

TO DO!2000
Contest Socially Responsible Tourism

Award Winner

The Tourism Project
KASAPA CENTRE LTD.
Holiday and Workshops in Ghana

represented by

**Dr. Susanne Stemann-Acheampong
and Kofi B. Acheampong**

Gomoa-Nyanyano, Central Region, Ghana

Rationale for the Award

by

Klaus Betz

1. INTRODUCTION

The investigations into the candidacy of the KASAPA CENTRE have been carried out between December 1st and 8th, 2000 in Ghana. At the request of the Institute for Tourism and Development, the data concerning the concept and objectives of the project stated in the contest documents could be verified in situ without any problem – with the following result: The authorised appraiser suggests honouring the Tourism Project KASAPA CENTRE with the award TO DO! 2000.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 THE COUNTRY

The Republic of Ghana has a population of 18 million people and is one of the few English speaking nations in francophone West Africa. In the south, Ghana borders on the Gulf of Guinea (with a coast line of about 550 kilometres), in the north with Burkina Faso, its neighbour to the east is Togo and to the west, the Ivory Coast.

An estimated two million people live in the capital Accra. Other important towns are Kumasi, the centre of the economically dominant Ashanti region (460,000 inhabitants), the university town of Cape Coast (60,000 inhabitants) and the port of Sekondi-Takoradi (175,000 inhabitants).

In 1960, roughly 100 groups which differ in terms of language and culture (some only slightly, some considerably) were registered in the country. The biggest and most important ethnic groups branching out in sub-groups are the Akan, the Ewe, the Mole-Dagbani and the Ga-Adangbe. Apart from English as the official language, the languages spoken are Akan (understood by about 70 percent of the population), Fanti, Ewe, Twi and Hausa. The different ethnic groups, right down to the communities, each have their Omanhene (chief), whose position is laid down in the constitution. The Omanhene is quite influential. In the event of national political decisions the kings or queens of the ethnic groups, assembled in the National House of Chiefs, are involved as advisers. In the various regions this process takes place in the Regional House of Chiefs.

For the first time since its independence in 1957 Ghana saw a democratic change of government in December 2000. From within the opposition, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) was able to win both the parliamentary as well as the presidential elections. This event is of considerable political significance for all of West Africa. Ghana hopes that this change will result in an economic boom. Of late, the national currency Cedi has lost half of its value against the US dollar. Within one year, the price of imported products doubled. The main export goods of the country are gold and cocoa, but their price on the world market has also drastically fallen.

With a top wage in the gold mines one can earn a monthly income of 400 DM (1.2 million Cedi). For a qualified government job one gets roughly 65 DM (200,000 Cedi), but the average monthly income of the majority of the people stands at 120,000 Cedi, which is equivalent to some 40 DM at present. In practical terms, this means that if a Western visitor has his or her laundry done and pays 10,000 Cedi for this service he spends slightly more than 3 DM, but for the person who does the laundry the amount is equivalent to nearly a two days' wage.

2.2 TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Tourism figures for Ghana show some 350,000 arrivals annually. The majority of those are, however, Ghanaians living abroad and business people. The number of actual Ghana tourists can only be estimated and amounts to approximately 100,000.

The kind of a more environment-friendly and socially responsible tourism as practiced by the KASAPA CENTRE has so far not been held in high regard by Ghana's leading cadres and tourism experts. Their image of tourism institutions has been too much influenced by a (Western) modern life style. Air-conditioning, room TV, easy chairs, carpeted floors, fenced in, large gardens, in short: an exclusive ambiente.

The hotels along the beaches are built in exactly this style. The tourists move around in a "beach-sun-fun-area", isolated from everyday life and they don't get to know much about the country. Unless they take part in day excursions to the former slave castles at the coast or to the country's interior such as a visit to a gold mine in the Ashanti region or to the museum in Kumasi.

With these "models" in mind, the people living in remote village locations often naively look at concepts such as "progress" or "tourism development" as being equivalent to expensive concrete structures with foam mattresses and corrugated iron roofs – instead of reverting to natural materials: Mud, straw mats and reeds.

3. THE TOURISM PROJECT KASAPA CENTRE

3.1 HISTORY AND PROGRAMME

KASAPA means "conversation" or "good discussions". This indicates what the project is about: Inter-cultural encounters, getting to know each other more intensively and deeply, an authentic view of one another – at the same eye level. This way, Europeans are able to ponder their thought pattern which have been shaped (latently colonially) over the centuries; and the local people's self-confidence is enhanced because their guests demonstrate respect and esteem for their culture.

Casually speaking, KASAPA CENTRE evolved from the tourist "drummer scene" but it did not stop there. The West African drummer scene which had become popular in the seventies and especially in the eighties concentrated on the legendary Ghanaian master drummer Mustapha Tettey Addy. At that time he had the idea to invite white people who he had coached in traditional African drumming and dancing in Europe to attend holiday workshops in Ghana to enable encounters on the basis of mutual respect and esteem. Later on Tettey Addy oriented himself toward more conventional forms of tourism, but not so his first colleagues: the German-Ghanaian couple Stemmann-Acheampong. They decided to continue with and expand the original concept and to settle on a small holiday resort near the village of Nyanyano. KASAPA CENTRE developed in a way which today is a paragon and model from various points of view.

First, KASAPA CENTRE, which has been in existence since 1996, continues to offer drumming and dancing workshops which are an essential non-verbal "tool" to approach this continent, to get familiar with it and to feel confident.

Second, KASAPA CENTRE offers holiday programmes or excursions of several days, through which tourists gain new insights in and experience old traditions; they also make everyday life in Ghana more transparent. This became possible through the contacts which KASAPA CENTRE has kept up for several years with villages in the interior of the country. Gradually, KASAPA CENTRE also developed into a kind of “consultant” for these villages, whose advice on matters concerning tourism is sought out by the respective chiefs and their village communities. What is quite important in this context is the ability of Kofi Acheampong to combine his Western experiences (training as a civil engineer, and stays abroad) with his African roots; to know and respect the rites and traditions, to speak the languages of the village population and to encourage the local people to follow their way, that is, to indirectly promote “appropriate tourism” – the kind of tourism that is fitting in the given situation.

Third, KASAPA CENTRE is a model because it demonstrates how to reach a standard with modern (Western) environment technology, local material and traditional building style that meets the needs of Western guests and which simultaneously offers feasible, affordable and functioning solutions for developing countries, especially in the tropics.

3.2 ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

From the outside, KASAPA CENTRE looks like a small holiday village. It is situated at the periphery of the small fishing town of Nyanyano, about 40 km west of Accra, directly on the coast.

Nyanyano itself (4,000 inhabitants) lives, after a fashion, off coastal fishing. Of late, the fishermen have to drive farther and farther out to the sea because big foreign fishing fleets are depleting fish stocks near the coast. This in turn forces the men of Nyanyano to buy costly and imported strong overboard engines to enable them to head as far and as fast as possible out to sea. Quite a few of the fishermen are thus trapped into indebtedness if the catch is bad or if repairs become necessary.

Six thatched mud round houses are situated on the 2.5 hectare KASAPA property. These can accommodate a maximum of 24 guests, with each round house being divided in two double rooms with a common terrace. A real jewel in terms of architectural design is the big, half-open restaurant pavilion. This, too, is a thatched round building whose sensational roof construction made of timber – with a diameter of 22 metres (!) – is essentially supported by one single central pillar (apart from supporting pillars at the outside). The idea to build it in keeping with the function of an umbrella came from quite an “average” carpenter from the village of Liate Wote. This is one of the villages visited in the framework of the excursion programmes offered to KASAPA guests.

There are furthermore domestic offices, and the staff also live in mud round houses on the compound. There are covered shower and toilet buildings (hygienic compost toilets), and a solar plant supplies electrical power. So far, solar energy is only used for the operational requirements (restaurant, kitchen, lights for showers, toilets, and for the rooms of the employees (!)), and not yet for the guest houses where kerosene lamps are installed.

The KASAPA compound is generously covered with shrubs (similar to macchia), neem and mango trees are planted, there are cashew and guava bushes, oil palms, coconut palms, agaves, papaya and lemon grass. The kitchen gets the vegetables from its own garden which

is leased to an employee. She supplies the goods to the KASAPA CENTRE at market prices and whatever is not needed there is sold on the market (additional income).

3.3 TOURIST OFFERS AND ACTIVITIES

The drumming, dancing and xylophone workshops are tailor-made for beginners, advanced and professionals. This is one of the main activities. Furthermore, several four to five day excursions into the interior of the country are offered, as well as excursions to the nearer vicinity – e.g. to Accra (market, handicrafts, popular cinemas, music events).

The excursions centre around the region of the Volta village Liate Wote (near the border to Togo) and trips along the West coast to the pile dwelling village of Nzulezo which until today can only be reached by dug-outs in well over an hour, travelling through species-rich wetland forests (birds and flowers).

Another four day trip goes to the old royal town of Kumasi and its surroundings (topics: culture of the Ashanti, gold, the colourful Kente clothes). During these excursions tourists are always taken to sites of natural beauty, or to the virgin forest in the Kakum National Park. But one of the topics is always the everyday life of the population.

The prices, without air fares, for workshops vary, depending on two, three or four weeks stays, between 1,500 DM and 2,100 DM; the prices for the excursion programmes vary between 1,900 DM (for two weeks) and 2,700 DM (for four weeks). Reductions are given for students and socially weak persons.

The flexibility of the KASAPA team can be seen from the fact that wheel chair tourists are also integrated in the programmes, and even the logistics for people suffering from diabetes is available (freezer for the insulin).

4. APPRAISAL OF THE PROJECT

The comparison of the activities of the tourism project KASAPA CENTRE with the TO DO! criteria for a socially responsible tourism results in the following appraisal:

Contest criterion:

Involvement of the different interests and requirements of the local population through participation

When the negotiations for the purchase of the KASAPA CENTRE plot were ushered in, great value was attached to act in keeping with the socio-cultural structures of the community. That is, the plot was purchased in the traditional way and in consultation and agreement with the traditional authorities (chiefs and elders) on the basis of hereditary lease. Apart from a one-time basic price an annual royalty for the plot has to be paid to the Community Treasury.

Independently of this, on the occasion of official contacts or discussions with the chief or the elders donations are given to them as is ordinary practice in Ghana. Normally about 10 DM, on particularly important occasions up to 60 DM. Yet, such donations must not be regarded as bribes, but rather as a contribution to the apanage of respected notabilities or for their representative duties.

From its very inception it was made clear that the KASAPA CENTRE was not intended to be an “ex-territorial” tourist ghetto but part of the village. Due to the good relationship to the local community and its residents – the best protection against thieves and intruders – KASAPA is not fenced in and must not be especially protected (there are, however, a symbolic gate and two night watchmen).

During the construction of the Centre local labourers from Nyanyano were employed whenever possible, sometimes in a responsible position (e.g. as supervisors) the building style and the building materials (local material) emphasise the local tradition and clearly demonstrate that KASAPA CENTRE is a thoroughly African affair.

It is precisely this attitude which made the people of Nyanyano accept the KASAPA CENTRE as a place which belongs to them and in which they are able to participate both socially and in terms of monetary income (see the following criteria). When drumming, dancing or story telling evenings are arranged at the KASAPA CENTRE both the notabilities of Nyanyano and the ordinary residents sometimes show up at the Centre.

If representatives of the community need an suitable place for assemblies with higher political representatives, they can fall back on the spacious restaurant pavilion of the KASAPA CENTRE.

Contest criterion:

Strengthening the awareness among the local people with regard to the chances and risks of tourism development in their everyday economic, social and cultural life

In view of the comparatively modestly developed tourism activities there is hardly any awareness among the Ghanaian population with regard to this kind of risks. The same goes for the alertness to chances. In this sense the KASAPA CENTRE’s procedure is one that rather shapes the style and shows (instead of only talking about it) what an environmentally compatible and socially responsible tourism could be like. For instance by not operating an uncontrolled dumping area or sewage at the cost of the community (garbage sorting facility, a composting plant, a reed sewage treatment plant) or by not barring the local people from the corresponding beaches.

KASAPA CENTRE is not only welcome as a tourism advisor for its own village, but meanwhile the chiefs and elders of the villages included in the holiday programme, such as Nzulezo and Liate Wote, are also getting in touch with Kofi B. Acheampong. He thus succeeded in dissuading the residents of the pile dwelling village Nzulezo from building a homestay house for overnight guests from concrete but instead to build it in the village style, i.e. from raffia timber (a kind of palm). The same goes for the Volta village Liate Wote which was been on the excursion programme for years. The villagers now have the courage to accommodate the guests in their own compounds (mud houses).

Contest criterion:

Participation of a broad local population strata in the positive economic, social and cultural impact of tourism

In this context the KASAPA CENTRE can be proud of having achieved a number of “impacts”.

The huge earth works necessary for the construction of the reed sewage treatment plant were not carried out with construction machinery but by using manpower, which meant that a lot of residents of Nyanyano were able to earn an income at the KASAPA construction site. The particularly demanding carpentry and masonry works were assigned to a group of skilled labourers from the village of Liate Wote mentioned earlier – it took them almost a year to finish the job. A specially skilled women's group was commissioned to stamp the mud floors.

Apart from creating jobs in the village care is also taken that the necessary services are rendered by local or regional small entrepreneurs. Should an additional mini-bus be needed for the excursions (apart from the one belonging to the centre) this will not be rented from a big rental firm but from the bus owner who is also in charge of the public transport.

For accommodations in town it is mostly the guest houses of church institutions that are booked since their income (directly or indirectly) will in the end be to the benefit of the population.

In its own interest the KASAPA CENTRE has made a substantial contribution towards infrastructure developments in Nyanyano. Until 1995 the communities did not have any toilets but used the beach as a cesspit which was of course a health hazard. To change this state of affairs and to build public toilets the KASAPA CENTRE invested about 17,000 DM. Furthermore, a concept for waste management was developed, and to begin with a huge pile of rubbish was removed from the beach and put into an unused quarry. The KASAPA CENTRE employs and pays for a garbage collector and pays a lot of attention to the cleanliness of the beaches, a fact from which the whole fisher village benefits. Expenses so far: 9,000 DM, part of which was donated by tourists.

KASAPA guests have on several occasions and from their own accord donated some money. Such as for the construction of a community clinic which was started only recently. Others pay for school fees or give assistance for training measures.

Through traditional donations the community receives substantial amounts every year. In addition the community also gets the yearly leasing rate of almost 800 DM for the KASAPA compound – which is quite generous compared to normal conditions in the country.

Contest criterion:

Guarantee of the attractiveness of jobs in tourism for the local people by improvement working conditions in relation to payment, social security, working hours, education and further training

The KASAPA CENTRE is run by the owner, i.e. the couple Stemann-Acheampong. Presently there are nine employees who work throughout the year and six who work only during high season. All are from Ghana (both from Nyanyano as well as from other coastal villages or from the capital Accra). All employees are introduced to the newly arrived guests. But there is also a picture panel with the staff of the KASAPA CENTRE with names and positions. Five of those fully employed are covered by the social security system. It is envisaged that all staff employments will be covered by the social security system.

The workers' wages are in line with those paid in the country (as mentioned earlier). Considering the extremely high unemployment rate in Ghana a year-round job is of invaluable importance. The employees also get special allowances such as financial assistance for

medical care or in situations of need. It is also a special privilege that the workers coming from Nyanyano are allowed to use the water supply of the KASAPA CENTRE for their personal use free of charge. In their home village water is a costly good, and always in short supply, which must be transported from Accra by tankers. A bucket of water (about 12 litres) normally costs 500 Cedi, an eighth of a daily wage.

KASAPA CENTRE also puts emphasis on its staff taking their own initiative and responsibility. The kitchen staff act almost completely autonomously and have their own budget. The kitchen is not equipped with European types of cookers and stoves or working tables, but partly furnished like a traditional private kitchen as is customary in the region. For the kitchen women it is their own working area which they regard as “their own thing” and which they therefore keep clean and proper – like their own kitchen at home. One of the employees started to offer “guided city tours” in his home village Nyanyano. On these tours he offers insider views, provides insight and contacts which would hardly be possible with normally arranged guided tours. This initiative led to several wages rises for him.

More than half of the employees have been working at the KASAPA CENTRE for more than four years.

Contest criterion:

Reinforcement of the local culture as well as of the cultural identity of those living in tourism destination areas

As mentioned on various occasions the intentions and procedures followed by the KASAPA CENTRE are aiming at exactly this point. The drumming and dancing workshops (enhancing and strengthening the local culture), the excursion programmes to or in the villages (reinforcement of cultural identity), the genuinely African building style of the KASAPA CENTRE itself.

Not to forget the fact (which might seem commonplace) that the KASAPA workers do not wear a European uniform (as is the case in the Western style hotels).

Contest criterion:

Avoidance or minimisation of social and cultural damage caused by tourism in destination areas

Right from the start, potential guests are prepared and put in the mood for the KASAPA CENTRE and for Ghana and, before they even start their journey, they are familiarised with the most important rules as to polite behaviour in Ghana. When they are in the country and during the excursions the guides and the employees see to it that the traditional good manners are kept (meeting the respective chiefs) and that existing taboos are respected. This also includes the extraordinarily important rite to observe the formalities of getting to know one another. This is when the “linguists” of each side, the spokesmen for the visitors and that of the village, initiate the welcome ceremony, explaining why and from where they have come, before being warmly greeted and by shaking hands.

The guests are asked not to “act like Santa Claus” i.e. not to give presents to the children. Those wanting to make a donation (money, medicines, clothes) are asked to do so in consultation with the project management so as to ensure that a sound balance is kept.

KASAPA CENTRE pays attention to the fact that the music and dance performances are not degraded to a kind of “hotel amusement”. Nor does the Centre tolerate trance dances to be “imitated” or performed.

Contest criterion:

Application of new methods in qualifying partnership and co-operation between the external tourism industry and the local people

The KASAPA CENTRE directly launches its offers on the European travel market. Presently without involving travel agencies. Co-operation partners in Germany are the “forum anders reisen e.V.” and a firm in Bonn active in tourism whose owners are related to the couple of Acheampong (see contact address). On the other hand, one is open to travel agencies which think that they could support the KASAPA concept.

Contest criterion:

Creation of other favourable conditions for a socially responsible tourism development in destination areas

As mentioned in the beginning the approach of the KASAPA CENTRE was not paid much attention to by the former political constellation in Ghana. It was known but due to its limited dimensions and its particular emphasis on being African it was not “impressive” enough. This might change after the democratic change in Ghana. At the same time such a distinctive project is dependent on getting access to the market, something that might turn out to be even more difficult in view of the future mergers in the realm of tourism taking place.

Contest criterion:

Projects and measures entered for the contest must be in line with the principles of environmental compatibility

Almost all matters of importance in view of environmental protection in a tourism enterprise are taken into consideration in an exemplary way at the KASAPA CENTRE. Garbage sorting facilities and composting are a matter of course. An excellent case in point is the implementation and use of energy supply through solar technology which will shortly be complemented through a small wind power plant.

It is quite an achievement in tropical regions to operate an odourless (!), modern compost toilet plant without using water. We can only recommend former TO DO! award winners and other tourism companies in a similar situation or geographic region to attain the environmental know-how of the KASAPA CENTRE. Conversely, we could also recommend to the KASAPA CENTRE management to make use of its knowledge and know-how in the area of consultancy.

Conclusion:

The KASAPA CENTRE implements a tourism concept Ghana can be proud of. It demonstrates how the African and European mentalities can blend into an exemplary symbiosis. Nothing

must be “developed” here, all that is necessary is to promote this concept. For the KASAPA CENTRE is a bridge across rifts which were torn up a long time ago.