The Inextricable Link: Protected, thriving wildlife resources and improved community livelihoods

Good morning ladies and gentleman. On behalf of Mr Brian Harris and Grumeti Fund, I would like to take this chance to thank the organizers of this conference for their vision, and the opportunity for us all to present and learn from others on this relatively new and powerful tool of tourism philanthropy. There is indeed much to learn. Thank you

1. Title

Today we present to you what we believe is the inextricable link: A thriving wildlife resource intertwined with peoples livelihoods

2. The product (photo of leopard)

Anyone in marketing will tell you if you want to sell something you need a good product and when people come on safari in Africa this is the sort of thing they want to see.

3. Map

On the north western boundary of the famous Serengeti National Park lie two protected areas, Ikorongo and Grumeti Game Reserves, that are an integral part of the Serengeti ecosystem. It is here where our story takes place. These areas are hunting blocks, which are leased to the concession holder for a period of five years and controlled hunting is allowed according to a quota system. On the boundary of these game reserves is a very rural community that is largely cut off from the rest of Tanzania, with Kenya to the north and Lake Victoria to the south, buffered in by the Serengeti National Park

4. Vacant plains

Until 2002 this area was subject to extreme hunting pressure as well as uncontrolled levels of poaching. The net result of which was a landscape largely desolate of any resident game, and the small numbers of game that were in the area were so skittish that their flight distances were well over 500m.

5. Poaching (2 slides)

Apologies for the harshness of this slide, but this is the reality of what happens to wildlife when there is no control. People rely on the illegal bush meat trade for food and income, and this was the challenge that faced the Grumeti Fund when we first arrived in IGGR in 2002.

6. Plentiful game

The situation is somewhat different now, with plentiful resident game. Examples being buffalo where the number has increased from 605 in 2002 to 3124 in 2007 - and the same trends in other species such as topi, hartebeest and giraffe.

7. Scouts

The latter is a function of an enhanced level of security which was enabled through a well implemented law enforcement program and a dedicated scout force, most of whom are ex poachers. Through their dedicated work, the product for high end low impact tourism was secured: thriving wildlife resource

8. Peoples livelihoods

This however meant taking away a source of food and income from local communities, and therein lies the challenge.

9. The GF vision

The vision of our benefactor is simple yet powerful…. if we can secure the wildlife resource and promote tourism, we can use this demand and income to facilitate sustainable, environmentally friendly businesses to support the tourism market, thereby providing long term livelihood solutions for communities: hence the inextricable link. This is enabled through facilitating projects, markets and at the same time creating awareness and educating people regarding the benefits of a live and burgeoning wildlife resource.

10. Community projects

Industries such as bee keeping, vegetable growing and sunflower oil production, all products used by lodges, have been set up and markets have been facilitated to secure sustainable income for these community members, thus providing an alternative source of income for people. Critical to the program is generating the understanding that peoples livelihoods are positively influenced and are a direct function of a live wildlife resource and that this provides a more sustainable, long term opportunity for income generation than poaching, which is not sustainable.

11. The model

The structure of the model used therefore is to have a high end tourism based business, currently run by Singita International. Income generated goes straight into Grumeti Fund, which is the conservation management and community development arm of the operation. Tourists thus indirectly support the program simply by visiting our lodges. In addition to this, we are setting up a projects pavilion where conservation and community development programs are described and funding needs outlined. Tourists visiting the lodge can peruse through these and if they find a project that is of interest they are free to make a contribution. What is critical here is facilitating the good intention of the philanthropic tourist. To make a success of any development project is challenging and requires strong relations, experience and a good dose of pragmatism. Grumeti Fund offers the opportunity as a facilitator to those who want to make a valid contribution to both conservation and community development.

12. Lessons learnt

Community development programs present a complex set of challenges, from ethical to logistical issues. We have learnt many lessons along the way but three stand out as being most important:

Identification of what is needed in terms of development must come from communities

The solution to addressing these needs must also come from communities

Using this approach empowers communities and instills a sense of ownership of the projects. This is critical for the long term sustainability and success of development programs

13. Summary (picture of animals and kids)

IN summary then, for tourism to work you need to secure the product

Securing the wildlife resources successfully depends on securing alternative livelihoods for people where they can see the direct link between a live wildlife resources and improved livelihoods for themselves. The Philanthropic tourist is a pivotal link to the success of this.

The message we hear from the communities is that for development programs in Africa to work and be sustainable, the people of Africa most stop taking ownership of problems and expecting hand outs and rather empower themselves to take ownership of the solutions!

Thank you