

# Developing Responsible Safari Guiding in Kenya

## Final Report (Phase 1) – October 2008

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### 1. Project Objective(s):

**Overall Aim:** To reduce the negative impacts on habitat, wildlife and local communities due to the 'irresponsible' practices of some driver guides, by improving overall guiding standards in Kenya.

**Objective 1 The Development of Tools** – To develop, and secure buy-in from partners and key stakeholders to use, best practice safari guiding checklists for responsible wildlife viewing, in order to set industry standards and enable suppliers of wildlife product to assess the performance of their guides in this area. The Best Practice Guidelines for Responsible Wildlife Viewing and associated Supplier Checklists developed by TVC previously for the Travel Foundation and the FTO to be built upon to deliver this phase of the project.

**Objective 2 The Development and Piloting of a Responsible Guiding Training Module** – To develop and pilot the delivery of a Responsible Guiding training module for safari guides in the Mara Conservancy and Tsavo East National Park, in the areas of responsible wildlife viewing (minimising environmental impacts and wildlife disturbance), responsible guiding etiquette, responsibility to local communities living in wildlife areas and client expectation management for more responsible safaris.

**Objective 3 Adoption of Responsible Guiding Training Module** - To motivate the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), the Kenya Association of Tour Operators (KATO) and the Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association (KPSGA) to adopt the training module developed in current guide training/ examination schemes.

**Objective 4 Moving the National Guiding Agenda Forward** - To work with partner organisations and key stakeholders to move the growing responsible guiding agenda forward in Kenya, by calling for a mandatory professional safari guiding qualification scheme in the country. Work alongside, and motivate, KWS, KATO, KPSGA & the Mara Conservancy to make recommendations to the Government (Ministry of Tourism & Wildlife) to make such a scheme compulsory.

## 2. Activities:

Project activities from August 2007 – Sept 2008:

- Face to face meetings with key stakeholders including KATO, KPSGA, KWS, Mara Conservancy, Abercrombie and Kent (Kenya), Pollmans Tours and Safaris and managers and naturalists/senior guides (those who train the resident guides) in 9 safari lodges operating in the Mara Triangle and 5 safari lodges in Tsavo East.
- Developed and solicited feedback from key stakeholders on the 'Responsible Safari Guiding Checklist' for Kenya to assess performance of guides. Finalised and circulated Checklist to key stakeholders for adoption.
- Conducted 12 game drives in Tsavo East and the Mara Conservancy to assess performance of guides at the start of the initiative using the Responsible Safari Guiding Checklist, sitting in drives unbeknown to the guides as a 'Mystery Visitor'.
- Developed and piloted a Responsible Guiding Training Module with 93 driver guides/ safari guides in 3 one day workshops - 1 in Nairobi in collaboration with KATO and KWS, 2 in the Mara Triangle in collaboration with the Mara Conservancy. All training materials subsequently circulated to participants and key stakeholders.
- Evaluated success of workshops through a participant evaluation form. Circulated feedback and recommendations from driver guides on how to improve guiding standards in Kenya to key stakeholders
- Worked with the Mara Conservancy to revise park rules and regulations and disciplinary code (fines and penalties for breaking park rules), in order to remove any 'grey' areas and cover all key responsible guiding issues.
- Worked with Olonana Camp to develop a 'Responsible Guiding Pledge' for the lodge to place in their safari vehicles for visitors to read – covering all aspects of being a responsible safari customer.
- Developed, launched and secured sponsorship for the first Responsible Guiding Award scheme in Kenya in conjunction with the Mara Conservancy.
- Acted as KATO's technical advisor in moving the Responsible Guiding agenda forward in Kenya.
- Served as Committee Member on KATO's newly formed Education and Training Committee, whose initial mandate is to come up with an enforceable national professional guiding programme for Kenya.
- Conducted 10 game drives in the Mara Conservancy to assess performance of guides at the end of the first year of the initiative using the Responsible Safari Guiding Checklist, sitting in on drives unbeknown to the guides as a

'Mystery Visitor'. Serves as benchmark to measure the success of the training delivered and other measures implemented to improve guiding standards.

### 3. Outputs:

- a) **Responsible Safari Guiding Checklist** developed with input from key stakeholders in Kenya. Checklist piloted, adapted, and finalised (Appendix 1). The Checklist sets industry best standards in responsible wildlife guiding and enables safari guides and their trainers/ managers to assess their own performance in this area. Highlights a guide's strengths and weaknesses, areas where further training is needed, helps them sets realistic timescales for improving their performance, and importantly gives them a score so they can benchmark and track their performance over time.
- b) **Checklist Circulated** to 93 guides, all lodges in the Mara Conservancy, KWS, the Mara Conservancy, KPSGA, KATO and CTDLT (government training accreditation body). Many already using the checklist to assess, and improve, guide performance.
- c) **Responsible Guiding Training Module** developed and piloted with driver guides/ resident safari guides in Kenya. Content of the module includes:
  - A Changing Marketplace - UK Tour Operators & the Responsible Tourism Agenda
  - Negative Impacts of Irresponsible Wildlife Viewing in Kenya – The Issues
  - Bringing the Small Things in the Bush to Life
  - Guiding Ethics, Professional Conduct & Responsible Client Briefings
  - The Psychology of Tipping
  - Best Practice Guidelines & Checklists for Responsible Wildlife Viewing
  - Park Rules & Regulations



Training delivered to guides in 3 one day training workshops – 1 in Nairobi run in conjunction with KATO and KWS, and 2 in the Mara Triangle run in conjunction with the Mara Conservancy. 93 guides trained in total to date from a range of tour operating companies and lodges in Kenya, both large and small. Training module received rave reviews from participants, achieving an

average score of 4.8 out of a maximum of 5 for how the guides rated the workshop in the feedback evaluation forms. Importantly 98% of participants reported that the workshops would change the way they conducted their game drives so that they were more responsible (for evaluation form feedback see Appendix 2). KATO and KWS have requested that the TF run additional workshops in Nairobi and Mombasa, and lodges in the Mara Conservancy, so that more guides can benefit from this valued training.



**d) Adoption of Responsible Guiding Training Module.** Training materials produced have been circulated to key stakeholders. Currently adopted in-house guide training programmes by lodges in the Mara Triangle, available to all driver guides via KPSGA's resource library, available to all KATO members via KATO, and importantly the training module has been put forward for inclusion in the harmonised national safari guide training programme currently being developed in Kenya by government.

**e) Revision of Park Rules & Regulations** in the Mara Conservancy so in line with best practice guidelines in Responsible Wildlife Viewing (Appendix 3). All driver guides now issued with a park rules leaflet when entering park, along with posters produced aimed at visitors that have been displayed in lodges and at the park entry gates.

**f) Stricter Enforcement of Rules and Regulations** in the Mara Conservancy versus the new park rules with fines and penalties clearly communicated. If park rules are broken Park Rangers now have the legal right to:

- Impose an on-the-spot fine of Ksh 10,000
- Have a vehicle and/or people removed from the park immediately
- Have a vehicle and/or people banned from the park



**g) Responsible Guiding Pledge** produced with Olonana Camp (Abercrombie and Kent) for the lodge to place in their safari vehicles for visitors to read –

covering all aspects of being a responsible safari customer (Appendix 4). Distributed to KATO, other lodges in the Mara Triangle, along with Travel Foundation Forum members for adoption.

- h) Development and Launch of the Travel Foundation / Mara Conservancy ‘Most Responsible Guide in 2008’ Award**, the first responsible guiding award in Kenya. All lodges operating in the Mara Triangle were invited to nominate their most responsible guide for the award, using the new Responsible Safari Guiding Checklist to assess them. A shortlist of 6 guides has been nominated and these will be judged during 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr 2008 (via Mystery Drives using the Checklist and feedback from Mara Conservancy staff in the field). Winner to be announced in the New Year and to receive a 2-week all expenses trip to internationally renowned safari destination, South Luangwa National Park in Zambia, to shadow some of Africa’s most responsible safari guides there. The guides themselves requested ‘training’ as the prize for this award. Sponsorship of the prize secured from Born Free Foundation, Kenya Airways and Luangwa-based safari operators Norman Carr Safaris, Robin Pope Safaris and Remote Africa Safaris.
- i) Benchmarking of Guides Performance.** 12 game drives (as Mystery Visitors) were conducted in Tsavo East and the Mara Conservancy at the start of the initiative to benchmark guides’ performance against the Responsible Safari Guiding Checklist. Average score was 56 (best score 16 and worse score 76).
- j) Improvement in Guides Performance.** 10 game drives (as Mystery Visitors) were conducted in the Mara Conservancy at the end of the first year of the initiative to determine whether the guides’ performance had improved versus the Responsible Safari Guiding Checklist. Average score was 28, a 50% improvement in responsible wildlife viewing etiquette since project inception.
- k) KATO’S Technical Advisor.** TVC acting as KATO’s advisor in moving the Responsible Guiding agenda forward in Kenya.
- l) Compulsory Safari Guiding Qualification.** Invited to be a Committee Member of KATO’s Education and Training Committee, whose initial mandate is to come up with an enforceable national professional guiding programme for Kenya. Working currently with other committee members (KATO, KWS, KPSGA, CTDLT and Utali College, Kenya’s tourism training institution run by the Ministry of Tourism) to develop a qualification specification, conduct a technical needs assessment for a harmonized syllabus for professional safari guide training to be used by all training institutions in Kenya, devise a grading system for guides, and importantly work on the legal framework to make this qualification compulsory in Kenya.
- m) Kenyan government (KWS) agreed to enforce Tour Guide Licensing scheme in Kenya.** KWS agreed to set a date to begin checking that all driver guides bringing paying clients into protected areas in Kenya have a tour guide’s license to prove they are operating to legal standards (including the holding of an appropriate guiding qualification).

- n) **Minimum Wages for Driver Guides Minimum Daily Contracting Fee for Sub-Contracted Guides.** Moving the agenda forward via KATO's Education and Training Committee to set minimum wage guidelines for driver guides in Kenya, along with a minimum daily contracting rate for sub-contracted guides used during peak times.

#### **4. Impacts:**

The project has achieved all of its objectives and more. Key impacts include:

- 50% improvement in guides' responsible wildlife viewing etiquette in the Mara Conservancy over the life of this one-year initiative.
- Park rules and regulations set and being enforced in the Mara Conservancy that reflect industry best practice in responsible wildlife viewing.
- A compulsory safari guiding qualification scheme firmly on the national agenda in Kenya and real progress being made by government, training institutions and industry partners towards this being achieved.
- Minimum wage guidelines for driver guides uplifted onto the national agenda.
- KWS agreement to enforce tour guides licensing scheme.

#### **5. Challenges:**

- The key challenge will be how to phase in the new compulsory safari guiding scheme without causing a 'gap' in guide services provision in Kenya. Needs to take into account the existing qualifications held by many guides and facilitate the transfer of these over to the new scheme. A phased approach over time will be necessary.
- To work up the 'mechanics' of the new scheme i.e. which training institutions to be accredited to deliver the training programme and how to independently, externally examine participants.
- How to build in a practical field element to the training.
- To keep the momentum up on the bigger agenda (minimum wages / compulsory guiding qualification) if the Travel Foundation team were not there to push it.
- Bringing non-KATO members on board as a widely fragmented industry in Kenya.

#### **6. Broader implications:**

The broader implication of this initiative is clear to see from the great strides taken already towards achieving the long-term goal of this project – a compulsory safari guiding qualification in Kenya. This addresses a really high profile issue in the country. If carried forwards towards a successful conclusion, this new qualification

will cement lasting change in Kenya's tourism industry, much of which is based on travel to fragile areas to view wildlife. Kenya would most certainly increase its competitiveness in the safari industry market globally by such an enhancement in the performance of its guides, and importantly the very resource upon which tourism in Kenya depends, its wildlife and protected areas, will be safeguarded into the future; a sustainable future.

#### **7. Long term sustainability:**

The long term sustainability of this initiative is assured due to the big issues now being cemented in national government and industry agendas. KATO's Education and Training Committee is also now in place to drive the agenda forward.

#### **8. Replication potential:**

This initiative has huge replication potential in other safari destinations worldwide. The Responsible safari guiding checklists and training module could be rolled out to other safari destination in Africa and Asia, as could the new park rules and regulations reflecting industry best practice in responsible wildlife viewing and the safari guiding training qualification currently being developed.

#### **Acknowledgements:**

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TVC would also like to thank KWS and the Mara Conservancy for their collaboration in piloting the training module, and to CC Africa (Kichwa Tembo) and Olonana Camp (Abercrombie and Kent) for hosting the training workshops in the Mara Triangle.

Thanks are also due to Somak in Nairobi for all the logistical and travel support they have given to the project team during the implementation of this initiative. Their assistance is very much appreciated. Thanks also to Pollmans Tours and Safaris for volunteering their time to visit Tsavo East with TVC to move the initiative forward.

Thanks to the Born Free Foundation and Kenya Airways for sponsoring the Responsible Guiding Award, and to George the project's driver from Born Free for his very cheerful company during long journeys in the bush.

Finally, very special thanks are extended to Fred Kaigua, Chief Executive of KATO (Kenya Association of Tour Operators) and Brian Heath (CEO, Mara Conservancy) for all their invaluable help, advice and collaboration in delivering this initiative to date. We couldn't have achieved what we have to date without their wisdom to address the issues at hand and their passion for tourism development and conservation in Kenya.

**Supporting materials:**

**Appendix 1** – Responsible Safari Guiding Checklist

**Appendix 2** – Guide Workshop Evaluation Feedback

**Appendix 3** – Revised Park Rules & Regulations in the Mara Conservancy

**Appendix 4** – Olonana Camp, Responsible Guiding Pledge

**Appendix 1 – Responsible Safari Guiding Checklist**

See separate file attachment.

## Appendix 2 – Guide Workshop Evaluation Feedback

### Workshop Evaluation Form - Feedback from the Guides

93 guides attended the UK Travel Foundation's 'Responsible Guiding' Workshops in Nairobi (at KWS HQ) and the Mara Conservancy (at Olonana Camp and Kichwa Tembo) in June 2008. 82 handed in completed feedback evaluation forms.

- Using a scale of 1 - 5, where 1 indicated 'Not useful at all' and 5 'Very useful', workshop participants were asked to rate the individual workshop sessions.

The feedback from the guides shows that the Responsible Guiding Workshop was very well received with an overall rating of 4.9 out of a possible 5. The individual sessions within the workshop also scored highly, with average ratings for all well in excess of 4.

Individual Workshop Sessions	Average Rating
A Changing Marketplace	4.6
The Negative Impacts of Irresponsible Wildlife Viewing	4.5
Bringing the Small Things in the Bush to Life	4.8
Guiding Ethics, Professional Conduct & Responsible Client Briefings	4.9
The Psychology of Tipping	4.2
Best Practice Guidelines & Checklists for Responsible Wildlife Viewing	4.8
Park Rules & Regulations	4.7*
<b>The workshop overall</b>	<b>4.9</b>

\* N.B. This session was run in the Mara Conservancy workshops, not in Nairobi.

- The participants were asked which of the following potential interventions / actions would improve overall guiding standards in Kenya.

The feedback has been listed in priority order, although the majority of guides agreed upon all interventions. It is hence recommended that this feedback be fed into private sector/government 'think tanks' looking at the way forward to improve guiding standards in Kenya.

Potential Interventions / Actions to Improve Guiding Standards in Kenya	% Agree
Improved client briefings by guides to manage their expectations	93%
Industry awards & rewards for 'Most Responsible' Guides	91%
More short 'refresher' courses available to guides	90%
A minimum compulsory guiding qualification that guides should obtain to lead safaris in Kenya	87%
Improved pay and working conditions for guides	87%
More 'responsible' marketing of safaris by tour operators – not to overly focus on the 'Big 5'	87%

in their brochures / promotional literature	
Exchange programme with guides in other safari destinations	84%
Improved career progression & promotional opportunities for guides	83%
Stricter enforcement of Park Rules	82%
More realistic safari itineraries to be sold by tour operators to allow guides the time to deliver quality safaris	79%
Code of Conduct for Responsible Guiding	77%
More training institutes in Kenya to be accredited to run safari guiding courses	76%
A safari guiding manual for Kenya	66%
Trainee guides to shadow experienced guides for a set period	61%
More driving loops / roads in parks	51%
Other	15%

Of the participants who volunteered potential interventions themselves ('other' category above – 15% of sample), their input read:

- Membership to a safari guides body that sets standards
- Being presentable and following a strict code of conduct
- Not putting more loops in the parks as they cause further degradation
- Government legislation on guiding standards and tour operator goodwill in looking after staff
- Disciplinary action team to be constituted and guides encouraged to 'self police'
- Adopt regular guides training programmes and workshops
- Ban KPSGA as they are only money minded
- More consultation/discussion with guides – give them a voice in the industry

3. The participants were asked if the workshop had encouraged them to conduct their game drives in a more responsible manner. An overwhelming **98%** reported that it had. This is an important statistic as it indicates potential for 'changed behaviour' as a result of sensitisation to the issues through training.

3a. The 98% of participants who stated that they would conduct their game drives in a more responsible manner in future, reported the following ways in which they would change their behaviour.

<b>Behaviour Changes</b>	<b>% Reporting</b>
Change and improve client briefing in order to manage client expectations whilst on safari	34.3%
Take more responsibility for and complete command of the safari	26.9%
Not to concentrate on the Big 5 but to develop more knowledge on other wildlife species so can bring the smaller things in the bush to life	14.9%
To strictly follow the Park Rules	7.5%
Clearly explain to clients why speeding and off-road driving is not allowed in the park	7.5%
Not driving too close to wildlife sightings and avoid crowding animals	6.0%
To lead by good example and also discourage fellow guides from breaking the Park Rules	2.9%

# **Appendix 3 – Revised Park Rules & Regulations in the Mara Conservancy**

## **Mara Triangle Park Rules**

### **1. No off-roading in the river zone.**

From Mara Bridge to Oloololo Gate is a graded road that runs closely to the river. Under no circumstance must you off-road between this road and the river.

### **2. Keep to graded roads and cut tracks.**

Outside of the River Zone you are not allowed to off-road in the Mara Triangle unless you have a confirmed sighting of one of the Big Five. Only in this instance can you leave the road or track at the nearest point to the sighting, and then approach no more than 25 metres (five vehicle lengths) to the animals. Always return to the track by the way that you came.

### **3. Stay more than 25 metres away from the animals.**

### **4. No shouting, clapping or cheering near any of the animals.**

### **5. No more than 5 vehicles around lions, rhinos, leopards or cheetah.**

When there are more than five vehicles want to see an animal, viewing time is restricted to 10 minutes. Vehicles waiting to see the sighting must wait at a distance of 100 metres.

### **6. Respect wildebeest crossing points**

During the migration visitors are not allowed out of their vehicle or to stand on vehicles at crossing points. Never block a crossing by parking too close, nor drive through the animal herds.

No more than 20 vehicles are allowed at the crossing point towards Mara Bridge, and no more than 10 vehicles at the crossing point near Serena Hotel.

### **7. Do not cross the Tanzanian border.**

There is a track that runs along the border with white markers at each kilometre.

**8. Animals are not to be chased, followed too closely or *harassed* .**

Harassment includes forcing animals into movement or approaching the animal at closer than 25 metres.

**9. No littering**

**10. Leave the park by 6:30 pm.**

If you are staying in the park you must be back to your lodge or campsite by 7:00pm.

## Appendix 4 – Olonana Camp, Responsible Guiding Pledge

Jambo, and welcome to the Masai Mara! In line with its conservation efforts, Olonana has pledged to run its game drives according to Responsible Tourism guidelines. So, for your safety and comfort, please find below some of the “dos and don’ts” of game drive etiquette that will help us in the fight to preserve the fragile and endangered ecosystem of the Mara:

- Protecting the Mara Ecosystem – Safari Vehicle Etiquette  
Please remember that wildlife is extremely vulnerable to noise and harassment. We respectfully request that, when viewing game, noise in the vehicle is kept to an absolute minimum to allow animals to continue with their normal hunting, feeding and nursing activities. **Please do not hang out of vehicles, call to the animals, bang on the sides of the vehicles or slam doors.** You will see that our vehicles are equipped with two-way radios. Once inside the Park, the radios are switched off in order to provide you with a disruption-free safari experience and also to protect the animals from “over-crowding” through excessive vehicle numbers. Radios will only be used in case of an emergency. In accordance with responsible guiding procedures, our Guides will approach animals only to a minimum distance of **25 metres**. If you would like to take a closer look, your Guide will be happy to provide binoculars for this purpose. No more than five vehicles at a time are permitted to approach animals, therefore your patience in awaiting your turn and viewing for no longer than 15 minutes (when other vehicles are waiting) is very much appreciated. Our Guides will not actively pursue or intercept **any** animal engaged in hunting activities or displaying behaviour that indicates avoidance, since doing so disrupts their daily survival patterns.
- Alighting From The Vehicle  
For your safety on a game drive, under no circumstances should you alight from the vehicle *at any time* without the express permission of your Guide. If you need a “bathroom break”, please let him know and he will accommodate you at the earliest safe opportunity.
- Smoking and Litter Disposal  
Please note that there is no smoking inside the vehicle. Your Guide will be happy to stop, when safe, for you to take a cigarette break. Cigarettes are sadly not biodegradable and pose not only a health hazard to wildlife but also a fire risk to the savannah if not extinguished properly. We would therefore kindly ask you to deposit extinguished cigarettes in the receptacle provided inside your safari vehicle. Wildlife is particularly susceptible to the dangers posed by discarded litter: animals often pick up litter thinking it is food, ingest it and subsequently die a prolonged and painful death by choking. Please ensure that any litter is kept inside the vehicle, in the container/s provided.
- Feeding the Animals  
Please do not, under any circumstances, feed the animals. Wild animals become habituated if fed and this causes them to abandon their normal hunting and feeding behaviours. They can then become extremely aggressive and threatening towards humans, which may lead to them ultimately having to be destroyed.

- Off-Road Driving  
It is illegal to drive off-road in the Mara except to see a confirmed sighting. Your Guide will be happy to take you to any confirmed sightings but please understand that he is not permitted to deviate from the site and must return to the road by the same route afterwards.
- “Guaranteed” Sightings  
As we are sure you will understand, the Masai Mara is not a zoo or a wildlife park and we therefore cannot guarantee what game you will see on any given day: we are all at the mercy of Mother Nature! However, your Guide will use all his expertise and experience to try and locate any animals you have expressed a particular desire to see.
- Photo Opportunities and Guides’ Knowledge Base  
Our Guides are extremely knowledgeable and experienced and will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any time during the drive, so please don’t be shy in asking. Additionally, please let them know if you spot any photo opportunities for which you would like them to stop.

***Safari njema, and thank you for your kind co-operation!***

**<Insert Guide Name>  
Guide, <Insert Camp/Lodge  
Name>**



**The Olonana Management Team  
The Mara Conservancy**