2020 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story:  Financing conservation and environmental education through ecotourism

Destination Name:  (include any state, province or region)
Chumbe Island Coral Park, Zanzibar, Tanzania

Country:  Tanzania

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Nomination Category:  (Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)
☐ Culture & Communities
☐ Environment & Climate
☒ Nature & Ecotourism
☒ Islands & Seaside
☐ Immediate responses in dealing with the COVID -19
☐ Post COVID -19 recovery
☒ One of the 17 SDGs* (if yes, which one) GOAL 14: Life Below Water

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. What are the Sustainable Development Goals? https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/

For further information on Tourism for SDGs: http://tourism4sdgs.org/

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices here
DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced
In the early 1990’s a German aid worker, Sibylle Riedmiller, came across Chumbe island, an uninhabited island with a coral rag forest and coral reef, off the coast of Zanzibar, whilst searching for an appropriate location to establish an environmental education initiative to raise awareness about marine conservation and sustainable management, primarily targeted towards school children. Chumbe was selected as an appropriate site due to the healthy, biodiverse coral reef, and dense coral-rag forest on the island. At the time, Zanzibar did not have any marine protected areas (MPAs) and little precedent existed for the establishment of such an initiative. There was limited knowledge in the local fishing communities about the importance of protecting the reef. Local schoolchildren at the time had very little to no touch points with marine conservation and ecotourism, as these topics were not actively integrated in the school curricula. Until today, many children in Zanzibar cannot swim and without the right professional guidance, will never get the opportunity to see first hand the benefits of conservation and appreciate fully the need to protect the ocean.

Methods, steps and tools applied
Sibylle Riedmiller took the decision to establish Chumbe Island Coral Park (CHICOP) Ltd, a not-for-profit company set up for the sole purpose of establishing and sustainably managing the Chumbe Island MPA. CHICOP is the first of its kind self-sustainable marine protected area in the world and to this day, internationally, it is one of only two self-financing MPAs. The process to set-up Chumbe island took several years and involved extensive multi-stakeholder consultations and the set-up of a multi-stakeholder advisory committee, which includes Government, academic and community representatives. In 1993, Chumbe Island Coral Park Limited (CHICOP) was specifically established for the purpose of developing and managing Chumbe Island as a financially self-sustainable privately protected area (PPA), utilizing ecotourism to generate revenue for all operational costs and associated conservation and environmental education activities. The company objectives are not-for-profit, and has been operating for more than 25 years under the framework of three management plan iterations that were developed with wide stakeholder participation.

Key success factors
The key success factor in making Chumbe island an international recognized model for ecotourism, financing conservation and environmental education, lies in local participation. From the start Chumbe was developed with the help of local community members and by seeking support from all concerned stakeholders, emphasizing the mutual benefits that the project would help to achieve over the years. CHICOP employs 43 staff: 93% are Tanzanians from local communities and 30% are women from rural communities with limited education opportunities who face difficulties finding employment and financial independence in the Zanzibari society. Chumbe has likely the highest employee/room ratio of any hotel in Tanzania, and three times the international average for eco-lodges.

Lessons learned

Over the years Chumbe Island faced many challenges. It was a process to get local fishing villages on board and supportive of the marine park and thereby reducing illegal fishing attempts in the MPA. This could only be achieved by long-term relationship building and partnerships with local villages, which now have learnt about and support the conservation goals of Chumbe island and understand the benefits this brings to their fishing grounds. In terms of the ecolodge, there is increased international competition and a risk of greenwashing as nowadays many self-proclaimed ecogenerated or hotels attract tourists with affordable prices and the promise of a stay with limited impact on the environment. Through these marketing claims, considerable marketing budgets, and the increase and pressure of online booking platforms, these accommodations are now real competition for Chumbe. Chumbe decided to stay true to its rates and unique model over the years, operating as a social business, with all revenues directly supporting conservation and education and little margins left for marketing budgets or sophisticated campaigns. True Chumbe lovers know that there are few properties like Chumbe that truly operate in harmony with nature, with a near to zero impact on the environment. We have managed to build a loyal, international customer base with many repeat customers who truly cherish the experience Chumbe has to offer.

Results, achievements and recognitions

Over the years Chumbe island achieved a number of results around the three pillars of its model:

Ecotourism: seven eco bungalows and an education center were built with a near to zero impact on the environment, which can be seen as an inspiration for eco lodges worldwide. The eco-infrastructure involves rainwater collection, solar water heating, water conservation measures (involving ‘press action’ shower heads, composting toilets --> water usage on Chumbe is calculated to average 30 liters per guest per day (a regular hotel average is > 200 liters per person per day), greywater management to ensure no greywater can run-off into the marine environment, solar photovoltaic electricity for all structures, temperature regulation through a tropical building code, with no need for air conditioning, waste management

Conservation: successful 24/7 patrols of the 55.06 ha Coral Reef Sanctuary, with illegal fishing attempts decreasing from around 170 trespassing incidents per year in the early 90ies to under 20 per year in 2018. Chumbe's uniqueness is reflected in its biologically diverse seagrass beds that host seven out of the 13 known East African seagrass species and fringing coral reefs with at least 59 hard coral genera, over 500 recorded reef fish species including apex predators such as blacktip reef sharks and large groupers, as well as endangered sea turtles that are rarely found outside the MPA. Rare Ader's duiker mini-antelopes and Coconut crabs, the world's largest living land crustaceans, inhabit the CFR, while being exploited outside Chumbe. Adjacent fishing communities benefit from the marine park as Chumbe is a...
nursery for fish and produces healthy fish populations which spill-over from the marine park to community fishing grounds.

Environmental Education: endorsed by the Ministry of Education and involved 10,815 school students, teachers and community members since its inception in 1996. In 2019 alone, Chumbe hosted 47 environmental education trips and thereby engaged with 437 students, 60 teachers and 148 community members and government officials.

Chumbe has won numerous awards over the years. In 2019 we won the Top 100 Sustainable Destinations Award for Best of Africa, Best in Supporting Conservation Projects – Responsible Tourism Tanzania, Best in Supporting Conservation Award – Zanzibar Tourism Award, and Certificate of Excellence by TripAdvisor in 2019 and Best of Africa 2019, Hall of Fame for 10 Consecutive Years of Excellence, TripAdvisor

Additional references

Selection of photos: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1wvWewWyoei4J-UB8eD0oQQWC8KuAESql?usp=sharing (all credits: Visual Narrative)