

MAZIWA YA TEMBO

(milk from the elephants)

Can there be a win-win between Eco Tourism and the traditional Masai of Tanzania? Steered by a visionary council of tribal elders, the Lolkisale people of Tanzania's Monduli district have made some tough decisions, but finally can now savour the "milk that comes from Elephants".

In 1996 a landmark agreement was struck between the Lolkisale Community and a couple of Tanzanian based Australian brothers which saw 140000 acres of traditional Masai lands bordering the Tarangire National Park designated a Conservation Area, for the purpose of Eco tourism developments, further reinforced by a 45000 acre buffer zone of shared land use.

Encouraged by the prospects of income and local employment from tourism, the cooperative sought partners for the construction in 1998 of Tarangire Treetops, committing returns to a challenging list of community projects, such as Lolkisale's first medical clinic and dispensary opened in 1999, and the construction of three remote primary schools in outlying villages over the following two years.

In 2002 the construction was started on the jointly owned **Boundary Hill Lodge**, which opened in 2006. **Boundary Hill Lodge** broke many rules normally associated with "Eco tourism" and "Community Conservation". It was the first and is still the only project in Tanzania that the local communities have a 50% shareholding or any shareholding at all in any tourist facility, as well as nominating members to the Board of Directors.

The success of **Boundary Hill Lodge** and the Conservation Area has cleared the way for other like minded community partnerships.

As Tanzanians strive to find a balance between the nomadic pastoralist culture of the Masai and a modern, sustainable conservation model, the partnership which is **Boundary Hill Lodge**, is fittingly described by the local Kiswahili saying, Maziwa ya Tembo that, "milk will come from the elephants".

