

Supporting Global Development through Sustainable Tourism



DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING MODEL

Uganda Kob in Queen Elizabeth National Park. Photo by Chris Kidd

*A Solimar Solution,
implemented in partnership with USAID-Uganda
and US Forest Service*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Destination Development and Marketing Model

The primary goal of Solimar's United States Agency for International Development-funded Sustainable Tourism in the Albertine Rift program (USAID-STAR II) was to model practical sustainable tourism solutions that enhance conservation activities, revenue streams, and awareness levels for select protected areas in Uganda while supporting the people and businesses that are connected to them. To achieve this goal Solimar implemented four model strategies: 1. Destination Development and Marketing; 2. Public Private Partnerships; 3. Community Tourism Enterprise Development; and 4. Local Government Engagement.

The Destination Development and Marketing Model focuses on a destination level approach to tourism enhancement and promotion and works with partners to inventory and improve the services offered to clients in the region while connecting them to complimentary tourism markets. Visitors travel to a destination to experience all of the activities and services within that region; therefore, when looking to attract more visitors to a destination for longer periods and encouraging them to spend more, one must address the entire tourism experience within the destination and help to improve and market it as a whole. This is the approach the model demonstrates.

The Destination Development and Marketing Model improved sustainable tourism in Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area through a number of interrelated activities. These included creation of a destination forum called "Friends of Queen" that brought together stakeholders involved in the destination to help plan and execute activities, which would enhance and promote the destination. Based on this partnership, an inventory of tourism attractions and services was conducted that culminated in the creation of content (text, photography and video) of the destination for a park website, sales manual and other informative and promotional materials. This was the basis through which to identify gaps in the products and have the information required to promote the destination. Building on these initial steps, activities were carried out that created new tourism products for the destination, enhanced existing products, and collectively executed a promotional campaign for the destination.

Through the Destination Development and Marketing Model initiative, Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area realized improved conservation as a result of increased park visitation and revenues; new funding mechanisms for conservation research and conservation projects; increased conservation awareness and benefits for neighboring communities; and the establishment of a partnership between tourism stakeholders from the region to better support conservation and sustainable tourism in the destination.

What is a 'Destination?'

Rather than focusing on an individual product, this approach looks at the destination as a comprehensive region where travel occurs specifically to the 'destination' for the purpose of conducting a number of different but interrelated tourism activities within a geographically recognized region.

II. CONSERVATION THREATS AND THE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING MODEL

Conservation Threats

The major conservation threats to Uganda's protected areas are a result of poverty and increasing population levels in surrounding communities. Human-wildlife conflict, encroachment, poaching and other unsustainable extractive activities are severely degrading habitat, threatening species, and harming the overall integrity of protected areas. Population pressures are increasing the demand for agricultural lands for subsistence farming, energy sources for cooking, and natural resources such as timber and plants for household uses. The more the population grows on the borders of protected areas, the greater the increase in human-wildlife conflicts such as crop raiding and animal attacks, escalating the tension for survival between humans and animals.

People and wildlife have interacted in this region for millennia; however, the pressure of land and population is heightening the conflict between the two. The goal is therefore to establish ways in which people can benefit from the protected areas and mitigate the impacts of wildlife on their lives, while at the same time strengthening the resources and capacity of protected area managers to safeguard these natural assets.

Sustainable Tourism Solution

Sustainable tourism has been identified as one of the most significant ways through which to address conservation threats. When done well, tourism can provide the revenues required to enhance the management capacity and security of protected areas. Tourism can also provide employment, income, and boost awareness within communities that border protected areas; which, through a quid-pro-quo system, can lead to stronger conservation by these communities.

Tourism is one of the largest foreign exchange earners in Uganda, a significant employer and driver of the economy, and relies almost wholly on protected areas to attract visitors. It is therefore also in the interest of the tourism sector, especially the government and private sector, to support the conservation of protected areas and the livelihoods of communities that are impacted by its wildlife.

Ultimately, the need is to demonstrate the economic as well as the natural value of protected areas, allowing those that live within the destination to see the park as an asset providing a tangible value as a protected resource. The Destination Development and Marketing Model strives to address these needs by demonstrating how sustainable tourism and improved destination management can bring diverse partners, including protected area managers, government, private sector, civil society and others together to support conservation and economic growth in and around a protected area.

III. USAID-STAR PROGRAM CONTEXT

Project Timeline

The program started in August of 2009 to support biodiversity conservation and community benefits from protected areas through sustainable tourism in the Albertine Rift region of Uganda. In its initial phase, Solimar focused on broad support to the tourism sector to enhance the overall tourism offer in the Albertine Rift and to create or enhance community tourism enterprises so that they benefited from protected areas. In its last year (August 2011 – July 2012), Solimar focused its activities on models that could be scaled up to a larger, national tourism-for-conservation program. The Destination Development and Marketing Model was selected as one of these models.

Conservation Threats and the Solimar Response

Major conservation threats to Uganda's protected areas included bush meat poaching, problem animals (human-wildlife conflict), illegal timber cutting, and oil. Of these, bush meat poaching and human-wildlife conflict were a factor of cultural practices and necessity. Bush meat poaching was done on the basis of food needs, sale for cash and as a cultural practice. Human-wildlife conflict occurred when animals impacted people neighboring the park by raiding edible crops and livestock grazing in proximity to or within the park boundary. Strategies for addressing the factors that caused these threats included income diversification; alternative activities/livelihoods on the borders of protected areas; enhanced communications and awareness; and increased financing for conservation activities.

Threats were highest in parks with the greatest population pressures, one of which was Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area. This was a major factor in selecting this conservation area to model the 'Destination Development and Marketing' approach. Additional factors included the willingness of park management to actively participate in the program and test new ideas within the conservation area, as well as the presence of a sufficient density of tourism businesses in or around the park with an interest in supporting the protected area.

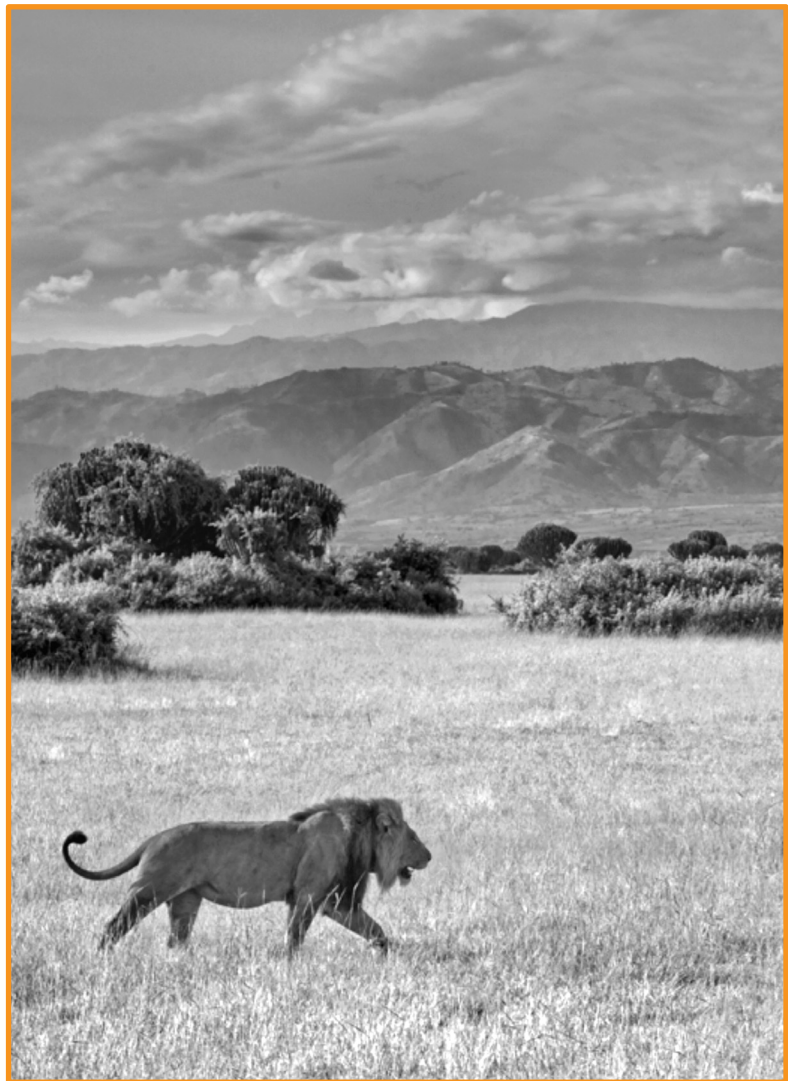
Tourism in Uganda and Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area

Tourism in Uganda is based around nature tourism in its 10 national parks and 12 wildlife reserves as well as a number of national forests and other areas of high biodiversity. Visitor numbers to Uganda's national parks totaled 210,525 in 2011, with 88,643 visiting Queen Elizabeth National Park. The 765 square mile park, which includes sprawling savannas, forest, lakes and fertile wetlands, make it the ideal habitat for 95 mammal species, including the classic big game, ten primate species, and over 600 species of birds.

The Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage is responsible for the maintenance, protection and sustainable utilization of Uganda's protected areas. The Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) is an independent government body under the Ministry tasked with managing the country's national parks and wildlife reserves. UWA generates most of its own revenue, the majority of which comes from tourism sales. UWA therefore also invests in promotion of Uganda and the country's protected areas as a way of boosting its own revenues. As UWA is the main manager and promoter of the protected areas of the country, it was the obvious primary partner for the program with regard to the Destination Development and Marketing Model. Though UWA was the program's lead partner on the model, the public and private sectors were also key contributors to the model's success.

Site Selection

The selection of Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area as the location for modeling destination development and marketing was based on a number of factors. The primary factor was the prevalence of significant conservation threats that put pressure on the protected area; however, other factors were also considered to ensure sustainable tourism could be used as a tool to help address these conservation issues. These factors included the willingness of the park staff to launch such an endeavor and commit the time and resources to moving it forward; the ability of the park to sustain greater visitation without negative impacts; the opportunity to attract more visitors to the park for longer, especially increasing the length of stay of visitors from the present average of 1.8 days; and the interest of the private sector in supporting initiatives for the park. Other parks that adopt similar approaches in the future should also consider these factors when starting a project.



Lion in Queen Elizabeth National Park with a view of the Rwenzori Mountains in the background. Photo by Chris Kidd

IV. CHALLENGE, GOAL, VISION AND STRATEGY

Challenge

Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area faces considerable challenges related to encroachment and illegal activities within its borders; however, the park lacks the resources to properly mitigate these threats. The park also has limited ability to support and work with the communities and businesses that live or operate in or around the protected area, reducing its ability to leverage relationships to support monitoring and enforcement activities.

Goal

One of the primary goals of the Destination Development and Marketing Model and the 'tourism for conservation' theory in general was to establish tools for directing more money to conservation and community activities in and around Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area through sustainable tourism. Additional program goals included building awareness and understanding about conservation issues, and creating a support network for the park.

Vision

To develop Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area as a travel destination, and through this, enhance conservation and community wellbeing in the region.

Driving Principle

Tourism needs to be addressed at the destination level to ensure the greatest positive impact for the sector, the communities, and the environment. A single tourism business cannot succeed without being part of a larger suite of businesses in a destination. Therefore, to improve conservation and enhance community tourism at the destination level, the entire operational ecosystem across the value-chain of a destination must be engaged.

Quantitative Goals

The program worked towards various indicators as measures of success.

INDICATOR
1. Increase in visitation to the protected area
2. Number of educational and informational materials developed and distributed
3. Partnerships formed to support tourism and conservation activities
4. Number of people participating in tourism and conservation activities as a result of Solimar's involvement
5. Uptake of tools and approaches by UWA

V. PHASE I – PLANNING

Situation Analysis and Implementation Strategy

In the first phase of destination development and marketing, one must gain an understanding of the destination, including the assets and opportunities within the destination, and the issues and threats to the destination. A team conducted a rapid assessment and analysis of the destination, which formed the basis for a destination strategy to guide the programs activities. By inventorying and analyzing the destination, the team was able to understand the destination, its assets and gaps, as well as the goals of the stakeholders involved before launching into specific activities that were tailored to the destination (described below). The analysis also helped to prioritize what would be achievable for the destination within the given time frame and resources. The strategy included long-term plans as well as shorter-term implementation activities.



The Destination Development and Marketing Model worked with the Uganda Wildlife Authority, interested private sector businesses, and communities in the region to improve the destination's tourism products as well as its marketing and management. Solimar served as a facilitator, bringing parties to the table to discuss, plan and address various activities that would support the goals of the protected area. The Uganda Wildlife Authority was the program's primary collaborator, though public and private partners also supported activities.

After conducting the site selection and situation analysis to gather information about the region and determine what the main goals for the program would be, a strategy was developed with partners from the destination to guide the implementation of the program. This situation analysis and strategy fulfilled two main objectives:

1. The identification of gaps in tourism infrastructure and activities, along with a strategy for the development of new products in the destination to fill these gaps. This information was generally already laid out in the park management plans. These plans included the short and long term visions for the park. For the purpose of this model, two components of the management plan were selected to demonstrate implementation with approaches that could be modeled in other locations. These included trail infrastructure and new tourism products in the park.
2. The identification of gaps in the information available to tourism markets, promotional activities relating to these markets and a marketing strategy for the destination to improve the accessibility of destination information to attract greater visitation. A marketing strategy for the park was created along with the information, content and tools required to properly market the destination. Catalytic promotional activities were also implemented to demonstrate how marketing could attract greater visitation.

Program Design – Integrating Past Experiences

The model was designed based on a number of Solimar International's destination approaches that were integrated and adapted for the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area context. The broad theory is based on best practices of destination management and marketing from projects in Bocas del Toro, Panama and the Dominican Republic as well as other destinations. Other parts of the model were developed from Solimar International's National Geographic partnership that employs a process for the development of a destination stewardship council around the implementation of catalytic informational and promotional tools. Solimar's work as the North American representative for the Namibia

Tourism Board also allowed the program to draw from facets of that marketing and trade outreach experience. These experiences were adapted and melded with UWA's General Management Plan to form a model based on global success and local initiative.

Working in the Destination

Working with Uganda Wildlife Authority on the Destination Development and Marketing Model required engagement strategies at both the park and national management levels. As with any institution of UWA's size and responsibilities, there are a number of levels that one needs to work with to gain consensus and approvals for activities.

The program had liaisons at both the park and national headquarters level, working with UWA through each step of its activities, ensuring that all parties actively understood and participated in every step of the process. This enabled UWA to further develop its capacities for implementation of similar approaches in other protected areas.

Building Partnerships

The development of partnerships was vital to support the program's activities and to scale the impacts that the program could have in the destination. The following are key partners that were a part of the implementation of the model.

Partnership with Uganda Wildlife Authority

Destination Lesson

When starting this model the program focused a lot of energy on the park management.

Although this was very important to achieving success in the program, there was a need to also involve those at UWA's headquarters in the planning and decision making process to ensure efficient implementation in the required timeframes.

The program worked with UWA at both the conservation area level and the national level. At the conservation area level, the program worked hand in hand with both the Conservation Area Manager (CAM) and the head tourism officer. Together with program experts, the collective UWA/Solimar team developed the concepts and logistics for new products, collected content for marketing, and worked with the private sector on validating and implementing ideas. At the national level, Solimar worked with UWA's leadership, especially the Director of Tourism and Chief Conservation Area Manager to ensure that the proper documentation was in order and approvals received. This ensured that UWA's partnership with the program was effective from the bottom up and top down.

Partnership with the Friends of Queen

Solimar fostered public-private sector stakeholder groups at both the park and national level called 'Friends of Queen.' Representatives primarily included lodge owners and tour operators with vested interest in the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area, as well as UWA, civil society, Peace Corp and other interested parties. The Friends of Queen met bi-monthly to discuss product development and marketing initiatives as well as conservation and other destination issues. These groups became the central body through which activities were planned and implemented.

VI. PHASE II – IMPLEMENTATION

Activity 1: Friends of Queen

One of the critical factors for success of the Destination Development and Marketing Model is partnership. Without a support network of stakeholders with similar interests and objectives, activities will only have limited success. To establish the support network for Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area, Solimar worked with UWA and its existing network of private sector partners to convene an initial discussion with interested stakeholders about their interests, opportunities, goals and other issues for the protected area and the greater destination. From this meeting, a strategy for the destination was developed and quick catalytic activities were initiated which fit with the needs of the destination and the interests of the stakeholders in and around protected area. These activities included the development of informational materials that better informed visitors about the destination, along with promotional programs that increased traffic to the destination. The 'Friends of Queen' stakeholder group convened approximately bi-monthly and also worked through a list-serve to review and support activities.

'Friends of Queen' was the guiding force behind the marketing component of the program, allowing the USAID-STAR program and its partners to jointly implement marketing activities for the destination. The group also acted as a forum through which stakeholders could interact with UWA park management and each other to work on issues such as fire management, marketing, events, etc. This type of engagement did not exist before the program but was considered by the stakeholders as having one of the greatest impacts for the destination. Solimar's initial catalytic activities, facilitation and support to the 'Friends of Queen' has led to the group planning and implementing a familiarization trip for tourism businesses to the park and surrounding community tourism enterprises as well as a conservation program for the park and fire management planning all on their own accord. One key aspect to the continued success of the group was a volunteer who could coordinate

Destination Lesson

Although it is important to involve national and destination based tourism stakeholders, it is those at the destination that will maintain and continue the 'Friends of Queen' goals, objectives and activities.

and convene the group and its respective activities. A Peace Corps Volunteer who had been working with communities in the region led 'Friends of Queen' administration, though this role was later filled by a local hotel owner.

Often, committees or groups that are formed for destinations or other activities get bogged down by starting with the administrative formalization of their organization, rather than taking quick actions that can catalyze interest and involvement in the activities of the group. Therefore, the model focused the 'Friends of Queen' group on getting involved in tangible activities that supported a collectively approved set of goals rather than the formal establishment of the organization. After nine months of tangible activities (described in the following sections of this case study), the group themselves decided that a more formal arrangement was required, and we helped them work through the development, review and validation of a charter, bylaws and membership for the group.

Activity 2: Destination Development – Tourism Infrastructure

Managing and growing visitation to a destination requires maintaining and upgrading tourism infrastructure to ensure there are a sufficient number of high quality activities and facilities to attract visitors and retain them in the destination.

The first step required to increase visitation was identifying and prioritizing gaps in the infrastructure of the destination. This step was completed by conducting a situational analysis, which includes revising management and strategic plans. The next step was the creation of technical implementation plans, which include the costs, time, and technical details involved in the development of the priority infrastructure based on the resource constraints of the partners.

The program, with support from the US Forest Service, helped UWA to develop detailed designs for trails, bridges, huts and other trail infrastructure in the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area. UWA staff identified the locations with the priority needs to enhance tourism visitation to the park and improve the visitor experience. To supplement the physical infrastructure development, the program also worked with the US Forest Service to train UWA staff on trail planning, development and maintenance to ensure that the skills to enhance the parks trail network would endure beyond the life of the program.

Activity 3: Destination Development – New Tourism Products

For a destination to fully realize its tourism potential, sufficient infrastructure and a diverse array of high quality tourism products are required to attract and maintain visitors in the region. Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area has many popular attractions; however, on average, visitors only spent 1.8 days in the destination in 2011. This was mainly due to a lack of information about the existing tourism attractions and a limited overall tourism offer.

During the situation analysis, UWA identified 'Experiential Tourism' as a product type that would help diversify what the park had to offer. UWA had conducted initial conceptualization

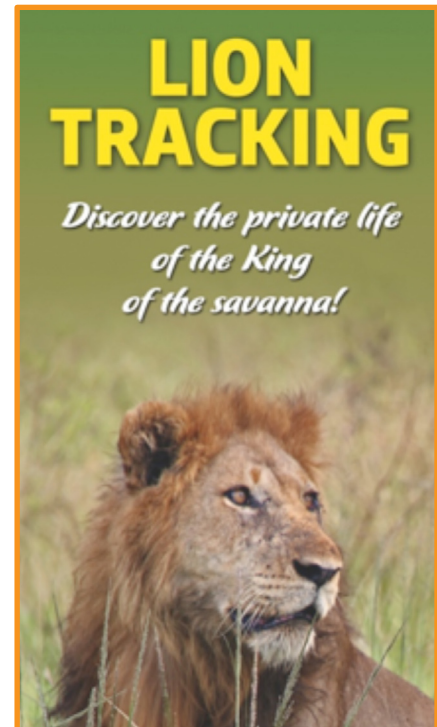
Experiential Tourism

Tourism that offers the ability for a visitor to see, do, and learn from an activity. In this case, experiences involve joining an ongoing research project to learn about their work and gain a unique insight into the animal they are studying.

and testing of two experiential tourism products (predator tracking and mongoose tracking) and requested help in solidifying and packaging these for tourism markets. The new products were based on existing wildlife research projects that were ongoing in the park. The goal was to diversify the park's product offer with unique and interesting activities while supporting research efforts and boosting park revenue. The tours allow a limited number of tourists to go out with a researcher and gain in-depth insight into animal behavior, conservation threats and the research being conducted.

To support these new products, Solimar first worked with UWA staff and the researchers to assess and expand on the proposed tours. Based on this, Solimar helped them implement improvements to the tour and provided guidance on length, starting points, locations for tours etc. Once the basic product was established and tested by the team, two main areas of additional assistance were needed, the 'back-end' policy and governance framework and the 'front-end' market and client information. For the back-end of the product Solimar worked with UWA on the policy, product guidelines and internal procedures for proposing, approving and then implementing each new product within the UWA system. This included approvals within the UWA system but also pricing, booking procedures, etc. The program then worked with UWA and the research teams on MOU's that defined each party's roles and responsibilities, resource allocations and management procedures, so that each party was clear on their functions relating to the product. While final approvals and MOUs were being negotiated, the products were tested, allowing visitors, UWA and the researchers to sample the experiences and improve on them before they became official products. This provided a vital feedback system from visitors to UWA and the researchers to refine the products being offered.

In addition to the two initial experiential tourism products, UWA and the program team identified the opportunity to use a similar model for one-off or periodic research activities in addition to the products that could be offered every day, such as the mongoose tracking. To model this approach for experiential tourism Solimar focused on a hippo population count conducted every two years by UWA. To help cover the cost of the hippo count and offer another unique experience to visitors, two seats per day were offered on the boat conducting the counting for the duration of the count (approximately one month). The program worked with UWA on conceptualizing the product, establishing the guidelines and the steps required by UWA internally to approve the product, as well as pricing, payment methods and other logistics. Solimar then worked with UWA, tour operators and lodges interested in the product to market the activity by creating online materials, e-fliers, print posters and a small social media campaign to raise awareness. The product was hailed as a great success by UWA, as its revenues paid for the costs of the count and it attracted national and international media coverage, helping to build further awareness about the destination. UWA have said that this is a model that they will start to explore in other parks for periodic research activities.



Activity 4: Destination Marketing – Tools to Inform Tourism Markets

Print Materials

With just nine months to implement the model, the program needed to work quickly to get the attention of the sector so that they would actively participate in the Destination Development and Marketing Model. With the understanding that the private sector responded best to tangible results that linked to their interests, and are less concerned with absolute consensus and a fully collaborative process, the program would present them with something nearly completed to be later adjusted as needed.

One of the constraints of the destination was a lack of high quality information, pictures and other content about the region's attractions. This was echoed through interviews with national and international tourism businesses. To respond to this need, Solimar worked with UWA to design the Queen Elizabeth National Park Sales Manual, which contains all the information needed to learn about or promote the destination. The manual includes sample itineraries around the destination, descriptions and pictures of all tourism activities in the region and other useful information about travel to and within the region.

For a copy of the manual, visit: www.ugandawildlife.org/contact-us-2/tour-operators-corner

The development of the sales manual demonstrated a quick result and acted as a catalytic activity to build support from partners on future promotional activities. The printed sales manual was used in the region's visitor centers, lodges, and other locations to provide visitors with reliable information about traveling within the destination. The sales manual was also turned into a DVD that included additional content about the destination, such as pictures, videos, and Uganda in general, to further promote the destination. UWA used these materials at the World Travel Market in London and ITB in Germany (the two largest tourism trade fairs) to promote the destination by distributing over 400 branded copies of the DVD.

Online Materials

During the situation analysis and strategy development, a need was identified regarding the online presence of the conservation area. Very little high quality information about the conservation area existed online. A web presence was required so that the park could encourage visitation through promotional campaigns (described in the next section) by channeling interested potential visitors to a central website. Upon discussing this with UWA, issues were raised about



the development of a website for a single conservation area, and the need to do this for all of Uganda's parks. A single website for all the destinations allowed for cross-linking, a more comprehensive set of information about all parks and easier management of information for UWA. Therefore UWA approached USAID and requested additional funds to support a web-portal for all of their 10 national parks. Based on this, Solimar was granted additional funds and developed a web portal for all of UWA's national parks with micro-sites for each individual park. As the program had good information on Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area, this was used as the content model for the development of the micro-sites for each of the other parks.

A destination website serves as the anchor for most destination marketing strategies, with campaigns and activities leading interested parties to the website for more information. Developing the new UWA website required a team of content developers to travel to each park in Uganda and collect the necessary photos, video and editorial information. Solimar worked with a local Ugandan company (Promote Uganda) to build their capacity in destination content

development so that UWA or other clients could access local resources for these needs in the future. The program matched an expert content development staff member with this team to train them at the beginning and travel with them to the first park. The team then covered the other parks on their own and worked with Solimar's team after the field visits to refine the content for the final website. In addition to building the capacity of the local content collection team, the program trained UWA, UTB, UCOTA, and interested members of the tourism private sector to enhance their skills for managing their websites (using the UWA site as the model). Social media and e-marketing strategies to drive website traffic and convert leads to sales were a focus of the training.

At the same time, Solimar's web-development team worked closely with UWA's staff to develop website wireframes, layout, design, branding and more. Over the course of five months, and through extensive consultation and review, the website was designed and launched. After going live at a highly acclaimed launch event hosted by UWA, the website has received 14,169 visitors (May 16th 2012 to July 16th 2012), an increase from the same period the year before of over 200 percent with people spending longer on the site (almost seven minutes) and viewing more pages (113,648 page-views versus 18,404 the previous year).

The website not only includes basic travel information but also offers a glimpse into UWA's conservation work, raising awareness as well as interest in biodiversity conservation in Uganda.

"I applaud Uganda Wildlife Authority for the development which will address the much needed marketing for Ugandan products, attractions and traditional hospitality."

Professor Ephraim Kamuntu, Minister of
Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage

Activity #5 – Destination Marketing – Programs to Attract Tourism Markets

Once the tools to promote the destination and inform visitors are developed, the focus shifts to using these tools to attract people to the region. When developing the promotion strategy it must be specific to the destination and the time and resources available. Given the time (nine months) and resource constraints for the Destination Development and Marketing Model, Solimar's focus in this destination was on creating the tools for UWA and testing them on local markets that are already in Uganda or East Africa. Limited activities also reached out to international markets, though the results of these efforts will only have an impact one to two years after implementation due to the length of booking cycles for international markets.

Over the nine month implementation phase of the program, the first three months focused on the situation analysis, strategy and creating the tools for the destination. Promotional activities started in the fourth month and continued for approximately six months. The campaigns that were implemented focused on a regional market that could make a decision to travel in a short time period (within a month or two); however, the techniques and tools used could be employed for other markets in the future.

Long Weekend Campaign

This campaign focused on promoting a long weekend away in the park around the US Thanksgiving holiday. The tools employed were promotional posters, e-fliers and social media posts in popular locations around Kampala, such as shopping centers, churches, etc. Flyers were distributed at embassies and posted on social media sites used by potential visitors in Kampala. Private sector operators also offered special rates for the weekend to encourage visitation. This initial campaign was a low cost test campaign to evaluate the market and test appropriate channels to reach the market.

The campaign was a relative success and built awareness of and interest in the destination, demonstrated through increased enquiries about travel to Queen Elizabeth National Park. However, as it was a one-off weekend and the lead-up time for promoting the weekend was short, there was limited uptake on the actual weekend, though some lodges and operators did report a nominal increase in visitation. Lessons learned from this test campaign were applied to subsequent events.



Hippo Count

Hippo Census

Building on the development of 'Experiential Tourism' products in the conservation area, Solimar worked with UWA to promote the availability of seats on their periodic hippo count in the park. The program developed descriptions and promotional information about the activities and worked with interested private sector operators from the 'Friends of Queen' to distribute the information to the Ugandan and East African market as well as to the press. These outreach efforts and the fact

that it was a unique experience generated considerable interest in the activity. In addition to regular visitors, two groups of international journalists participated in the experience, further highlighting the park to their respective tourism markets. The activity was also picked up by local media, which generated interest in the experience from regional markets.

Easter Road Trip

To increase awareness and interest in the parks by local Ugandans, Solimar worked with UWA and Power FM (a local radio station) to promote visitation to the park during the Easter weekend holiday, as well as build interest in general to about the park. The program helped to organize transport, accommodation and other logistics for the trip. Power FM ran a competition with questions about the parks. Five winners won free trips to the park over Easter and other listeners were able to pay their way on the trip. The trips, which have been run by UWA and the program for a number of years, are a great success; and in addition to helping to bring people to the park, generate awareness about the park among Ugandans.

Seasonal Promotions and Events

Many destinations used seasonal promotions (such as low season) and events to promote their destinations. When developing the promotional strategy with 'Friends of Queen', Solimar highlighted potential activities that could be undertaken to promote the destination. A low season campaign was among these suggestions, however upon further discussion it was found that the tourism businesses did not really have a low season. Due to the limited accommodation



Promotional event in Kampala

available in and around the park, many facilities had healthy occupancies during the traditional low season and therefore a low season campaign was not required. Events, however, were of interest to the park authorities and tourism businesses. To model this, and in partnership with the Pearls of Uganda program, we worked with a local cafe to conduct a weekend festival in Kampala highlighting the tourism attractions of the park and the communities in the region. The event was well attended and helped to further raise awareness of the destination.

VII. CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION

A Recognized Model

The Destination Development and Marketing Model in Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area resulted in the development of successful tourism infrastructure, and new products and tools for the destination. It also increased awareness about the conservation area, promoting its offerings and addressing its conservation needs.

Going Forward

As a result of this model the Uganda Wildlife Authority has a set of tools and tangible examples for developing and promoting its parks. UWA will continue to implement activities in Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area by further expanding its new tourism products and using its new marketing collateral to do more international outreach. UWA hopes to spread the model to its other parks which will compliment the new national website.

VIII. RESULTS

Summary of Results

INDICATOR	TARGET	ACHIEVED
1. Increase in visitation to the protected area	12%	16%
2. Number of educational and informational materials developed and distributed	200,000	475,675
3. Partnerships formed to support tourism and conservation activities	20	32
4. Number of people participating in tourism and conservation activities as a result of USG involvement	6,000	2,366
5. Uptake of tools and approaches by UWA	7	7

Monitoring and Measurement Mechanisms

During the implementation of this model the impacts and lessons were monitored on a continual basis. One of the main methods for monitoring the model was observing interaction with, and involvement of, partners. Solimar gauged partner involvement in activities as a measure of interest and effectiveness. This informal feedback loop was vital to be able to adapt activities as the program was being implemented.

More formal monitoring also included periodic review of park entrance numbers (gathered from UWA), visitation numbers for tourism businesses, and visitation to the UWA website. The adoption of tools and materials that were developed for the park, were seen as successful based on their integration into park staff usage.

Keys to Real Impact

The key to implementing this kind of model is partnership and the ability to be flexible and adapt the program as it is being implemented based on partner input. Solimar took the destination approach with an understanding that tourism must be addressed at the destination level with destination stakeholders to achieve meaningful results.

IX. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Conclusions

Within a relatively short amount of time Solimar was able to develop the information, materials and new products to demonstrate approaches to destination development and marketing. Although the program was successful in attracting people to the park for longer, the time required to have the maximum impact was too short. The model demonstrated approaches and was able to show results from these efforts. If the model were to be replicated, a two-year period of implementation would ensure the greatest impact and the ability to measure more completely the results from regional and international markets.

Based on this model, UWA and its partners have the tools and experience to implement destination development and marketing in other parks. Visitation has increased and the information available about the park is much improved. The 'Friends of Queen' is also continuing with its own efforts to support the park and the interests of the stakeholders around the destination. This model will act as a catalyst for future activities in Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area as well as other parks in Uganda or elsewhere.

Lessons Learned

1. Connecting the Destination at the Local and National Levels

In the process of implementing the model it was apparent that although a focus on the destination is important, destination development and marketing cannot work in isolation and has to be linked to local level activities in communities or with businesses within the destination as well as to the national level as part of the broader national destination.

This model describes the activities that took place at the destination level, but complimenting it were also significant activities at the local level, whether it was developing a specific product within the destination (a community tourism enterprise or in-park activity) or training staff or guides. Major work was also done at the national level to link to the destination level efforts, such as developing the national web portal for UWA to promote the protected area, working with the media to generate press and interest in the destination, and building strong partnerships nationally that helped efforts in the destination.

2. Catalytic Activities to Stimulate Support for the Destination

Momentum and buy-in from partners was built through consultations and quick implementation of catalytic activities. Showing movement on actions that all partners agreed on and supported helped to get the partners behind the actions and activities that followed, including more complicated or contentious issues. Initial 'quick wins' are key to building confidence. For the Destination Development and Marketing Model, these wins included a sales manual for the park (everyone contributed to this and agreed it was vitally needed); the strategy; and some small promotional activities. These successes led to more substantive discussions and activities.

3. Linking Tourism to Conservation

The goal of the model was to strengthen the revenue streams of the park through visitation and new products, as well as to support specific conservation initiatives. Visitation to the park has increased, increasing revenue to the Uganda Wildlife Authority increased entry and activity fees. Through the development of experiential tourism products, Solimar was also able to promote tourism and conservation simultaneously. Revenue from these products goes both to the park to support its operations, and to the research initiative. This arrangement also helps to strengthen the relationship between research projects and the park.

'As a research project our objectives are not always totally aligned with those of UWA, so it is nice to have something that supports the park and builds awareness about the project.'

Lead Scientist, Banded Mongoose Program



Mongoose Tracking in Queen Elizabeth National Park

4. Human Resources at the Destination and Nationally

Good people are key to all efforts, and this is especially the case with destination development and marketing. To be effective, people are needed at the national level to coordinate promotion and broader issues with partners, as well as at the ground level to coordinate with local partners and support their efforts in developing the destination. The person on the ground does not have to be an expert, and volunteers could also be used, but they need to know the region, the context and be able to work with a variety of partners. In fact, 'unthreatening' people such as volunteers and junior coordinators are often more beneficial at this level than more experienced experts. More technical people are required at the national level and periodically to support efforts at the local level.

5. Partnerships and Relationships

Broad partnerships with a wide range of engaged supporters are key, but it is also important to have two levels of decision makers. A small number of key decision makers and local 'champions' (such as Solimar, UWA and one or two other stakeholders) are needed to work on actions and narrow down the final choices on proposed activities. A wider group is then needed to review, comment on and provide consensus on the proposed actions.

Stakeholders are most active and engaged when the issues and activities support their interests, fit within their geographic scope, and do not draw them away too much from their primary business. To support partnerships, Solimar established the 'Friends-of-Queen' at two levels: the national level (lodge owners, tour operators, UWA Headquarters staff, etc.), and the local level (UWA park staff, lodge managers, local lodge owners and tour operators, other partners). The local level group persisted beyond the life of the project because Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area was their specific geographic focus and promoting the park was in their interest. The national level group, although interested in the activities at the park level, often had other interests and were more focused on national level issues and activities. They preferred to be a part of a 'Friends-of-parks' group for all protected areas rather than a specific park.

Beyond partnerships, strong working relationships are key to the success of the model. Having strong relationships with UWA staff, tour operators and lodge managers or owners on an individual basis was vital to the success of the model and support for its initiatives.

6. Timing

Although a reasonable amount was achieved in the short duration of the project, more time is needed in a destination to fully implement and track the results of the model. Two years of implementation in a destination such as Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area, and follow up monitoring with minor technical support in subsequent years, is needed for the most effective impact.

Marketing and promotion activities need to start early. In many projects it is often something that comes later in the process, after the infrastructure and products are complete, but this means products are stagnant for too long before clients arrive. Arranging FAM (familiarization) trips for tour operators to see the 'sample product' and get their feedback and input before it is complete is a good approach, as well as conducting test tours, where visitors experience the activity but understand that it is still in development and contribute to it through their feedback.

For promotional campaigns (in the Uganda market, for example) the lead period to promote a specific event or promotion needs time. For a number of reasons the early campaigns tended to be implemented too close to the time of the activity or event. Greater lead-time allows for better uptake by the market.