



Project Concept for Laikipia Tourism Association

Laikipia Sustainable Tourism Incubator (LASTI)

Laikipia County, Mt. Kenya Region, Kenya

Purpose

Sustainable Tourism becomes a major driver to help Laikipia become a model County for an inclusive green economy, which protects the environment, celebrates cultural diversity, generates economic growth, creates jobs and reduces poverty.

Context

The Laikipia Tourism Association is a collection of private-sector tourism providers with the overall purpose of bringing all tourism operators and destinations in Laikipia together for increased collaboration. They aim to influence the direction and contributions of this sector to the County and the sustainable development and management of the greater Laikipia landscape.

The goals of LTA include:

- To be and to be recognized as the most diversified, sustainable tourism destination in East Africa
- Adopt global tourism standards that support environment, culture, economy and social benefits.
- Establish an association and network of tourism providers and destination managers that can interface effectively with County and National government and counterpart associations.
- Realize the goals and objectives of the Laikipia Sustainable Tourism Master Plan.





LTA have been recently constituted (2017) and are served by the Laikipia Wildlife Forum as a secretariat. LWF is a 25-year-old, non-profit membership organization, with more than 10,000 members. With the support of donor funding, LWF provided money, products, and technical services to the eco-tourism enterprises in Laikipia for more than 10 years (2004-2014). LWF assisted with marketing and branding, and provided consulting services in support of community ecotourism planning and programming. The model, while successful, was not sustainable.

In order to address the sustainability of the sector, tourism members of the LWF have assisted the County to develop the first generation of sustainable tourism legislation, developed a 10-year sustainable tourism master plan for the County, and led the formation of broad-based commitments of private sector tourism providers to form the **Laikipia Tourism Association**.

At the core of the next phase of LTA's development is a sustainable tourism incubator. The Incubator is a catalyst for sustainable tourism development in Laikipia, and draws on international experience with business incubators. It combines the private sector, the county government, and a knowledge-building institution in service to MSME development with a focus on Sustainable Tourism Practices, and Sustainable Consumption and Production tools and approaches (SCP). The Incubator will be the first substantive tool for the implementation of the Laikipia Sustainable Tourism Master Plan and is a vehicle for engagement in the County Tourism Sector Plan.

The design of this Project fully complements the 10-Year Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (2015-2025) for Laikipia County.

Background

Tourism is Kenya's second largest income generator after agriculture. Ecotourism has increasingly played a role in the development of the Country's tourism sector, as many tourism products are related to wildlife, adventure and cultural tourism. International tourism market segments are also changing rapidly as newly affluent economies support more international visits to Kenya. Ecotourism Kenya is the leading organization in the country for the voluntary adoption of ecotourism standards and practices in the industry, but their reach has been limited.





Additional international voluntary standards for sustainable tourism (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, The Long Run, and IUCN Green List) are making small inroads but are largely focused on protected areas and private conservancies only.

Laikipia County is located in Central Kenya. It is approximately 9700 square kilometers. It contains Kenya's best and most stable wildlife population, and the country's largest diversity of endangered species. It enjoys Mt. Kenya as a backdrop to its rangelands, and is considered among the most cosmopolitan of areas in Kenya, with over 19 different ethnic groups represented. It is also among one of the favorite wildlife and adventure tourism destinations, second only to the Maasai Mara and Kenya Coast. There are now over 105 tourism facilities in Laikipia, collectively providing over 2,100 beds and offering an expansive and creative range of activities. Moreover, Laikipia's population of 500,000 is expected to more than double in the next 10 years, as more people are drawn to the attractions of this area.

Since 2003, tourism in Laikipia has become an important source of employment, taxation, CSR, and a serious source of local procurement due to the County's preeminent role in wildlife conservation on private lands. A 2013 survey indicates the important role wildlife tourism plays in the rural economy of the County, generating 320M Ksh in revenue/year, 55M Ksh in wages, employing more than 2000 people, and generating at least 13M KSH in taxes and 150M Ksh in procurement. A 2017 survey illustrates that ecotourism and private conservancies contribute USD\$ 2M annually in corporate social investments (CSR).

The Project

The LASTI Project is an important initiative with origins in the Laikipia Sustainable Tourism Master Plan. It is designed to accelerate the development of a business environment that supports the uptake of sustainability principles and practices within the County's tourism sector. The ability to bring SCP tools and approaches to this County through the establishment of a Sustainable Tourism Incubator is unparalleled in the County and is an important commitment to Kenya's Green Economic Strategy and Implementation Plan (GESIP).





Our Project is a 3-year effort to develop a more sustainable tourism sector in the County. We deliver a set of improved services, skills, and facilities through the development of a sustainable tourism incubator.

The Incubator is a public-private partnership between the Laikipia tourism sector {which is comprised mostly of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSMEs), with the new functions of devolved County government, now in its second 5-year phase of devolution. The Incubator draws on international best practices for project design and implementation. It promotes a sustainable consumptions and production methodology in support of MSMEs through the full tourism business cycle. The Incubator is a mechanism for appropriate SCP practices, promotion, and technologies, and will help with access to finance for appropriate projects. It provides mentoring and mechanisms to support individual and collective SCP business development in tourism, during and after the life of this activity.

We seek support for the organizational capacity of three institutions: the Laikipia Tourism Association, the Laikipia Tourism Board, and a Kenyan partnerships with a sustainable development and tourism pedigree (such as Strathmore University and the Sustainable Travel and Tourism Agenda). These institutions are key target groups and beneficiaries of the LASTI Project and key to the sustainability of the functions of the Laikipia Sustainable Tourism Incubator.

The Challenge

The Governor's Manifesto for Laikipia includes tourism as a pillar. A new CIDP is being crafted as we write. And the growth of international tourism in Laikipia represents a significant market force, but is subject to perturbations based on international, national, and county security issues.

Three years of increased domestic (particularly middle class) tourism growth in Laikipia attests to the role that domestic tourism can play in the rural economy of the County. Much of the domestic tourism product however has yet to adopt sustainable standards or practices. Leadership efforts with ecotourism standards and practices inside the county are not being transferred to satellite or ancillary tourism services/products on the edges of the County. Few efforts have yet been made to link sustainable tourism development with County investments in infrastructure, spatial planning, and business investment.





Continued, unplanned and unsustainable development of tourism products in the County jeopardize our natural resource base, and threaten the sustainable tourism markets inside and outside our wildlife areas.

The “Laikipia” name is increasingly synonymous with “branding of quality” for several agricultural and tourism products, but we’ve done little to capitalize on this market share. Without a unified approach and without an understanding of SCP principles and their application in planning, development, financing, and marketing of all forms of tourism in Laikipia, we could lose any competitive advantage we now have.

LASTI is largely the result of two years of strategic planning with the private sector and County government in Laikipia. Our overall objective:

Sustainable Tourism becomes a major driver to help Laikipia become a model County for an inclusive green economy, which protects the environment, celebrates cultural diversity, generates economic growth, creates jobs and reduces poverty.

Project outcomes are:

1. Laikipia Tourism MSMEs demonstrate leadership and business acumen in the uptake of SCP tools and practices in the County
2. The Laikipia Tourism Board adopts the Incubator as a Public Private Partnership that sustains support to tourism MSMEs and promotes sustainable tourism for Laikipia County and engages counties bordering the Mt. Kenya Region, and that it contributes to a national agenda of sustainable consumption and production programming
3. The Laikipia Tourism Association operates in service to private sector membership using a business model that is sustainable and supports advocacy for SCP principles and practices in the County.
4. The LTB and Incubator forms a positive, operational relationship with at least one Kenyan University to perpetuate the training, learning, and lesson sharing that supports SCP programming at County, regional and national levels.

The LASTI Project Outputs:

1. Increase the number and capacity of Laikipia tourism MSMEs to adopt SCP tools through the business project cycle and tourism value chain.
2. Establish a Sustainable Tourism Incubator within the County supported by both private and public funding by the end of the Project.





3. Diversify the types of sustainable tourism offerings in Laikipia.
4. Increase the adoption of appropriate technologies that support a sustainable tourism service (solid waste management, recycling, alternative energy, water conservation and management).
5. Demonstrate the collective benefits of the LASTI Project as a model for other biodiversity-rich counties.
6. The enabling environment created by County Government is positively influenced through advocacy and lobbying for the development of County Integrated Development Plans and budgets, Annual Plans and budgets, infrastructure plans, and county spatial plans and appropriate enabling legislation.
7. Strong Kenyan capacity building partnerships are established and sustained in support of LASTI project stakeholders.

The following stakeholder groups have been targeted for this Project. All are project beneficiaries:

- MSME players in tourism destinations including wildlife/eco-tourism, agricultural tourism, adventure tourism, MICE tourism, community tourism, and conservation education tourism.
- Tourism service providers: transport, food supplies, hardware and technology, souvenirs, food/accommodation, promotion and marketing, sales reps.
- Laikipia Tourism Association - a private sector tourism association
- Laikipia Tourism Board – a partnership of the tourism private sector with County Government, and provided for in County’s sustainable tourism legislation.
- Mt. Kenya Tourism Circuit Association and Adventure Works tourism enterprise arm of the Northern Rangelands Trust
- At least one Kenyan institution of higher learning that promotes SCP principles (Strathmore University) and by example, the Sustainable Travel and Tourism Agenda.





Elements of the Project

This Project is expected to last 3 years with the following work packages to be implemented

- Work Package 1 – Incubator Design, Participant Assessment, and Baseline
- Work Package 2 - Incubator Operations, MSME Marketing and Mentoring
- Work Package 3 – LTA and LTB Capacity Building
- Work Package 4 – Project Management, Monitoring and Secretariat Support
- Work Package 5 – Sustainability Plan Development and Financing Model

Expected Budget

The proposed Project is expected to cost USD \$1M over the three years, with a 10%-20% cost share from both the LTA and County Government of Laikipia.

