave him away – we enjoyed our meal profoundly!

It was about 5.00pm and time to begin our ascent to Jack's home. Jack had told us that this would be about a 45-minute climb. The museum Board Chairman, Bernard Omuga, fondly known as just 'Chairman', was on hand (in full suit and tie!) to join us in the climb. "Is it very far?" I asked Chairman. "No madam, it's just in the middle here, where you see the shining mabati (iron sheet) roof – you don't get to the top," he replied laughing. We began climbing and chatting about everything from Kenya's politics to cultural practices of the Suba people and even American politics (to keep Terry in the loop), and of course polygamy – Chairman's favourite topic! Chairman, a retired civil servant, is very knowledgeable on almost all issues, local and global. We chatted on and on, an hour had elapsed, we had passed the mabati roof, but Jack's home was still elusive. Half an hour later we arrived at Jack's home to a warm welcome from Jack's mother and father. I was exhausted to the





Gladys and Terry with 'Chairman' on the first TARA/museum boat

bone, and Terry was trying to smile, but he looked equally done-in. We had dinner and went to sleep – after all, tomorrow was another busy day.

The following morning we were up by 6.00am, had breakfast and left to see the 'new site' that Jack had recently discovered just 20 minutes ('Jack time') away from his home. Jack's father, now in his late 70s, joined us. This walk was not easy, Jack was ahead clearing the way with his panga as we went; at one point we were at the edge of a steep cliff with only

feeble stems and branches to hold onto – losing grip of these would mean falling into the unknown. At this point I was terrified – Was I crazy, or what? How could I do this while I was 5 months pregnant?! When we finally got to the site we took photos, discussed a bit about the significance of this site, and eventually headed back.

The walk to Kwitone rock art site, across to the other end of the Island, was beautiful; we had a lovely and commanding view of the lake, expanses of land, and the islands of Uganda – it was breathtaking. Walking through the overgrown Napier grass, witnessing the serenity of this virgin land with its little streams, was refreshing. When Terry, who has travelled to over 60 countries around the world, declared that Suba is one of the most beautiful places on earth, I knew what he was talking about; Mfangano is simply magnificent. This walk was meant to take two hours ('Jack time') but we arrived at Kwitone four hours later, completely exhausted but with a great feeling of achievement – we did it!

After visiting the museum later that day, we spent a well-deserved night at the exquisite Rusinga Lodge, on Rusinga Island, reminiscing about our adventures. This truly was a baptism of fire for Terry into the realities of rock art community projects.



OFFICIAL OPENING: ABASUBA COMMUNITY PEACE MUSEUM



Hon. Cecily Mbarire cutting the tape at the opening ceremony

The Official Opening of the Abasuba Museum was pegged on the completion of construction of the two buildings, which had turned out to be a rigorous and protracted exercise. At TARA, we had never been involved in the construction of buildings before, so this was an eye-opening experience and a challenging one at that, because of the short time-frame, among other factors. Against all odds, we successfully brought the buildings to completion and we then planned for the official opening ceremony; we had set the dates earlier but cancelled them because it did not seem feasible for the construction to have been completed by that time. Having set the final date, the project team moved to the field one week in advance to make sure everything was in place.

Hon. Otieno Kajwang' dancing a jig with other guests including co-author, Gloria Borona, at the opening ceremony





Suzzana Owiyo entertaining the crowd

They were later joined by all TARA staff members and everybody worked exceedingly hard – cleaning, arranging, clearing, and putting up the publicity materials; all this was crowned by dancing to local tunes in the evenings.

The new Abasuba Community Peace Museum was officially opened on 17th October 2008 by the Assistant Minister for Tourism, Hon. Cecily Mbarire. Other dignitaries who graced the occasion were the Local Member of Parliament, Hon. Otieno Kajwang (also the Minister for Immigration); the Permanent Secretary for Tourism, Rebecca Nabutola; Hon. Millie Odhiambo, MP; the CEO of Kenya Tourism Board, Dr Ongong'a Achieng'; the French Ambassador to Kenya, Madame Elisabeth Barbier; as well as representatives from the Tourism Trust Fund, the European Union, the National Museums of Kenya, cultural attachés from the US and French Embassies, and representatives from the Provincial Administration. The huge gathering was entertained by local school groups, as well as by internationally acclaimed Kenyan singer, Suzanne Owiyo, who thrilled the crowd. Her hit song 'Kisumu 100' got dignitaries and community members on their feet.



Students from Uterere primary school thrilled the audience with their wide repertoire of songs, all performed in Abasuba language and perfectly choreographed.



The ceremony was a colourful event that was well attended by hundreds of community members from Suba District. Speakers at the function marvelled at the beauty of the region and pledged their support to the museum.

The new museum will be the gateway to the heritage of the Abasuba people through public programmes that are innovative and sustainable. Throughout the process of building, TARA enjoyed the full collaboration of the Abasuba Museum Board, the community members, the Provincial Administration, and other stakeholders.

Several hours after the opening ceremony, after most of the guests had left, there was a heavy downpour, which saw almost 100 people – including school groups from the mainland – stranded at the museum for the night. The next day the museum staff worked tirelessly clear the buildings of the three-inch carpet of mud.



Mzee Hamisi, Chairperson of the Abasuba Council of Elders, showing guests around the new museum

As a result of this project (and TARA and ACPM efforts) plans to establish an Immigration Office on Mfangano Island have been realised. This will go a long way towards opening up the region for tourism.



Improved Livelihoods - Community Perspectives



Denis Ogweno Musiara (Coxswain/Handyman)

I have been a volunteer with the Abasuba Community Peace Museum from 2003 to 2008. I started earning my first salary when the European Union funded the construction of the new museum building. I have managed to take one of my brothers to a secondary school nearby and now he is in Form Two.

Text message from Denis to Terry, TARA COO - 2007

“Good morning. I’m very much ok. May I inform you that I bought two goats from my salary I received last month. May God bless you until we meet again”

At the same time, it has enabled me to take dowry to my wife’s home and now I am a father of two, which is just a blessing to me. I have also managed to purchase four domestic animals (goats)

through my salary that I am paid from the museum.

Through the museum support I have managed to create both local and international friends and at the same time attend a number of short courses in tour guiding. I have also started to purchase three iron sheets per month so that I can finish my iron roof house by the end of this year [2009].

Akinyi, Peri, Susan, Mary and Scola (Cooks)

We started cooking at the museum when Jack was coming up with this idea. Therefore we have been helping the museum for free for some time. However after the European Union grant was officially announced, the museum called us back so that we could help them in the preparation of food when visitors are at the museum. During the year that the project was going on, we managed to go for special training on how to prepare food, which was a great achievement for us. At the same time it has enabled us to cook for high profile people like several Ambassadors from different countries in the world like France and Australia, the American cultural attaché, Kenyan ministers, District Commissioners and many other tourists who visit the museum. Through the museum we have managed to evolve our cooking talents as women from Suba. Through this cooking programme at the museum we have managed to get funds that we have used to buy several household materials that we never had before. We have also bought clothes for our children and our husbands.



Mzee Ouma (Security Officer)

As a community elder, I was honoured to serve as a security officer of the museum since the European Union grant was given to the Abasuba Community Peace Museum. During the project year I managed to pay school fees for one of my sons who was taking his final exams in school. This was a greatest achievement in my life and I am very grateful because the opportunity came when I had no money at all (Mzee Ouma continues to serve as the security guard at ACPM).

Abasuba Mothers (Construction Assistants)

During the construction in early 2008 when Kenya was in political problems, many people suffered due of lack money to purchase food. With the museum being constructed on Mfangano Island, we as mothers from this island decided to collect rough stones at reasonable charges for the museum and this enabled us to purchase food [fish] from the nearby beaches. This money that we were paid from the rough stone collection helped us to feed our children without any problem.

Benard Omuga (Chairman, Abasuba Community Peace Museum)

Benard Omuga has been the chairman of the Abasuba community peace museum since its inception. Walking



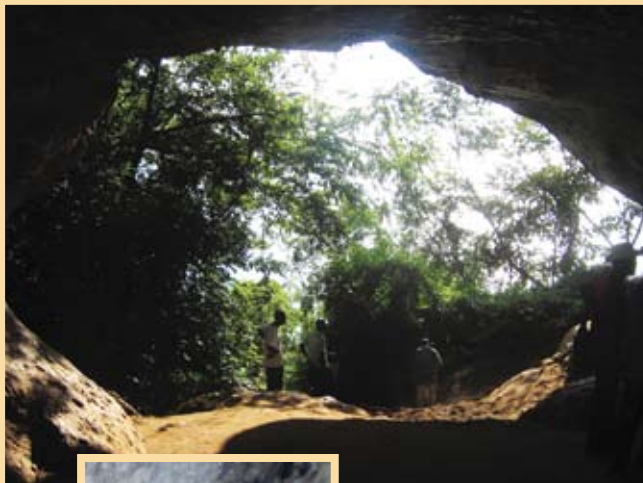
for over 3 hours to reach the museum from his home the retired civil servant puts many a young person to shame. He is passionate, dedicated to the work and always in a suit and tie. (See letter, right).





Hon. Otieno Kajwang (MP for Mbita and Minister for Immigration)

“As the Member of Parliament for Mbita in Suba District I am so very pleased to see intense efforts to promote this once marginalised region for both domestic and international tourism, with an emphasis on cultural tourism. I am speaking to you today not as a Minister for Immigration but as a representative of the people of my constituency and as a person committed to the promotion of our country’s heritage.”



Daniel Onyango (Guide, Mawanga rock art site)

Mawanga rock art site is one of the beneficiaries of this European Union grant to the Abasuba Community Peace Museum. This is because after the upgrading of the infrastructures at Mawanga, the rate of tourists to the site has been very high and this means that our entry fee collection has increased. Due to this, the community has benefited a lot by collecting enough money to construct a nursery school for our children, and we are even paying

our nursery school teacher a sum of Ksh. 3,500/= per month (roughly \$45/month). We have also purchased books for the school and we hope this school will grow bigger.



Moving Ahead

The phase after project completion is a project on its own, and if not well managed can erode all the gains achieved. Moving ahead didn't just mean tying up loose ends on site and handing over to the Abasuba Museum, it also meant capturing the lessons learnt during the project, together with the project team and the community, so that the community and TARA could build on them.



The administrative aspects included ensuring that policies were in place to ensure proper financial management and maintenance of project assets. It also encompassed strategies to strengthen the Museum Board and the development of a Strategic Plan. Appropriate archiving of project documents was also an essential part of this process.

A Post-Implementation Review was another element of moving the project ahead successfully, and the TARA team, together with members of the community, local leaders and elders, carried it out.

Contract closures involved finalising accounting documents for the donor, ensuring all contractors had been paid in full and were issued the relevant accounting documents, and issuing letters of completion and recommendations to the contractors.

Ensuring continued sustainability of the museum is among the most fundamental facets of this project. In addition to the income generation activities being undertaken by the museum, there is still a need to lobby the Government and other tourism stakeholders to promote not only Suba, but other cultural destinations on the Western Tourism Circuit, as destinations of choice. A consistent flow of visitors to the museum and the rock art sites in Suba will go a long way towards long-term sustainability.



Top: The ACPM Board touring the Museum;
Below: Post implementation Board meeting



Challenges of the Project

The implementation of this project was without a doubt very exciting, but not without its share of challenges. TARA, however, put in place mechanisms to work around them or adapt to the various situations as they presented themselves.

Delays of disbursements from the Tourism Trust Fund (TTF) were the greatest factor in overall project delays. The first tranche from TTF was received four months after the agreed starting date, June 2007. The second tranche was received six months later – ie. 10 months after the agreed starting date. Coupled with this, the implementing organisation (TARA) was expected to bring the project to closure in June 2008, as this was a one-year project. The construction of the museum was greatly affected by these delays, which led to the contractor to leave the site, and work stalled for months. Eventually, TARA had to look for alternative means of keeping the construction ongoing.

There were numerous logistical problems encountered during the project implementation related to transportation. The only mode of transport to and from the project area is by boat (with the exception of very expensive charter flights) and the lake can get very rough, especially in the afternoons, often making transport impossible. The construction, which was the most complex job of the entire project, was highly impacted by this. A substantial amount of materials was being sourced from the mainland, and getting them to the island was time-consuming and very expensive. For the project team, getting to the site took a whole day due to the poor road network from Kisumu to Luanda K'Otieno in some sections (the roads have since been greatly improved), the boat timings and the state of the lake.

The post-election crisis in early 2008 greatly affected the national economy and the cost of construction materials shot up. This resulted in the construction budget exceeding the original amounts quoted for in the Bills of Quantities. As a result, we had to cut back on other aspects of the project to ensure that the buildings were brought to completion.

Sleeping arrangements for the project team were often uncomfortable at the best of times. In the event of heavy rains, which characterise the region, we abandoned the leaking tents and 2-inch mattresses and sought refuge in neighbouring homes or in the old museum building.

The physical terrain was a great challenge for some of the project activities such as the installation of signage, which suffered many setbacks. Getting the signs and other installation aids such as water, cement and sand up the mountainous terrain to the sites was a very taxing exercise.



FOUR OTHER TARA COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Kakapel, Kenya

Kakapel, a large granite outcrop in western Kenya in the Chelelemuk Hills overlooking Kakapel Village, sits on the southern slopes of Mt. Elgon. The site is formed by a series of three shallow, adjacent shelters at the base of the granite outcrop. Kakapel is one of Kenya's most interesting rock art sites, combining a variety of styles and periods in a single shelter. It was gazetted as a national monument in 2004, and has been under the management of the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) since 2005.

Graffiti damage in recent years had rendered the site unsuitable for visitors. Through funding from the Safaricom Foundation, TARA was able to engage a conservator to remove the damage. Now that this has been achieved, the way forward is to market the site and develop tourism to spur socio-economic development in the region.

Unlike TARA's other community rock art projects, the Kakapel site is under the direct protection of, and managed by, the NMK, which also collects the income from site visits. This scenario leaves very little opportunity for the community to benefit directly from their heritage. To address this issue, TARA worked with the NMK to organise a workshop with community members to discuss ways of involving them in site management. This community project aims to: involve community members more directly in the site management and to diversify the tourism products; to increase visitor numbers and generate income and opportunities for the Kakapel community. A key activity of this project was construction of a community cultural centre with the financial support from the Safaricom Foundation – a first of its kind in the region.

Top: New Kakapel Community Cultural Centre; **Middle:** Kakapel Workshop participants; **Below:** View of Kakapel shelter with paintings on the right



Aïr Mountains, Niger



The Air Mountains rise in rugged and volcanic splendour high above one of the wildest and remotest areas of the Sahara. To their east lies the Tenere Desert, an ancient watercourse 322 kilometres (200 miles) wide and visible from space. Here the Tuareg people live in isolation, herding their camels and goats. Millennia ago, their forager ancestors carved some of the finest engravings on earth into the desert rocks: huge images of elephant, rhino, giraffe, lion and armed warriors, telling of a greener world long vanished.

The magnificent 'Dabous Giraffe' are found here – two huge giraffe engraved on a sloping slab, the larger one measuring 5.4 metres (17.7 feet) from hoof to horn. The engravings are probably between 6,000 to 8,000 years old. TARA began working with the local Tuareg community in 1998 through the Anigourane Rock Art Association, created to safeguard and promote the rock art, and which was working with the community to identify guides who would be custodians of the site. TARA

worked with Anigourane, Niger officials and tour operators to improve the accessibility, create signage and promote responsible tourism to the site. Activities included training custodian/guides, sinking a borehole for the custodians and community members, and arranging for the giraffe engravings to be moulded and displayed at the Mano Dayak International airport at Agadez. These sites have benefited from a high number of visitors, which in turn has generated considerable income for the local community. When TARA Chairman David Coulson visited the area after years of working together Sidi Mohammed Ilies, the president of Anigourane, he found a number of positive developments.

Top:
Head and neck
of life-size giraffe
engravings in
Dabous, Niger;
Below:
Community
borehole

Unfortunately, since 2007, the Aïr Mountains and their rock art have become a 'no-go' area due to the increase in domestic and political tension following the government's decision to open more uranium mines in traditional Tuareg territory with minimal compensation or consultation. The situation has devastated tourism in the region. More recently, the Prince Claus Fund in the Netherlands provided support to TARA to ensure security at the Dabous Rock Art Site while the long-term situation is still uncertain.



Lokori, Northern Kenya

Lokori is a small town with a population of approximately 10,000 people in the Kerio Valley, lying about 129 kilometres (80 miles) north of Lake Baringo and about 80 kilometres (50 miles) south-west of Lake Turkana. The valley lies in a narrow, long strip through which the Kerio Rivers flows, providing water in the dry semi-arid desert environment. Archaeological work in the 1960s and 1970s raised awareness about rock engravings and burials in the vicinity of Lokori. In 2002, TARA Chairman, David Coulson visited a site called Namoratunga, where a number of grave-marker stones bearing rock engravings had been dated (in the 1970s) to 2,300 years ago. Coulson, believing that there may be many more engravings in the area, did in fact record a number of previously unpublished engravings on his visit.

Local community participation is a key ingredient for the success of any heritage management project – especially when they have the potential to share in socio-economic benefits accruing from tourism. The recent project at Lokori draws heavily from TARA's experience in developing rock art tourism and the related community projects in Suba and Kakapel. This project aims to increase awareness among the local community, ensure long term conservation, and promote the rock art for local and international tourism, with an overall objective of enhancing community livelihoods.



Kondoa, Tanzania



Top right: Participants in one of the community workshops held at Lokori;
Bottom left: Community workshop participants, Kondoa

Kondoa rock art sites are located on the eastern slopes of the Maasai escarpment bordering the Great Rift Valley in Tanzania, and were placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2006. According to the Late Dr. Amini Muturi³, there are over 450 sites in the region and more are yet to be discovered. The Kondoa paintings, like most hunter-gatherer paintings in parts of eastern and southern Africa, have generally been dated to more than 2,000 years old (Williams 1986, Garlake 1995)⁴.

While there is a comprehensive site management plan, as well as structures and some human resources, the sites are threatened with a range of human activities, from charcoal production to farming. Due to the importance of the site and TARA's long-standing links with Kondoa, TARA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tanzanian Department of Antiquities in order to implement a community rock art project with an ultimate goal of promoting these rock art sites for sustainable tourism as a way of ensuring their long-term preservation. An Engagers' Workshop and Community Summit were held in 2009, with the financial support of EPA – School for African Heritage.

³ Kondoa Rock Art Sites Management Plan January, 2004. Dr Muturi also sat on TARA's advisory committee

⁴ Quoted on the Kondoa Management Plan January, 2004



MANAGING COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Management by objectives for community projects:

A key best practice that can be taken from this project is the successful use of the 'Management by Objectives' principle. The project activities and budget were aligned to the project objectives – every activity carried out had to contribute to the respective objective either directly or indirectly. This management system gave focus to the project and ensured that all project objectives were met, and that activities that did not have a direct bearing on the objectives were not prioritised.

An Introduction

Donor-funded community projects have become extremely common in Africa for many years now. These are mainly in the fields of health (especially HIV/AIDS), poverty alleviation, entrepreneurship, provision of water and sanitation, and food security. Only recently have we begun to see community projects in heritage management, culture, and the arts. The question that begs an answer is Why do so many of these projects collapse so soon after the donor funding ceases?

In this publication the authors examine some of the critical ingredients for planning and implementing successful community projects through a case study of the work of TARA and the Abasuba Community Peace Museum. While donor organisations, through baseline surveys, may be sufficiently armed with data to justify community development projects, the authors argue that the target communities more often than not have a clear idea of what their needs are and how they feel these should be addressed, ideas which must be collected, organised and respected by the donors as a critical first step. If communities would take the leadership in identifying needs and approaching donors, rather than depending upon donors to establish the priorities for funding support, and if these communities developed the necessary skills related to project planning governance, management and implementation, sustainability would be greatly enhanced.



Suba Community meeting



CRITICAL INGREDIENTS/KEY FACTORS

Real Community Involvement

One the biggest causes of failure in community projects has been superficial community involvement and passive participation from the beneficiaries. In many cases, funding organisations conceive a project on the assumption that they will definitely be suitable for the community in question. This is, however, not always the case.

Project managers should strive to provide communities with opportunities to be meaningfully engaged in the process of information gathering, planning, direction-setting and decision-making regarding the outcomes that affect the community. The ultimate goal is that communities should be driving this process.

Inclusiveness is critical for successful community involvement. Those involved should represent all segments of the community, especially the youth, women and elders. The structures within the community should also be well researched to ensure that all clans, villages, and ethnic groups are well represented. Strategies that confront prejudice based on gender, ethnicity, disability, social status and race should be built into the system.

To ensure that all these aspects of community involvement are taken into consideration, the project manager should prepare a community involvement plan. This plan outlines in detail the structure of the recipient community, an exhaustive list of stakeholders and their roles as well as what the expectations of each stakeholder would be. Input for the plan would normally be obtained through research and interviews with a good sample of community leaders and local administration.

Discussing the project concept with the community before beginning implementation highly enhances chances of success of the project. Groups that seem resistant should not be ignored; instead, they should be reached out to and their fears addressed. Normally, such groups/persons soften up when they understand that the project is for the benefit of the entire community and is inclusive enough to accept and take their input seriously.



Construction worker
at the ACPM



Case of ACPM

For a community as small as the Abasuba, this was a massive project and one that had a likelihood of attracting or even creating divisive politics. Early, consistent and real involvement of community members in all stages of the project ensured that the community was engaged positively at all times and that they perceived the project as their own. Jack Obonyo, ACPM Founder, deserves credit for being such a strong community mobiliser and for ensuring that structures were in place to include the community in all processes and at all stages. The importance of real community involvement cannot be overemphasised.

Collaboration

This is the second critical ingredient. Quite often, organisations moving into communities will find that there are local and external organisations and individuals with shared interests that have already been working with that community. The most sensible thing to do in such situations is to identify possible ways in which you can collaborate with the existing institutions.

Collaboration helps to mitigate the risk of duplicating efforts and wasting time and scarce resources to 're-invent the wheel'. Such collaborations could be at different levels with different organisations. The project manager should aim to nurture partnerships that will achieve a positive outcome for all community members. This would include developing networks within communities, encouraging different clans and groups to work together for a common good.

Perhaps the most vital dimension of collaboration in managing community projects in Africa is cooperation with the local administration and other community groups. These facilitate the dissemination of a positive message about the project and are the greatest tools in mobilising community support for the project.

Case of ACPM

Apart from the general community members, the local authorities and key opinion leaders within Suba District were also engaged from the early stages of the project. This resulted in whole-hearted support from local authorities whenever they were needed. They also spoke well of the project and encouraged the rest of the community to participate.



Capacity Building and Empowerment



Local women's group entertaining guests at the ACPM

Projects, by their very nature, are time-bound; ultimately any project will need to be managed and sustained by the communities themselves. The community members must therefore be involved in the collective effort in a manner that enables them to gain confidence in their own abilities and their power to influence decisions of the projects that affect their lives.

Change and growth in a community will only occur through informing and empowering individuals and groups in the community to be able to identify problems and take control at local levels. Capacity building can be done through awareness campaigns, training workshops, engaging workshops, training of trainers, and advocacy, among others. All these efforts should endeavour to support and strengthen individuals and groups within the community to identify needs and develop solutions at a local level.

Since communities know what they need – and often it is clearer to them than to the donor organisation – it is imperative that they are ‘engaged’ rather than trained in the conventional top-down approach. Engaging enables the community to own and be willing to ‘fight’ for the project. This model was adopted by TARA in the implementation of its Suba project, and is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this publication.

Besides individual capacity building, institutional capacity building is also fundamental. Building institutional capacity is vital to facilitating development and fostering longer-term sustainability through the empowerment of local actors. Assisting local institutions – through advice and training in programme planning, financial management, strategic planning, financial and programme reporting, board selection and development, and institutional transparency and accountability – renders them models of viable, professional and transparent organisations, and valuable resources for other local institutions.

The project manager must also include in the project concept a detailed and systematic capacity building and empowerment plan. This plan should envision operations of the initiative beyond the life of the project and ensure sufficient confidence, knowledge and experience among the local actors to take over after the completion of the project.



Equity

From the outset of a project, the project manager should make certain that structures are in place to ensure that opportunities and resources available to the community are distributed in a just and equitable manner. Real or perceived discrimination, favouritism or unfairness, are among the most dangerous killers of projects. The project should therefore always use culturally appropriate strategies to reach out to people – especially to marginalised and under-served groups – and ensure they are actively engaged and with an equal voice to articulate problems and find solutions.

The project manager should ensure partnerships with representative community organisations, both formal and informal networks and other communication channels that serve diverse groups within the community effectively. For a community project to succeed, it cannot be seen as benefiting only a select few community members. It must pass the accessibility, fairness and accountability test – and remember: the community's positive perception of the project is key.



Discussion group during a community workshop, ACPM

Impact Assessments



Bird Island, Lake Victoria



The impacts of development interventions take different shapes. While significant benefits flow from different development actions, there is a need to identify and evaluate the associated negative impacts that accrue from various aspects of the project. Socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts in project management are critical factors for consideration before the implementation of the project, as they provide an in-depth analysis of the various community dynamics. Armed with information from these impact assessments, the project can then be designed to best suit the local conditions in the area of implementation for greater success.

Socio-Cultural Impact Assessment

These impacts not only need to be identified and measured but also need to be managed in such a way that the positive externalities are magnified and the negative ones minimised. Developments have socio-cultural ramifications and all stakeholders involved must be active participants in the process. Key among the stakeholders are the community members who must be given an opportunity to design their future. This assessment should focus on the community's social organisation such as family structures, traditional administration/governance systems, and cultures/beliefs and norms that the community subscribes to.

Economic Impact Assessment

Economic impacts are those that affect the level of economic activity in a community either positively or negatively. An Economic Impact Assessment traces the spending through an economy and measures the cumulative effects of that spending. This assessment is guided by: employment levels, value added to the local economy (eg. infrastructure development), wealth creation owing to increased value of property, and opportunities for enterprise development. These indicators reflect a particular dimension of improvement in the economic well-being of area residents, which is usually the major goal of development projects.

Environmental Impact Assessments

An EIA is a procedure that ensures that the environmental implications of development projects are taken into account before decisions are made. The rationale of this impact assessment is to determine the potential adverse effects to the environment and thereby design appropriate mitigation measures. In Kenya, carrying out an EIA for development projects is mandatory under the Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act (1999). Faced with numerous challenges ranging from environmental planning, climate change, catchments and ecosystem conservation, pollution and waste control, compliance and enforcement of environmental laws amongst others, an EIA is a tool for ensuring that development is truly sustainable. Any development that destroys the basis for survival cannot be termed as 'development'.



Discussing potential environmental threats on Mfangano





ACPM Board members from left: Kings Owagogo, Pauline Oluoch, Jack Obonyo, Benard Omuga;
joined by Advisory board members Terry Little, Gladys Nyasuna-Wanga and Lorna Abungu

Monitoring is the regular collection and analysis of information in order to inform decision-making, ensure accountability, and provide the basis for evaluation and learning. Monitoring involves the regular review of a project's performance on both a quantitative basis (eg. time spent, expenditure) and a qualitative basis (ie. more general attributes, such as how smoothly the project runs, the satisfaction of those involved). Monitoring takes place throughout the life of the project and will help answer questions about the community project; it is crucial when it comes to evaluation, and also allows for making changes during the project.

Evaluation is a systematic examination of a project, usually once it is complete, and aims to answer specific questions and to judge the overall value of a project. It should demonstrate what lessons have been learnt that will improve any future actions, planning and decision-making associated with projects. Evaluation uses the monitoring information already gathered to make judgments about how well the project is doing, ie. what works and what needs improvement. It will reveal how well funds have been used and what the benefits are to all those involved. It will also help you create more successful, well-managed projects in the future.

A World Bank report notes that while heavy investment is made in community projects, it has been observed that most community development projects do not incorporate adequate or rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E). M&E for community projects is crucial in order to:

- Provide information for decision-making and improve project management;
- Assess effectiveness of the interventions and demonstrate results and the extent to which objectives have been met;
- Empower communities and ensure greater transparency and accountability;
- Increase chances for future funding.

While proper monitoring and evaluation need to take place for community projects, the approach and tools must be adapted to suit the local contexts. Approaches for M&E in community projects should not be overly rigid, and must recognise diversities within the community and maintain local relevance. Community projects are by their nature highly contextualised and have specific geographic coverage and objectives; however, the M&E approaches employed should be designed so that local lessons have relevance to stakeholders globally. A sound M&E system must be established from the outset of a project and this system should take into consideration the objectives of the project.

Case of ACPM : *The Museum Board continuously thought up ways and means of ensuring that the museum would be able to sustain itself after the project. The project invested in various tools that would ensure sustainability, including the strengthening of the Executive and Advisory Boards, boats, and Community Centre with a restaurant and seminar room. The sustainability component was well thought-out and can be emulated by other community projects.*



TOURISM IN SUBA

Lake Victoria is one of East Africa's most beautiful and spectacular features, yet only a small percentage of visitors to Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda ever see or experience it. One of the best places to experience the beauty and wildness of the lake is in Suba District, and especially on Rusinga and Mfangano Islands. Here, by night, hundreds of silent wooden canoes string out thousands of lanterns, silently fishing for Omena (dagaa/ sardine), lighting up the lake in a beautiful display of fairy lights.

These islands are also a birdwatcher's paradise. Huge fig trees grow by the shores, supporting colonies of egrets, cormorants and pelicans. The islands also attract sport fishermen who come to catch Nile Perch, some of which can weigh up to 20 kilos (44 lbs) or more. Visitors can also hike inland to visit sacred forests, and ancient rock art sites. Local guides from the Abasuba Community Peace Museum can take visitors to the sacred island of the Wasamo Clan, Nzenze, or take them hiking through the mountains to visit the special sites and sacred trees.



Pulling in the nets on Lake Victoria



Suba - A Tourist's Perspective - Robert Bangiola

"The view from the shore at night of the fishing boats is something I'll never forget. The next morning, the fisherman's wives lay the fish out by the hundreds in the brilliant sun to dry." That's how a friend from New York shared one of the many memories of Mfangano Island in Lake Victoria, about five hours from Nairobi, named after the three stones that hold a cooking pot over a fire, representing peace, stability, unity.

I vacationed on Mfangano with Fred Lake, my friend, guided by Jack from the Museum and TARA trained volunteers. In four days we learnt why trees are sacred, large stones magical, and how rock art in sacred places tells an ancient and peaceful story. Fred goes on to describe his personal perspective:

"From that village we hiked up a steep mountain with a local elder to the sacred rock art sight, with 4,000 year-old wall drawings said to be of the moon and sun. After the art and picnic lunch, we took an extra 3-hour hike across the mountain ridge, through sacred forests, a school yard, and a new artist colony, and spent a comfortable night in our guide's adobe home. The family's warmth and generosity was much appreciated.

Tonight at the Community Centre we dined and everyone danced together to music in a slow rhythm, waving their arms around and swaying, workers, too. Tomorrow morning we hope to visit the sacred island (must get permission from Elders) and see another rock art sight. There is a hippo in the area, so that may be an added treat." – Fred Lake, New York, NY.

I visited Mfangano first to participate in an international workshop. The beautiful and simple surroundings were ideal, and afternoon tea was so nice. The second time was to volunteer with a group helping with a community project through the "Gateway to Mfangano," the Abasuba Community Peace Museum was a great host.

Fred's travel notes capture the beauty of the people and the island. I hope you also have the chance to feel part of this warm and welcoming community."

Robert Bangiola served as US State Department Cultural Envoy to Kenya, and is now working with NGO leaders to enhance programme sustainability. www.bangiola.com



How to get to Suba

One can reach Suba District by road, boat or by air. Air charters are available directly to both Rusinga and Mfangano islands from Nairobi, Kisumu and the Maasai Mara. Rusinga is also accessible by road through the Mbita causeway that links it with the mainland. Mfangano is accessible by road and then boat: a good road runs along the north shore of the Winam Gulf from Kisumu to Lwanda K'Otieno, where there is a ferry service to Mbita. From Mbita, there is a regular motorboat ferry service to Mfangano, and boats can also be easily hired, including the museum's own boats.



Where To Stay

Camping & School Visits:

**Abasuba Community
Peace Museum**
info@abasuba.museum
www.abasuba.museum
+254-723-898406

Luxury:
Mfangano Island Camp:
info@governorscamp.com
www.governorscamp.com

Rusinga Island Lodge:
info@privatewilderness.com
www.rusinga.com

Mid-Range:
Lake Victoria Safari Village
 safarivillage@safarikenya.net
 www.safarikenya.net

ICIPE Guest House (Mbita)
 icipe@icipe.org
 +254-721-491431





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There are different levels of tourist accommodations in Suba District, including (from left to right) Mfangano Island Camp, Lake Victoria Safari Village (Mbita) and Rusinga Island Lodge. A range of cabins will soon be available next to the Abasuba Community Peace Museum (above).



About the Authors



Gladys Nyasuna-Wanga worked as Programme Manager at TARA, in charge of community projects, until 2009. She was involved extensively in fundraising, design and implementation of the Suba community project and is also involved with such other projects in western Kenya, northern Kenya and in Tanzania. Gladys is passionate about issues of community development at grassroots level and believes strongly that communities know the direction which development should take in their areas and should therefore be meaningfully involved at all stages. She holds a BSc from Kenyatta University and a Diploma in Project Management from the Kenya Institute of Management.



Gloria K. Borona joined TARA in 2007 as the Project Officer to implement the TARA Suba community project and is currently Manager of Community Projects. Previously she worked in various community development interventions including: health, education and income generation. She believes that if communities are empowered to harness the potential of their resources then we can achieve development that is truly sustainable and that development interventions must be consciously designed to bear meaningful results to the community. Gloria holds a Master of Business Administration – Strategic Management from the University of Nairobi and Bachelor of Environmental Studies-Community Development from Kenyatta University.