

# Ushoroba Team on Study-Tour!

By Kumrwa Ngomello and Catherine Picard

With more than 150,000 square kilometers of miombo woodland extending across southern Tanzania to Mozambique, the Selous Niassa Wildlife Corridor (SNWC) represents one of Africa's largest trans-boundary conservation efforts. The Corridor is a joint initiative between District Authorities and the Ministry for Natural Resources and Tourism with the support of the UNDP/Global Environment Facility and implemented by GTZ-International Services.

Locally referred to as the *Ushoroba wa Selous-Niassa*, the Corridor establishes a viable linkage between the Selous Game Reserve (47,000 sq km) and the Niassa National Reserve in Mozambique (42,400 sq km). The participation of 29 villages in Namtumbo and Tunduru Districts will form a contiguous network of village-managed Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) to secure the ecological integrity of the Corridor for future generations. As part of the Corridor's capacity building activities, a ten-day study tour was recently organized to share experiences with other communities establishing Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and expose participants to Tanzania's growing eco-tourism industry.



**Discussion of WMA establishment and zoning plan with BOMIPA Authorized Association near Ruaha National Park**

Photo: Catherine Picard

Participants included local government authorities, village and natural resource committee chairpersons and village game scout commanders. “Travel is knowledge” said one villager who reflected that this trip represented the first time for many participants to travel outside of Ruvuma Region. Travelling by coach from Songea, the tour began with visits to the MBOMIPA and WAMI-MBIKI wildlife management areas where participants discussed WMA revenue generation and distribution, procedural requirements for obtaining official authorized association status and user rights over wildlife, and how communities are working with wildlife officials to curb poaching and issues of crop protection and dangerous game.



**Game Drive in the Tourism Zone of Selous Game Reserve**

**Photo: Rudolf Hahn**

The next stop on the Ushoroba Tour was Matambwe station the headquarters for the Selous Game Reserve in the northern sector. On the way at Duthumi participants met with village game scouts from the JUKUMU community based organization and were graciously hosted by the Rufiji River Camp. The group learned first hand from the camp manager about the necessary infrastructure and amenities that characterize luxury eco-tourist destinations, which could also be applied at Ruvuma River. Before leaving the Selous the participants experienced a game drive and then traveled to the villages of Ngarambe and Tapika in Rufiji district to meet with representatives from the MUNGATA WMA. Participants listened keenly as representatives from MUNGATA described the process of establishing their WMA.



**Photo: Catherine Picard**

**Village game scouts of Mungata AA, Ngarambe & Tapika, and of the Corridor meet at Ngarambe village in the East of the Selous and discuss issues of poaching and crop protection.**



**Photo: Rudolf Hahn**

**Discussions about wildlife tourism issues at Rufji River Camp in the Selous gave initial ideas about the economic potential of tourism for the local development of the villages within the Corridor and along the Ruvuma River.**

The tour wrapped up with a visit to the historic island of Kilwa to learn about cultural and historical ecotourism activities. The stop in Kilwa was a highlight for many as it was their first time to experience the sights and sounds of the Indian Ocean. Returning home participants reflected on their 3350 kilometer journey with a final wrap meeting in Tunduru. Everyone agreed that the study tour was an ideal way to learn first hand from other WMAs and understand more about the ecotourism industry. Just as important however were the words of one village chairman who concluded; “Now I know we are not alone, we are all working together for a better environment and future.”



**The boat ride to the Kilwa Island was for most participants the first time to experience the Indian Ocean and to learn more about the cultural heritage.**

**Photo: Catherine Picard**