

# Workshop Report



June 2019

## Agenda:

- Introduction of workshop participants
- Project overview entitled "*Promoting sustainable ecotourism for conservation and management of mangroves in Gazi Bay-Kenya*"
- Impact monitoring (Social and Environmental)
- Challenges, perceptions and opportunities of ecotourism as a method for conserving mangroves
- A.O.B

## Introduction:

Anne led the introduction session where all the workshop participants introduced themselves and their respective affiliations. Of the participants, we registered a total of 19 from project team, Gazi Women Boardwalk, Fisheries department, WWF-Kenya and Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute. The invited officer from Kenya Forest Service in-charge of managing state forests was absent with apology and report of this workshop will be shared to them.

## Project overview:

A speech written by the Project PI (Robert Runya) was read to the participants about the Rufford supported project entitled "*Promoting sustainable ecotourism for conservation and management of mangroves in Gazi Bay-Kenya*". The speech covered the concept of ecotourism promoted as responsible travel to natural places like mangroves but also conservation activities like planting of mangroves in degraded areas and respect for the cultural integrity of the local area as key components/pillars of sustainable ecotourism

initiatives. Agnes translated the speech to Swahili language, which the community members were well versed.

### **Impact monitoring (Social and Environmental):**

Anne, a project team member and also the social impact officer of Mikoko Pamoja (a sister community project engaging in the sale of carbon credits for conservation of mangroves in Gazi) shared her experiences on how to assess the social impacts and performance of any community initiative. Different indicators including number of people benefiting from direct community development projects that could be financed from the proceeds of ecotourism business such as contribution to drinking water, learning materials to schools among others have been used to quantify social impacts of Mikoko Pamoja project. Also, Mwamba the project coordinator for Mikoko Pamoja gave a talk on how to use citizen science approaches to monitor the status mangrove biodiversity and impacts of human activities to mangrove ecosystems. Negative changes in the forest structure from the baseline could indicate a possible decline in mangrove biodiversity values and as such a potential proxy for impact monitoring. These lessons will heavily help the ecotourism project to develop monitoring protocols and indicators of assessing both social and environmental impacts of the mangrove ecotourism project.

### **Challenges, perceptions and opportunities of ecotourism as a method for conserving mangroves:**

The project team took this time to share the results of the socio-economic survey conducted some months ago which aimed to establish baseline information on the social barriers such as age, gender, economic status, literacy levels among others hindering the success of the ecotourism project run by Gazi Women Boardwalk project. Besides, the report highlights the different opportunities that can be integrated into mangrove ecotourism project including what the group witnessed during their exchange visit in Dabaso mangrove conservation project which is engaged in ecotourism, crab farming, and also run a restaurant business. Likewise, Nelly, a project team member and also the current area fisheries officer for Kwale county government highlighted aquaculture as an alternative practice that could unlock the economic potential of the Gazi village and improve the community's financial status.

In addition, Neema from WWF-Kenya took the community group to task and emphasized on the need for strengthening their governance structures and conflict resolution mechanisms in order to sustain the project in the long-term. She also urged them to embrace collective responsibility and unity of purpose in order for the group to remain on course in their efforts to conserve mangroves effectively.

### **A.O.B**

- Need for rebranding the project in order to remain attractive to visitors.
- Need to include additional members especially youths to boost the group dynamics and ensure youthful energy is present.
- Carry out survey to collect information about visitor experience/satisfaction, which will help to identify the areas needed for improvement.
- Emphasis on accountability and transparency
- More awareness campaigns on the importance of mangroves and the need to protect them from destructive human activities.

## **Welcome speech and project overview**

Good morning friends of mangroves, ladies and gentlemen!!

It is my pleasure to officially welcome you all to this workshop of the project on “Promoting sustainable ecotourism for management and conservation of mangroves in Gazi Bay-Kenya”. This project was born out of the need to sustain the economic incentives of Gazi Women Boardwalk Group; a community led organization engaged in ecotourism activities for managing mangroves. The benefits from their activities go a long way in enhancing conservation of mangrove ecosystems and improving the living standards of the Gazi bay community whose livelihoods are heavily linked to healthy mangrove ecosystem goods and services via ecotourism marketing.

Ecotourism refers to a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas intended as a low impact and often small-scale compared to commercial tourism. The concept of ecotourism has evolved and expanded from conservation and education only, to including socio-economic benefits (e. g jobs), equity dimension (e. g gender), sustainability (ethics, awareness and responsibility) and preservation of the cultural integrity of the local people. Sustainable ecotourism in the context of this project aims to underscore the balance between the needs of the mangrove environment and that of the Gazi people which portrays a win-win setup.

In order to address the various challenges facing Gazi Women Boardwalk Group from successfully implementing their ecotourism initiative such as low influx of tourists and lack of technical support, we managed to secure support from The Rufford Foundation (based in the UK) last

Year, with an aim to utilize a combination of research, local management and social media marketing strategies to achieve self-sustenance in the community ecotourism initiative. Specifically the project endeavored to achieve the following:

- (i) Improve management by identifying challenges and opportunities of the project
- (ii) Marketing and promotion using various media platforms including in the web, social media and physical visits
- (iii) Capacity building and education of the community involved in the project in marketing, management, mangrove restoration and awareness campaigns.

This project workshop is a culmination of the various activities that have been undertaken for the last one year including a baseline study of the mangrove status around the ecotourism boardwalk, a socio-economic survey to establish the challenges and perceptions of the community towards the ecotourism project, an exchange visit to Dabaso crab shark in Watamu, active social-media marketing among others. Looking back, it is no doubt that we have made substantial steps in putting the Gazi Ecotourism Project on the digital map under our various social media pages on Facebook, Instagram and twitter dubbed “Gazi Ecotourism Ventures”. In all these engagement, we have not only had the chance to market the project but also increased the level of awareness regarding mangrove conservation under the hash tag #saveourmangroves. I would like to personally recognize individual support from my project team (Agnes, Anne, Nelly and Donald) and also thank the collective contribution and partnership that Gazi Bay community has enjoyed over the years from KMFRI, KFS, WWF, and others by making mangrove conservation a priority in their work. Moving forward, I would like to call upon and remind everyone, that each one of us has a role to play in one

way or another in enhancing mangrove biodiversity values and make this planet a better place.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!! KARIBUNI SANA!!