Maasai International Solidarity Alliance

OUR MAASAI MODEL FOR FAIR AND JUST TOURISM

How can we transform the safari tourism industry?





Source: MISA

We are the Maasai of Tanzania. We want the tourism industry to change.

BOX: WHO ARE WE?

We, the Maasai of Tanzania, mainly occupy the regions of Arusha and Manyara in the North of the country, while also living in Kilimanjaro, Iringa, Morogoro, Tanga, and Pwani. We engage primarily in pastoralism, and in some areas practise agro-pastoralism. We have our own traditional systems, supervised by elders and traditional leaders. Our division of labour is systematically organised, with each group having its own roles within the age-set system. Maasai culture, spiritual beliefs, and livelihood are closely tied to land, livestock, wildlife, and nature in general. Without any of these elements, our culture, spiritual beliefs, and livelihood would be undermined. For us, land is the foundation of everything. Without land, there is no culture, no livestock, and no sacred grounds. Livestock, for the Maasai, does not only mean economic stability but is also highly connected to cultural beliefs. It is a source of friendship, naming, reconciliation, blessings, and food. We do not eat game meat, and all animals are associated with Maasai clans for protection. We have encountered systematic displacement, from the colonial period to the contemporary government, with the situation escalating from 2021 to the present. The Serengeti, Tarangire, Mkomazi, and Pololeti have been taken from us, while much of our land is now under threat of eviction. More than 80% of the land that was once described by colonial explorers and missionaries as Maasai Country in Tanzania is now listed by the Tanzanian government as strategic conservation areas worthy of *"protection"*. We have protected and lived in harmony with the land for centuries and are now being targeted for it.

Tourism should respect our culture, pastoralism, spirituality, environment and human rights and should not instigate or finance land dispossession. We have nothing against tourists in principle, provided that tourism respects our way of life. The massive promotion of tourism by the Tanzanian Government leads to land loss and threatens our access to spiritual areas, cultural areas, grazing areas, water, medicinal plants, firewood and mobility. Essential natural resources like water are being diverted by the government away from our communities to satisfy the needs of the tourism industry at the expense of our people[25]. While tourism generates high revenues, our communities do not benefit. Our communities are not meaningfully involved in decision-making and our right to FPIC is not respected.

Tourism in Tanzania cannot be considered in isolation; it is closely linked to and responsible for financing the expansion of fortress conservation. While we Maasai have conserved our land for centuries, we are being evicted to make space for hotels, hunting trips and safari tours. Tourism relies on restrictions, no-go zones and the separation of our Indigenous communities from the nature we have stewarded for centuries.

> Another tourism is possible: one that is community-led, community-owned, and which allows our people, our livestock and nature to thrive. For this to happen, alternative investments, better practices, radical transformation and an equitable distribution of revenues from tourism are required.

The following model is the outcome of a participatory process organised by the Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) and endorsed by all its members. In 2026, we travelled across Maasai land and spoke to 652 people from 24 villages across the districts of Ngorongoro, Monduli, Simanjiro and Longido. We gathered the views of women (217), Morans/youths (234), and elders, traditional leaders and village council representatives (201). We asked our community what their experience of tourism has been over the last decades, and how they would like to see tourism evolve.

It is our deep wish that this model can help reshape the tourism industry in Tanzania. We invite tourists to use it to make informed decisions and tourism businesses to improve their policies and practices. We call on the Tanzanian government, the international community and public funders of biodiversity conservation and nature-based tourism to ensure their programmes, policies and funding respect our rights. We will strive to disseminate this model and use it as a tool for dialogue, alliance building with other pastoralist and Indigenous communities, and transformative change.

[25] *MISA Conservation Vision, 2024*

OUR MAASAI MODEL FOR FAIR AND JUST TOURISM

How can we transform the safari tourism industry?



1 Land is life

We want tourism to respect and support our life on the land. We reject all forms of displacement, even if so-called voluntary. Tourism should not lead to land grabbing. Tourism should not lead to the expansion of fortress conservation.

2 Tourism Must Support and Respect Pastoralism

We reject all forms of dispossession of communal land used for grazing. We reject all forms of loss of mobility and the disruption of livestock routes. There must not be beating of herders, violence, and livestock confiscation.

3 No Trophy Hunting

We call for the abolition of hunting. We demand that the Tanzanian government completely ban trophy hunting like Kenya did. We encourage countries to pass trophy hunting import ban laws.

4 Tourism Must Respect Our Co-existence with Wildlife

No tourism infrastructure, hotels or camps on wildlife corridors. No negative biodiversity impacts of hotel construction and other infrastructure. Priority should be given to the local community with guaranteed daily water rights for households and herds ahead of tourism use.

5 No Tourism Without Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

We have the right to FPIC before any project is developed on our lands.

6 Cultural Integrity: No Appropriation of Our Culture and Knowledge

Our Maasai culture is a living knowledge and not a product to be appropriated.

7 Tourism Must Benefit Our Community

We need a different model of tourism: community-led, community-owned and with fair benefit-sharing.

8 The Tourism Industry Should Be Transparent, Accountable and Fair

Revenues generated on our lands must be managed in transparent ways to foster accountability.

9 No Exploitation in Cultural Bomas

Cultural bomas were initially designed to support women in need. If women are not in the driving seat, there is a risk that this objective is sacrificed for other goals.

10 The Roles of Women and Youth

Our culture recognises different groups in the community and allocates different roles and responsibilities to each. Women and youth are important groups in the Maasai community.

We are the Maasai of Tanzania.
We want the tourism industry to change.

MISA Maasai International Solidarity Alliance

1

LAND IS LIFE

We need to stay on the land because it is a source of food, water, pasture, livelihood, salt licks and building materials for our houses. Land is where we find our sacred mountains, medicinal areas (Irpuli), trees (Oreteti, Irmisigiyio, Oloilalei) and sacred grasses, and where we hold our ceremonies and rites of passage. Land is everything.

Land supports healthy livestock and healthy people and land supports our economy. Land is where we have our home, where our parents and ancestors were born and where we will be buried, and it is where we find wildlife and livestock living together. Land, people and livestock cannot be separated. We have traditional knowledge and skills to manage our land.

We want tourism to respect and support our life on the land:

- We reject all forms of displacement, even if so-called voluntary. No relocation can ever be voluntary in a coercive and authoritarian context. While our land may look empty or unoccupied to outsiders, every area has its purpose. This includes ronjos or temporary settlements that are essential to our mobility and culture.
- Tourism should not lead to land grabbing. It is possible on community lands. Communal lands and village lands must be protected and respected. Our villages should be given the power to control the village land use without interference by other authorities. Villages should have a right to engage and negotiate with investors who want to invest in their lands.
- Tourism should not lead to the expansion of fortress conservation through the creation of new protected areas, GCAs, GRs or WMAs. There should be no forced resettlement and no reclassification of communal land or village land into other protection categories.
- We reject all forms of loss of access to water for human consumption and for livestock.
- All sacred places and ritual sites (used by different community groups on different occasions) must be protected and respected as part of settlement and landscape use. We reject the interference of UNESCO/Geopark in the management of our sacred sites like Oldonyo Lengai.
- Land taken for conservation, safari tourism and trophy hunting without FPIC must be handed back to the community.
- We need a new constitution which will ensure the devolution of land from the President to the people, allowing for the establishment of a legal framework that enables communities to truly be in control.
- Our community must decide if and where new hotels or tourism infrastructure are to be built, ensuring that our strategic resources are not undermined; there should be no imposition of new constructions from above.

2

TOURISM MUST SUPPORT AND RESPECT PASTORALISM

Like land, livestock is essential to our way of life and survival. We want livestock to continue to be the foundation of our culture and identity. Our livestock is a source of leadership and respect. It sustains our economy through food, provides us medicine and enables us to cover school fees, clothing and other costs. Livestock embodies our culture through practices like reconciliation and rites of passage and holds spiritual significance from birth to death.

We want tourism to respect, promote and support pastoralism:

- We reject all forms of dispossession of communal land used for grazing and the harvest of medicine and firewood.
- We demand unconditional access to Ngorongoro Crater, Ormoti, Mairang'wai, Alaitole, Oldupai, Mukulat and Endoinyo Oormorwak as granted by the law. We also demand that our right to graze within already established WMAs be fully respected and protected, especially in dry season. This right should be enshrined and ensured when the WMA general management plan and land use planning/zoning is developed and reviewed. We demand the right to graze in already established GRs until they can finally be abolished.
- We reject all forms of loss of mobility and the disruption of livestock routes. There should be no restrictions on livestock movements. Tourism must support and not undermine wildlife, human and livestock co-existence. We say NO to "no-go" zones. We reject all forms of loss of access to water for livestock. Use of and access to water for livestock should be prioritised over water consumption by tourism facilities including pools and showers.
- We reject all forms of disturbances to livestock and herders (noise, traffic, chasing). There must not be beating of herders, violence, and livestock confiscation. Harassment, insults and gate controls targeting herders, women and youth must cease. Rangers must be held accountable for any violence or harassment inflicted.
- Roads and tourism activities and infrastructure should not disrupt grazing patterns or block livestock corridors.
- Grazing and resting areas should be managed according to Maasai rotational grazing knowledge, with the tourism industry reframed as a guest rather than rule-setter. Tourism activities must respect seasonal rejuvenation.
- Communal land must be recognised, respected and protected. Tourism in Maasai land must respect, protect and support pastoralism. Pastoralism must be explicitly recognised and supported as a legitimate form of land use worthy of protection and as a base for livelihood. We need a new constitution which recognises pastoralism as a livelihood and land use system that is efficient, legitimate and deserves protection.

3

NO TROPHY HUNTING

We believe trophy hunting is inhumane, immoral, barbaric and against Maasai culture. Trophy hunting is not compatible with pastoralism and biodiversity conservation and leads to land alienation and displacement of the pastoralist communities. Our communities do not understand nor support the idea that wildlife is killed unnecessarily. Trophy hunting segregates and creates a racist distinction between the rich (trophy hunters) and the poor (poachers). It leads to the depletion of wildlife. Why should animals die for human leisure?

Some pro-hunting organisations and lobbies say we need hunting money to finance conservation but we can conserve the environment for free and have done so for centuries.

We call for the abolition of hunting.

- We demand that the Tanzanian government completely ban trophy hunting like Kenya did.
- We encourage countries to pass trophy hunting import ban laws.





Source: https://africanhuntinggazette.com/the-kilombero-valley-africas-best-kept-secret/

4

TOURISM MUST RESPECT OUR CO-EXISTENCE WITH WILDLIFE

We have always coexisted, we coexist and we want to continue to coexist with wildlife. We have cultural, traditional, spiritual, and medicinal attachments to wildlife. Our Maasai peaceful behaviour and knowledge benefit wildlife, which feel secure and protected. Different Maasai clans have a cultural and moral obligation to protect different wildlife species.

We want to continue to co-exist with wildlife and live in harmony with nature:

- No tourism infrastructure, hotels or camps on wildlife corridors. No negative biodiversity impacts of hotel construction and other infrastructure.
- Priority should be given to the local community with guaranteed daily water rights for households and herds ahead of tourism use, with dry-season monitoring. Hotels should ensure sustainable water use and management (both drinking and other uses) and put in place water conservation methods.
- Priority should be given to the local community over firewood to avoid conflicts between women residents and hotels. Hotels should ensure proper firewood use and management as well as other energy uses and conservation methods (fuel, diesel, solar, ...). Alternative sources of energy (solar, biogas) should be prioritised and made available to the community.
- Tourism businesses must have proper waste management and sewage treatment policies and practices in place. There should be no dumping of solid waste or wastewater near bomas, water points or salt licks to protect human and livestock health. Information on waste disposal and sewage treatment should be made available and community committees should be involved in environmental checks.
- The total number of vehicles should be controlled including at specific points and moments to avoid road kills and disturbances to wildlife and people. Time and area limits for safari vehicles in residential and grazing areas should be put in place, with enforceable speed restrictions. Effective measures should be put in place for the control and active removal of invasive species (spread by vehicles).
- Tourism businesses should publish a climate strategy on how to reduce CO2 emissions linked to international and domestic flights and local transport. We reject soil carbon credit projects on our lands, and any form of carbon offset project. Instead, tourism operators need to find ways to reduce their huge amounts of CO2 emissions.

5

NO TOURISM WITHOUT FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC)

We have the right to FPIC before any project is developed on our lands. FPIC is to be ensured at all stages, from project identification to formulation, implementation and closure. FPIC should be obtained before we enter into a contract with any investor.

For our right to FPIC to be ensured:

- The FPIC process must be community-based or community-controlled. There should be no interference or intimidation by the government.
- Access to information about tourism and its impacts should be guaranteed for all community members. Various dissemination channels should be used including village assemblies, radio, social media and plays to ensure that non-literate community members are informed. Neutral, transparent and independent information should be provided allowing our communities to assess the advantages and pitfalls of the proposed contracts. This includes proper training, communication and independent and credible legal advice to all community members with emphasis on women and youth.
- Before an investor signs a contract or begins construction, the community should receive the draft agreement in Maa and Swahili, have adequate time to consider it, access independent legal advice and understand the proposed land use, water requirements, employment commitments, revenue terms, environmental impacts, complaint procedures and termination provisions.



Source: MISA

- A truly effective and meaningful participatory process is key to FPIC. Separate spaces should be provided to consult and involve everyone, including elders, Laigwanak (traditional leaders), Morans, women, youth and various elite groups (lawyers, human rights defenders, Civil Society Organizations) before a joint community decision is taken. The Maasai community operates within the age-set system, a social structure that assigns responsibilities and roles to different groups within Maasai society without granting autonomous authority to any one group over another. Within this system, no group supersedes another and all groups need to be consulted and consent. None of them has the final say and no single group should be treated as automatically authorised to consent for everyone. If one of the groups does not consent, the project or investment cannot go forward. The FPIC process requires the organisation of separate meetings for all different community groups. For FPIC to be effective and meaningful, it must be understood and agreed upon by all of these groups.
- Consent includes the right to say 'no'. FPIC requires a free and non-coercive environment. This means no arbitrary arrests, no evictions, no abuse, no harassment, no seizure of livestock. The right to withdraw consent in case of contract breaches or abuses is also essential. We reject any form of violence on our lands by **TAWA** and **TANAPA.**
- FPIC requires a whole community approach. There should be no capture by the elite or a fraction of the community.
- The FPIC process should be properly documented and monitored at all stages. It is important to keep written records of whose consent was given but Village General Assembly records are insufficient as proof of FPIC.
- Accessible complaint mechanisms at village level (including anonymous options) and regular community reviews of tourism impacts should be made available.
- We commit to developing a full and culturally appropriate Maasai FPIC protocol.



In June 2024, thousands of Maasai gathered in the Ngorongoro crater to celebrate the rite of passage Enkipaata. Source: https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/featured-report/tourism-over-cultural-heritage

6

CULTURAL INTEGRITY: NO APPROPRIATION OF OUR CULTURE AND KNOWLEDGE

Our culture holds us together and shapes our relationship with livestock, land and each other. Our Maasai culture is a living knowledge and not a product to be appropriated.

We want:

- Respectful and meaningful tourism-local interactions.
- Tourists should be able to join everyday experiences (such as walking with herders or milking) rather than consuming staged shows, if this is the type of tourism activities the community wants to develop.
- We reject the marketing of our culture for tourism. Rites of passage, healing rituals and deep spiritual practices should be off limits for tourists.
- We must consent, individually and collectively, before our photos and videos are taken. Separate consent procedures should be in place for elders, women, Morans and children prior to filming or photography, with an easy option to refuse. Guidelines for photo consent should be developed, and guides should encourage tourists to always ask if they can take pictures.
- We must control how we are represented and used in tourism promotion materials. Maasai community should review and approve all promotional materials (websites, brochures, social media) before publication.
- We reject all forms of cultural appropriation. We reject the business practice of using non-Maasai dressed as Maasai to attract tourists.
- Tourism should never separate us from our spiritual and sacred sites. Sacred mountains, springs, trees and sites remain under the authority of the community, with tourism access only if we agree and with clear rules.
- Local and traditional knowledge should be used in tourism decisions and activities. Maasai guides, drivers, elders, women and Morans should be recognised and paid as experts when their knowledge informs and supports tourism or conservation activities.

7

TOURISM MUST BENEFIT OUR COMMUNITY

While we want pastoralism to remain our main livelihood and source of identity, we want to access a range of job and economic opportunities linked to tourism to diversify our livelihoods.

We want tourism to benefit our communities and be shaped by our needs and priorities:

- We need a different model of tourism: community-led, community-owned and with fair benefit-sharing. Tourism should be organised in a fundamentally different way: communities should be leading economically and organisationally, receive a substantial and transparent share of the revenues, and become greater owners or co-operators of tourism offerings. The benefits of tourism should be controlled and managed by our community, in a transparent way.
- A substantial share of total profits should go to the community, and profits should be equitably and communally distributed and spent. All hotels should have formal contracts obliging them to pay an agreed amount to the village.
- Village land should be adequately planned so that tourism activities are properly allocated to certain areas and payments linked to land use are clearly defined. Benefits should be diversified and include: a substantial share of entrance fees, renting of the land, concession per bed to the village and sale of shanga (beads). Current fees must be reviewed because they are extremely low.



Source: MISA

- Benefits should be equitably distributed within the community. The Lake Natron Model (see below) is a good example of community managed incomes, which could be replicated elsewhere according to the respective context. In Ngorongoro division, the Ngorongoro Pastoral Council (NPC) represents an interesting example of a mechanism designed to redistribute tourism revenues to the community. While the **NPC** has faced significant challenges linked to mismanagement and co-optation and has been completely dismantled under Samia Suluhu Hassan's regime, it is nevertheless remembered by many as an effective mechanism which turned a (too small) fraction of tourism incomes into bursaries for students.
- Our community must access and benefit from tourism related employment opportunities. A target of 60-75% of jobs should be local and Maasai, without gender discrimination. Jobs should be maintained during seasonal variations. Jobs should reflect a diversity of skills and include both entry-level and high-level jobs, with opportunities to grow. For this to be possible, there is a need for skills training and development including once employed. Jobs should be decent (contract, insurance, leave, decent wage, National Social Security Fund) including for women. There should be minimum quotas for Maasai women and men in management, guide, driver and ranger positions, not only entry-level roles.
- A significant proportion of tourism revenues should be invested back into the local community economy. We encourage Maasai investment and community ownership of tourism facilities and want to see more of it. Where possible, the co-ownership model between investors and community/village is to be facilitated. There should be no hidden or side deals that divert revenues to external companies, brokers or politicians.
- Tourism should directly contribute to the creation of useful infrastructure. Tourism-related roads, power and telecommunications should provide shared access points for local users. Tourism should directly contribute to the State's implementation of people's right to health, food and education.
- Local sourcing of meat and milk at fair prices should be prioritised, creating local economic opportunities and avoiding imports that undercut local markets.

BOX: THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE LAKE NATRON MODEL

The Lake Natron Model demonstrates how community-led tourism, wildlife conservation and pastoralism can coexist and support each other within a community-managed landscape. In Ngorongoro District, the four villages of Engaresero, Pinyinyi, Jema and Oldoinyosambu are legally registered, and their Village Land Use Plans provide a framework for managing settlements, grazing areas, water sources, tourism investments and other land uses. In Engaresero, the grazing area has been registered, and a title and village registration certificate have been issued. Traditional rangeland management in the Lake Natron area is also recognised under Government Notice No. 597 of 7 October 2022. These arrangements provide a basis for community land governance that incorporates traditional pastoral knowledge and supports the sustainable management of natural resources.

A central component of this model is the Engaresero Eramatare Community Development Initiative (E.E.C.D.I.), a community-based organisation (CBO) established by the village council and community around 2012 to manage tourism and direct part of its revenue towards local employment and community development. Its General Assembly is the main decision-making body and includes members from the village's four sub-villages. Membership is open to village residents aged 18 and above who pay an annual membership fee of TZS 2,000. An 11-member secretariat represents the four sub-villages.

The CBO coordinates local guides and collects tourism fees on behalf of the village. Hotels and tour operators are expected to use local guides when visiting sites such as Lake Natron and the nearby waterfall. Visitors who pay the Lake Natron entrance fee must hire a local guide; tour operators that do not wish to use a guide must sign a form at the entrance but are still required to cover the guide's cost. A share of the fees goes to the guides, while the remainder contributes to the CBO's activities. The CBO uses available funds to support local employment and community projects, including initiatives in health, water and education, as well as scholarships. The CBO and associated Village Community Banks (VICOBA) also provide opportunities for saving, borrowing and starting small businesses. These arrangements help retain part of tourism revenue within the community. Income from guiding can help families cover food, healthcare and education costs, including university expenses in some cases. The model thus seeks to connect tourism and public revenue with local employment, community development and conservation, while maintaining pastoralism as a central land use.

Africa Safari landscape. Source: Magnific.com

An important feature of the Lake Natron Model is the coexistence of tourism activities with designated grazing areas and wildlife habitats. Community-managed rangelands and traditional grazing arrangements guide livestock movements according to seasonal conditions and pasture availability. In principle, these arrangements help balance the needs of livestock, wildlife and local livelihoods while supporting the conservation of Lake Natron's ecosystem.

Although the model is a good example for community-based tourism in Northern Tanzania, it faces challenges. It creates jobs and generates income, but community members report that tourism companies often benefit more than local residents, while their contributions to village development remain limited. Some hotels employ few local people beyond guides, partly because residents lack the skills required for other positions; consequently, available jobs may be casual rather than secure. More fundamentally, tourism-related benefits cannot compensate for the wider pressures on community land and pastoral livelihoods. Residents report losing access to grazing areas and livestock routes, including land taken for an airstrip built by **TAWA** and hunting concessions. Such restrictions threaten pastoralism, associated cultural practices and young people's ability to remain in the village. Community members have also reported problems with investors, including late or insufficient levy payments, unclear or broken contracts, and poor communication when agreements end.

Overall, the Lake Natron Model illustrates the potential of community-led tourism and land governance to support local employment, community services, conservation and pastoral livelihoods. Realising the full potential depends on fairer and more transparent arrangements with tourism companies, stronger local skills and participation, reliable contractual and revenue-sharing mechanisms, and effective protection of community land rights and access to grazing areas. With these safeguards, tourism income can ensure the long-term sustainability of Maasai pastoralism and cultural heritage.



Africa Safari landscape. Source: Magnific.com

8

THE TOURISM INDUSTRY SHOULD BE TRANSPARENT, ACCOUNTABLE AND FAIR

Revenues generated on our lands must be managed in transparent ways to foster accountability. Transparency requires the disclosure and provision to the public of timely accurate information. Accountability is key to enable us to monitor, manage and control activities that are happening on our lands. Without transparency and accountability, there can be no FPIC and no real benefit-sharing.

We want the possibility to freely enter fair contracts. This requires:

- Contracts, investments and revenue streams must be transparent. Contracts should be clear and written and available in Maa and Swahili languages. Before signature, a full FPIC process must be completed on the draft contract. Villages must receive copies and have time for questions and room for negotiation. Full disclosure of all payment flows (fees, bed concessions, shanga or beadwork sales) must take place in village assemblies. Contracts must contain clear commitments related to employment, CSR projects, payment, land use and general management plan. Contracts must be regularly subjected to review. Clear and solid compensation and remediation mechanisms should be in place if contracts are not respected including payments.
- We call for setting up an independent community mechanism to ensure benefits reach the many, and to mediate conflicts linked to tourism (e.g. NPC or CBO). Existing traditional mechanisms for redistribution of revenues within the community can be useful in that regard following the principle of Maasai dignity (Imbarakinot orkwaak).
- Fair and clear dispute resolution mechanisms should be in place. The community should have access to independent lawyers. Multi-tier grievance pathways should be available and accessible to allow complaints to be raised from the village level to independent ombuds function and national human rights institutions.

- Tourism businesses must be mindful they operate on Indigenous land and as a result, their activities carry specific human rights responsibilities. They should develop Indigenous Peoples policies. Such policies should be made available and their implementation regularly monitored.
- Tourism businesses must be mindful of how their activities contribute to the climate crisis including through international and local flights. We reject the offsetting of carbon emissions through soil carbon credits on our territories.
- Independent and regular monitoring mechanisms of company policies and commitments when it comes to human rights and climate should be in place to ensure accountability and access to remedies. Independent, accessible and culturally appropriate monitoring, feedback, grievance, appeal and redress mechanisms should be mutually agreed by the community including through its village assemblies and should operate independently of political actors.
- We encourage tourists to travel consciously. They must be aware of the land and human rights challenges that our communities are facing. We advocate for mandatory guest briefings before travel, on issues such as land conflicts, FPIC, human rights and culturally appropriate behaviour such as dress and consent for photos.



Africa Safari landscape. Source: Magnific.com

BOX: TOURISM IN OLOLOSOKWAN VILLAGE: A SUCCESS STORY OF MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, FAIR BENEFIT-SHARING, AND TANGIBLE BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

In 1999, Ololosokwan village entered into a 15-year tourism investment agreement with &Beyond/Conscorp Tanzania Limited, covering approximately 25,000 acres of village land. Negotiated through the Village Council and approved by the General Village Assembly, the agreement allowed livestock grazing during the dry season, enabling tourism and pastoralism to coexist. The village also benefited from independent legal advice, contract reviews every three years and a joint committee to oversee implementation and accountability.

The initial contractual period ran from 1999 to 2014, after which the partnership was renewed for a further 15-year period, from 2015 to 2030. However, in June 2022, it ceased to operate following the designation of the area as Pololeti GR. This development highlights the vulnerability of community benefit-sharing arrangements when land-use designations change.

During the partnership, approximately 75% of the investor's employees were recruited locally, creating jobs and income opportunities. Seasonal tented-camp operators, including Nomad Tanzania and Asilia Africa, also operated under community-oriented arrangements, with each camping area limited to ten acres.

Tourism revenues contributed significantly to local development. The village supported school fees for more than 1,000 students in need, contributed to the construction of a healthcare centre, assisted vulnerable patients with medical costs and financed other community projects. Additionally, 20 community patrol personnel were employed to monitor the area, linking local employment with conservation and natural-resource management.

Ololosokwan's experience offers important lessons for Tanzania's community-based tourism sector. It demonstrates that tourism can generate shared benefits when communities have meaningful decision-making power, fair contractual arrangements, continued access to traditional livelihoods and transparent mechanisms for managing revenue. Crucially, this tourism arrangement did not require the community to abandon its pastoral way of life. The land remained available for livestock grazing during the dry season, demonstrating that wildlife-based tourism and pastoral livelihoods could coexist through deliberate planning and mutual respect. Rather than viewing local land use as an obstacle to investment, the agreement recognised it as an essential part of the village economy and identity. However, the termination of the renewed agreement also underscores the need for legal certainty and safeguards for community interests when conservation or hunting policies change.

Africa Safari landscape. Source: Magnific.com

9

NO EXPLOITATION IN CULTURAL BOMAS

Cultural bomas can provide economic opportunities and access to a good life, through networking, a safe shelter, community friendships and a sense of belonging.

We hope to see reforms to how cultural bomas operate:

- Cultural bomas should be owned collectively by the community, not by individuals or outside investors. The boma governance system should be transparent, with clear rules and oversight. The leaders of the boma must be accountable to the wider community and should not capture benefits for themselves. Decisions about the boma (management, rules, income use, prices) should be made through consultation and dialogue and agreed by all.
- Cultural bomas were initially designed to support women in need. If women are not in the driving seat, there is a risk that this objective is sacrificed for other goals. The management of cultural bomas should be reformed to be women-led, while the role and representation of Morans, who also reside and perform in cultural bomas, should also be included.
- The cultural boma must reflect real Maasai culture (dress, rituals, daily life), not a staged or distorted version. This includes enabling tourists to meet "modern" Maasai wearing watches, carrying smartphones, being educated and speaking English. The cultural boma can be a good place to inform tourists about the real challenges facing Maasai in terms of land alienation, discrimination, and access to education.
- The cultural boma should be like any other Maasai boma; it is a place where livestock is to be found. This can be an opportunity for tourists to engage in pastoralist related activities. Tourism should foster true interactions and experiences not extractivism and voyeurism.
- Benefits (income, opportunities) should be fairly shared among community members, avoiding exploitation and class divisions. The cultural boma must provide access to a stable livelihood and shelter, including employment and income from jewellery sales. Additional benefits offered to residents could include scholarships; healthcare support; food access; development (water, nursery).
- The cultural boma should create jobs, especially for unemployed youth and women. Opportunities in cultural boma should be open to all community members and not restricted to a small group. In addition, a transparent and effective rotational system can ensure that roles and opportunities are accessible to a diversity of community members. Cultural bomas should strengthen community unity rather than divide people.
- There should be transparent, agreed upon entrance fees for visitors, so communities are not underpaid or exploited. Competition between bomas should be addressed to ensure fair prices are respected.
- Community control over the boma should be maintained because it helps safeguard village land from external grabbing and inappropriate uses. This is because communal management comes with a collective obligation to respect and protect the land.

10

THE ROLES OF WOMEN AND YOUTH

Our culture recognises different groups in the community and allocates different roles and responsibilities to each. Women are an important group in the Maasai community. They play essential roles in the use of forest resources, sacred sites, prayers, rivers, and other water sources. We are encouraged to see a number of women taking up leadership positions, speaking up in community meetings and participating in decision making. We value women's substantial contributions to the economic and social wellbeing of the family and community. Women are at the forefront of our community land struggle. Women have their own ways of organising their own meetings.

According to Maasai custom, Morans are responsible for the protection of water sources, pasture lands, and territorial security. They are also in charge of looking for adequate pasture. They are therefore at the forefront of community efforts to protect their lands. If Morans are usually referred to as youth, they do not follow the internationally accepted definition of youth defined for example in the African Youth Charter as people under 35 years old. Morans follow the age-set system and once retired, Morans will join the Elders group.

To ensure women and youth have equal opportunities and are not marginalised in tourism activities and tourism-related decisions:

- Women's right to water points, salt licks, medicinal herbs, construction materials and firewood should be actively protected and respected.
- Women's associations should be fostered to help women control and self-manage their businesses.
- Skills training and development (including foreign languages) should be provided to women, including once employed. There should be minimum quotas for Maasai women in management, guide, driver and ranger positions, not only entry-level roles.
- There should be explicit protection against gender-based exploitation, with community monitoring and sanctions against perpetrators.
- Gender parity and effective participation of women and youth in the village council and all relevant decision-making bodies should be fostered as a key component of the FPIC process.
- Gender-based violence and harassment which undermines women's participation needs to stop.
- Platforms where women can speak up, share challenges and develop self-confidence should be developed.

BOX: A PROMISING INITIATIVE: NARAMATISHO WOMEN'S CENTRE

The Naramatisho Women's Centre was established in 2025 following a decision by several women's groups to join forces and strengthen their collective capacities. Located near Makuyuni in Northern Tanzania, along the road to Ngorongoro and Serengeti NPs, the Centre was founded to create a space where Maasai women can develop sustainable livelihoods, strengthen their skills and preserve their cultural heritage. Its establishment reflects the women's ambition to shape tourism and development according to their own priorities and on their own terms. The name "Naramatisho" in Maa describes a strong and resilient woman who protects, provides for and uplifts her community. This understanding is reflected in the Centre's guiding values, which include women's leadership, community ownership, cultural pride, dignity, learning, environmental stewardship and economic independence.

The Centre occupies a 25-acre site comprising six traditional Maasai-style guest houses, a campsite, a restaurant and training centre and a Shanga House for selling handmade beadwork and souvenirs. The site also includes an expanding organic garden where vegetables and herbs are cultivated for use in the restaurant. More than 180 women contribute to the Centre's activities on a rotating basis, with approximately ten women working on site each week. Their responsibilities include welcoming guests, preparing meals, leading cultural activities, maintaining the gardens, and producing and selling handmade beadwork. Through these activities, the women gain practical experience in hospitality and tourism while developing opportunities for employment, leadership and greater economic independence. The women are not merely beneficiaries of the initiative; they actively contribute to the Centre's development.

Visitors can stay in Maasai-inspired guest houses, eat meals prepared on site, purchase locally produced beadwork and participate in cultural activities led by Maasai women. All income generated through visitor activities contributes to employment opportunities, training programmes, the maintenance and development of the gardens, and the Centre's day-to-day operations. In this way, tourism revenues support both the Centre's economic activities and its wider community-oriented objectives. Beyond tourism, the Naramatisho Women's Centre serves as a gathering place for the wider community. Its facilities host meetings of traditional leaders, women's groups, youth programmes and community training activities. The Centre therefore combines economic activities with opportunities for knowledge exchange, collective organisation and community development.

Africa Safari landscape. Source: Magnific.com

Maasai International Solidarity Alliance

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