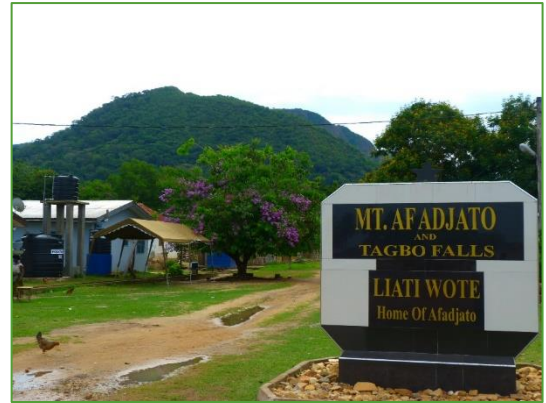


REPORT 1 - TELLING THE STORY OF THE PAST, LIATI WOTE - FEBRUARY 2017



Date: February 24, 2017

Venue: Community Market Square, Liatl Wote

PRESENT: LIATI WOTE COMMUNITY, CHIEFS AND ELDERS, STEPPING STONES FOR AFRICA (CINDY NOORDERMEER-PANOU, JONATHAN KUMA GAVI), JOLINAIKO ECO TOURS (APOLLO PANOU) AND THREE DUTCH/BELGIUM STUDENTS.

INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2017, Stepping Stones for Africa Foundation (SSFA) in collaboration with Jolinaiko Eco Tours held a meeting with the Chiefs, elders and people of the Liatl Wote community. Liatl Wote is situated at the foot of Afadjato, the highest mountain in Ghana, found in the Afadzato South District of the Volta Region.

WHO ARE STEPPING STONES FOR AFRICA AND JOLINAIKO ECO TOURS?

Stepping Stones for Africa Foundation is a Ghana-based charity organization that works in partnership with Jolinaiko Eco Tours, a Ghana-based tour operator promoting ecotourism in Ghana and surrounding countries. Together they provide stepping stones-like guidance, expertise, inspiration and funding for community-initiated eco-touristic initiatives and destinations in West Africa. Their aim is to contribute to the development of the community, make them a success for all parties involved while respecting the environment, and thereby significantly improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the community. The target communities are potential or existing ecotourism destinations.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

Cindy and Apollo through their company Jolinaiko Eco Tours have been engaged in ecotourism activities in Liatl Wote over the past twelve years. Within these years, Jolinaiko acquired a piece of land in the community and built a lodge that will soon be opened to the public. The opening of the lodge is going to be the turning point in the relationship between Jolinaiko and the community as there will be mutual benefits and risks to both parties. The purpose of the meeting therefore was to:

1. Officially introduce the organizations Stepping Stones for Africa Foundation and Jolinaiko Eco Tours and their philosophy. This also includes their strong believe in community participation. The initiatives are community-driven and communities play a major role in decision making during each phase of the project.
2. Brainstorm with the community how all the various stakeholders (Jolinaiko, the Lodge, the community) will benefit from ecotourism.
3. Ultimately draw a social map of the community for development.

SUMMARY OF THE MEETING

OPENING

Jonathan Kuma Gavi, board member of Stepping Stones for Africa and native of Liati Wote, did a brief overview of the purpose of the meeting and introduced Cindy and SSFA to the community. Cindy then explained the approach for the meeting using the Sankofa Adinkra symbol. The approach she listed is at three levels:

1. Telling the community story (*Let's go back*),
2. Social mapping
3. Prioritizing community needs for action.



The approach of SSFA is based on the meaning of the Asante Adinkra symbol called Sankofa that represents a bird with its head turned backwards taking an egg off its back. Literally it means; "it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind." (san - to return; ko - to go; fa - to fetch, to seek and take). SSFA explains it as let's go back and take the egg from the past into the future.



Kuma Gavi explaining the Sankofa concept



A cross-section of the participants

EXERCISE 1: THE STORY OF THE PAST ('LET'S GO BACK')

The first exercise was about the history of the village. The community members were asked to share their story of Liati Wote from the time of the visit of the very first tourists which is very important to understand the dynamics in the community and very valuable for tourism development. Everybody was asked to contribute and everything that was said was visualised with a symbol (these symbols were small objects and pieces of objects collected around).

1961 – The first recorded tourists to visit Liati Wote (symbolized with the big stone) were some officers and men of the Ghana Military Academy and the Field Squadron who came to climb Afadjato

1967 – Visit by the Ghana naval crew on a ship called the Afadjato Queen (symbolized with a bottle and small pebbles). They erected a cross on top of Afadjato and decorated it with their crest. This visit and the planting of the cross attracted random individual visits.

1989 – First visit by a tour company called Kasapa Centre Ltd (symbolized with a medium stone). Kasapa adopted Wote as their tour village with sustained visits every year for more than 20 years. Their visit marked

the beginning of the community-based ecotourism development in Wote. They started the Tourism development fund that eventually translated into the Tourism Village. Kasapa introduced the concept of “homestay” for their visitors to live with families during their usual ten-day visits. The Kordadza IV Memorial Award was initiated by Jonathan Kuma Gavi as a quiz competition for the expatriates to be immersed into the culture of the community. This award ceremony eventually evolved into the present day “Afadjato Tagbo Falls festival” (symbolised with flowers and leaves). The first festival was celebrated in 1992 with the Canadian Ambassador being the guest of honour. One benefit of the visit of the ambassador was the construction of the primary school block (empty can symbol).

1995 – Nature Conservation Research Center started its activities in Wote (symbolized with a plant). By 1997 they helped in getting the American Peace Corp Volunteers (symbolized with pens) to send Michelle Beasley as the first volunteer to Liati Wote to help with the development of tourism. This also led to the training of locals to be counterparts for the volunteers. Edward Gavi (Asafo) served as the local counterpart from 1997 to 2004. Other benefits include building of bridges on the various crossings on the Tagbo stream when going to the waterfall and building KVIPs for individual homes. Selected women were trained in catering services. The Peace Corps also started bee-keeping in Wote and teaching in the local Junior High School.

- An offshoot of the NCRC was the creation of the **GREET Office** to help in online booking of tourists. GREET in collaboration with **SNV** organised a week constitution writing workshop for the community. This resulted in the separation of the running of the project into a Tourism Board and a Staff & Management Team.

By this time the Hohoe District Assembly also got interested in tourism activities and assisted the community to build a guest house (symbolized with a plant).

2004 – An NGO called Madventure (plastic bag symbol) came and helped with constructing gutters to stop excessive erosion (stick symbol) and also built the community clinic (old slippers as symbol). Through the initiative of Lawyer Nelson Agbesi the Lions Club furnished the clinic.

2004 – Apollo and Cindy (Jolinaiko Eco Tours) came to Wote. They helped in renovating the guest house on several occasions (coconut symbol), donated six desktop computers (plastic bag) and dug a water well for the guest house (water sachet symbol).

A black American Rastafarian group also got interested in ecotourism development in Wote (the nylon string symbol). They donated two thousand Ghana cedis (GHS2000.00) for the construction of a concrete bridge over Tagbo and another two thousand Ghana cedis for the extension of electricity in the village.

2012 - A very important local development as a result of the development of ecotourism in Wote is the formation of the Wote Afadjato Youth Association (WAYA). The purpose of this group was to help in keeping the village clean and help in development projects (symbolized with a branch of leaves).

2016 – The Afadjato South District assembly assisted the community in mechanising the borehole in the village.

- A Ga lady who bought a piece of land for tourism purposes also donated four thousand Ghana cedis for the laying of main pipelines through the village and maintenance of the bridge over Tagbo (paper and stone symbol).



Cindy symbolising arrival of first tourists

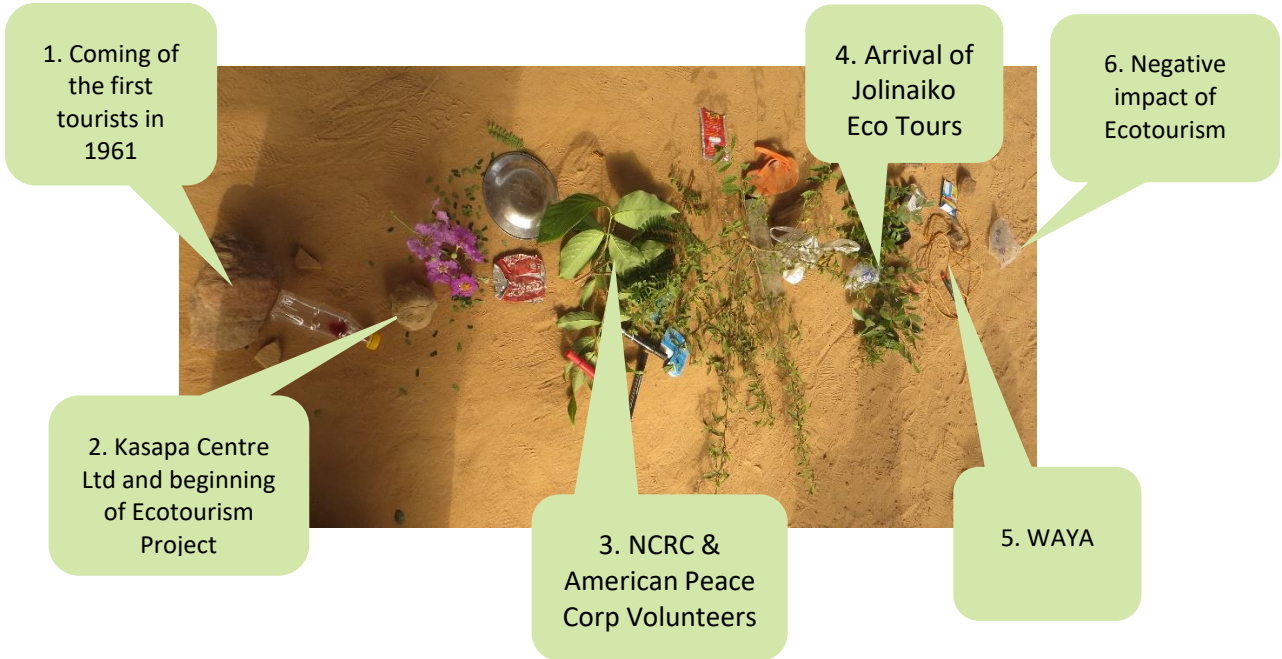
UNINTENDED IMPACT OF ECOTOURISM IN LIATI WOTE

In spite of the many positive impact of tourism in Wote, there were some other negative effects (symbolised with an empty water sachet). These include excessive littering of the village and forest in the tourism catchment area, starting bush fire by smoking tourists which burnt the forest and farms, and copying of the bad behaviours of tourists by some of the youth in the village.



CONCLUSION

This participatory approach of going back to tell the story of how tourism development started in Liati Wote and its impact on the community was the first of its kind since the inception of ecotourism in the community. It was an eye opener for the whole community since many people were not aware of the true impact of the ecotourism project on the life of the community. From this exercise, it has emerged that many social and infrastructural developments such as the building of the community clinic, guest house and basic school buildings among others were all linked to ecotourism activities. It is also clear that tour operators particularly the Kasapa Centre Ltd and Jolinaiko Eco Tours have been very important development partners of Liati Wote. SSFA is committed to continue with follow up excersices – Transect Walk to identify the strengths/ opportunities and weaknesses/ threats to tourism and eventually prioritization of the development needs of the community.



Important milestones in the development of ecotourism in Liatu Wote