

Project Title: Developing a Community Based Ecotourism Model at Lake Natron, Tanzania

Region(s) and Country (ies): Africa Region, United Republic of Tanzania

Donor(s): Darwin Initiative

Focal Area: Ecotourism, bird conservation

Duration: 3 years

Amount of Financing: £311,351

Collaborators: Arusha Regional Office, Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA), Ngorongoro District Council, Longido District Council, Monduli District Council, Tanzania Tourism Board (TTB), Pinyinyi Donyo Sambu Water Users Association, Engaresero Eramatare Community Development Initiative (EECDI), Tanzania Association of Tour Operator (TATO), Honeyguide Foundation, Pinyinyi Village Council, Magadini village council, Engaraseo village council, Engaruka Juu village and Oldonyo Lengai village council

Project Description:

Lake Natron is a mineral-rich soda lake in northern Tanzania, at the border with Kenya. It's an important breeding ground for about 2.5 Million Lesser Flamingos in East Africa. The Lake is fed by the Ewaso-Ngiro River from Kenya. The lake is within the Lake Natron Basin, a Ramsar Site wetland of international significance. BirdLife has worked at Lake Natron for 9 years supporting biodiversity conservation and alternative livelihoods, including tourism at Lake Natron and raising awareness on the impacts of mining soda ash through the 'Think Pink' campaign, which rallied support from around the world.

The ecotourism potential of Lake Natron is well known and documented. Its global place as the only breeding place for Lesser Flamingos, its unique biodiversity and local culture, have not been aggressively used as a selling point for the lake. That potential remains locked and is faced by many barriers including lack of a coherent tourism development plan and little coordination between stakeholders with regard to revenue collection. Local communities have received limited benefits from ecotourism and have limited skills to manage ecotourism business. Local communities also have few livelihoods options and hence their overdependence on the natural resources found in their areas. In addition, the key wetlands that are vital and provide fresh water for the breeding of flamingos face various challenges, including water over-use and catchment damage.

BirdLife International has been funded by the Darwin Initiative to implement and deliver the project for Developing a Community Based Ecotourism Model at Lake Natron, Tanzania. The will run from September 2017 to September 2020.

Project Goal; Develop a Community Based Ecotourism Model at Lake Natron

Project objectives;

- i) Developing a Tourism Development Plan to help coordinate ecotourism activities.
- ii) Building the capacity of the community to run ecotourism business and improve livelihoods.

- iii) Protect key wetlands vital for biodiversity especially flamingos and improve natural resource decision making.
- iv) Promote the value of Lake Natron for biodiversity and ecotourism.

Project Activities

- (i) Participatory development (drafting and validation) of Tourism Development Plan for Lake Natron Ramsar Site
- (ii) Training and set up of revolving fund for boosting local ecotourism business
- (iii) Conduct market analysis for ecotourism at Lake Natron and how it relate with that at national level.
- (iv) Training on ecotourism and business management to women groups, youths and men at Lake Natron Ramsar Site
- (v) Development of Catchment Action Plan
- (vi) Prepare land and support planting of indigenous tree
- (vii) Awareness raising through use of posters, media, advocacy booklets etc.
- (viii) Conduct land rights training to village, ward and tourism leaders at Lake Natron
- (ix) Conduct IBA Monitoring and training
- (x) Water quality monitoring
- (xi) Construction of booth (cultural boma) for use by local women
- (xii) Communicate lessons learnt and best practises to general public, NGOs, EAC and sectoral ministries at national level.

Recent Project Status:

i) Progress summary:

The project is now on the second half of year 2. Implementation is in line with the approved work plan. Endorsement and collaboration from the government of Tanzania and local communities is well established. Impacts of the supported activities are now evident. Development of the Lake Natron Tourism Development Plan (TDP) is now on the final end with all key stakeholders involved in the process. Preparation and establishment of system and guidelines for revolving fund is also in the final process. More than 5,800 indigenous trees have been planted and 95% of those are doing very well. Catchment Action Plan for Ngare Sero and Pinyinyi Rivers is developed and endorsement is underway.

ii) Lessons Learnt (optional):

Participatory engagement of key stakeholders is key for a successful project implementation.

iii) Challenges (optional):

Road infrastructures are limited.

iv) Next Steps:

Conclude activities remained for the second year by March 2019.

Last updated (date): 21st November 2018

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