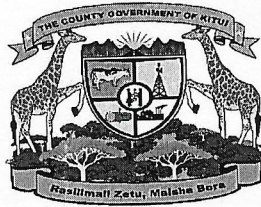


COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KITUI



THE COUNTY ASSEMBLY

THIRD ASSEMBLY – (THIRD SESSION)

**REPORT BY THE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM AND NATURAL
RESOURCES ON THE INSPECTION OF TOURISM PROJECTS FUNDED BY
THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KITUI FOR THE PERIOD 2013 TO 2023
CONDUCTED AS FROM 24TH TO 28TH JULY, 2023.**

**The Clerk Chambers
P. O Box 694 – 90200
Kitui**

MAY, 2024

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	-Annual Development Plan
CECM	-County Executive Committee Member
CFSP	-County Fiscal Strategy Paper
CIDP	-County Integrated Development Plan
CO	-Chief Officer
FY	-Financial Year
HWC	-Human Wildlife Conflict
IBA	-Important Bird Areas
IGA	-Income Generating Activities
KFS	-Kenya Forest Services
KWS	-Kenya Wildlife Service
MHPS	-Mutomo Hills Plant Sanctuary
MNR	-Mwingi National Reserve
NEMA	-National Environmental Management Authority
PFM	-Public Finance Management
S.O	-Standing orders
SKNR	-South Kitui National Reserve
SSG	-Site Support Groups



ANNEXURES

1. Photo Gallery (Annex I)
2. Signed Adoption List of Members (Annex II)
3. Adoption Minutes (Annex III)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mr. Speaker Sir, the oversight visit conducted by the Committee on Tourism and Natural Resources adhered to Article 185(3) of the Constitution, aiming to exercise oversight over the County Executive while respecting the principle of separation of powers. The five-day tour from 24th to 28th July, 2023 focused on various County tourism projects and existing historical tourists' attraction sites identifying challenges and opportunities for development. The County projects and tourists' attraction sites included Kanyonyoo Community Conservancy, Kalundu Eco Park, Ikutha AIC Historical Church, South Kitui Game Reserve, Mutomo Reptile Park, and Mutitu Hills.

The oversight aimed to assess project implementation status, evaluate tourism project effectiveness, and identify successes and challenges encountered, providing actionable recommendations for improving future initiatives and resource management strategies. Through firsthand inspections, oral interviews, and photo documentation, essential information regarding tourism sites across the County was gathered.

Mr. Speaker Sir, key observations and recommendations made by the Committee are as follows:

1. Kanyonyoo Community Conservancy:

- Observations: Human wildlife conflict, absence of fencing, encroachments/ illegal settlements, inadequate accessibility, security concerns, and environmental challenges.
- Recommendations: Proper fencing, equipping rangers, enhancing housing and transportation, fostering community relationships, and addressing environmental issues.



2. Kalundu Dam Eco-Park:

- Observations: Incomplete infrastructure, landscaping issues, and duplication of developments by private investors.
- Recommendations: Completing infrastructure, improving landscaping, enhancing security, and promoting collaboration with investors.

3. Ikutha AIC Historical Church:

- Observations: Structural integrity, historical significance, and lack of investment for preservation.
- Recommendations: Structural assessment, restoration funding, historical designation, and educational initiatives.

4. South Kitui Game Reserve:

- Observations: Degradation, human-wildlife conflicts, poor accessibility, and incomplete infrastructure.
- Recommendations: Electrified fencing, gate completion, policy formulation, road repairs, ranger training, and water provision.

5. Mutomo Reptile Park:

- Observations: Incomplete infrastructure/unit projects (parking lot, ceiling, flooring water piping, gate A and sentry house), abandoned projects, and environmental conservation efforts.
- Recommendations: Complete the infrastructure and the projects within, fund restoration, species introduction, and fast-track environmental protection measures.

6. Mutitu Hills - Birds Watching Site IBA 067:

- Observations: the SSGs were not available during our visit, there was of an lack of an official desk for information from the

ministry, lack of infrastructure to house rangers, dried streams due to human interference (cutting of trees).

➤ Recommendations: there is need for all round site availability of the SSCs, establishment of a site office and information desk by the department, construction ranger of houses and re afforestation.

• The oversight tour provided crucial insights into the state of tourism sites across the County, identifying key areas for improvement. Implementing the specific recommendations which can enhance tourism development, preserve cultural heritage, promote environmental conservation, and foster socio-economic growth for Kitui County and community empowerment.



CHAPTER ONE

1.0 PREAMBLE

Mr. Speaker Sir, it is with great honour and privilege that I, on behalf of the Members of the Committee on Tourism and Natural Resources, present the Report on the Inspection of Tourism Projects funded by the County Government, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 179(6). This comprehensive exercise occurred from July 24th to 28th, 2023.

1.1 COMMITTEE CONSTITUTION AND COMPOSITION

The Committee on Tourism and Natural Resources is constituted of the following members in accordance with Standing Order 190(1):

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Hon. Titus M. Kasinga, MCA | Chairperson |
| 2. Hon. Mercy Muema, MCA | Vice Chairperson |
| 3. Hon. Daniel Ngoima, MCA | Member |
| 4. Hon. Priscilla Makumi, MCA | Member |
| 5. Hon. Cyrus K. Musyoka, MCA | Member |
| 6. Hon. Rose K. Kathoka, MCA | Member |
| 7. Hon. Hussein Mwandia, MCA | Member |
| 8. Hon. Ciambutra Karigi, MCA | Member |
| 9. Hon. Waziri Bakari, MCA | Member |
| 10. Hon. Sammy Munyithya, MCA | Member |
| 11. Hon. Sylvester Kitheka Munyalo, MCA | Member |

1.2 COMMITTEE'S MANDATE

Article 185(3) of the Constitution states that, "*A County Assembly, while respecting the principle of separation of power, may exercise oversight over the County Executive Committee and any other County executive organ.*"

The Committee derives its mandate from the provisions of Standing Order No. 190(5) and the second schedule to the Standing Orders, which defines the functions of the committee in summary as follows: -

- i. Investigate, inquire into and report on all matters relating to the mandate, management, activities, administration, operation and estimates of the assigned department.
- ii. Make reports and recommendations to the County Assembly as often as possible, including recommendation of proposed legislation.
- iii. Study the programme and policy objectives of departments and the effectiveness of the implementation.



1.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Committee expresses gratitude to the Offices of the Speaker and the Clerk of the County Assembly for their invaluable support during the execution of its mandate. Special appreciation is extended to all Committee members for their dedication and commitment during the entire inspection, not forgetting to mention the committee clerk as well the staff from the Ministry of Tourism, Hospitality, and Game Reserves for their and invaluable background input on the projects.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Committee on Tourism and Natural Resources, I am honoured to present this report on the Inspection of Tourism Projects Funded by The County Government of Kitui, conducted from 24th July to 28th, July, 2023.

Thank you,

Signed: _____



Date: _____

26th April 2024

**HON. TITUS M. KASINGA,
CHAIRPERSON,
COMMITTEE ON TOURISM AND NATURAL RESOURCES.**

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 BACKGROUND

In undertaking the tour visit, the committee adhered to the provisions of Article 185 (3) of the Constitution, which allows a County Assembly to exercise oversight over the County Executive committee and other County Executive organs while respecting the principle of separation of powers. The five-day tour covered various County government funded tourism projects and historical tourists' attraction sites as outlined in the itinerary below:

DATE	SUB COUNTY	WARD	PROJECT/ SITES
Monday 4/07/2023	Kitui Rural	Yatta/ Kwa Vonza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yatta/Kwa Vonza Kanyoonyoo Community Conservancy i. Meeting stakeholders ii. Inspection/tour of the site
Tuesday 25/07/2023	Kitui Central	Township	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Township - Kalundu Eco Park i. Inspecting work done ii. Inspection/tour of the site • Ikutha AIC as first missionary's site – document historical information
Wednesday 26/07/2023	Kitui South	Mutha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Kitui Game Reserve i. Construction of entry gate at Tulima – South Kitui National Reserve. ii. Inspect/ tour the game reserve. iii. Inspect the Kalalani rangers camp
Thursday 27/07/2023	Kitui South	Mutomo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutomo Reptile Park i. Construction of reptile park – fencing project. ii. Construction of Ablution block, snake cages and snake pit.
Friday 28/07/2023	Kitui East	Mutitu/ Kaliku	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutitu Hills proposed site for bird watching IBA 67. i. Meet the site group. ii. Inspect/ tour the site.



2.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE OVERSIGHT:

The objectives of the oversight activity were to:

- i. Assess project implementation and evaluate the effectiveness of tourism projects.
- ii. Identify successes and challenges encountered during the implementation of tourism projects within the specified timeframe.
- iii. Provide actionable recommendations for improving future tourism initiatives and resource management strategies.

In realization of these objectives, the Committee conducted the aforementioned exercise from 24th July to 28th July, 2023, to gather first-hand information regarding County tourism projects and Historical sites across the County.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

The committee employed the following methods during the inspection exercise to gather necessary information:

- i. Direct observation of the sites/projects.
- ii. Oral interviews with County executive staff who accompanied the committee.
- iii. Oral interviews with the members of the public in the respective sites.
- iv. Photography of the sites/projects.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Committee Observations and Specific Recommendations

3.1 Kanyonyoo Community Conservancy

Mr. Speaker sir, the Kanyonyoo Community Conservancy, located approximately 45 kilometres from Kitui town, holds a unique geographical significance at the convergence of Garissa Road, Embu Road, and the Machakos-Thika-Nairobi Road. Encompassing an expansive area of 23,000 acres, the Kanyonyoo Wildlife Conservancy stands as the sole wildlife conservancy within Kitui County.

The Department of Tourism, Hospitality, and Game Reserves engaged in discussions with the B2 Yatta Ranching Cooperative Society to establish a community wildlife conservancy. This initiative was inspired by the presence of diverse wildlife, including giraffes, zebras, and impalas, for the development of wildlife-based tourism. Yatta B2 operates under an active 99-year lease agreement, primarily focused on supporting cattle ranching while simultaneously promoting wildlife conservation in partnership with the County Ministry of Tourism, Hospitality, and Game Reserves.

During our oversight, the committee gathered relevant information concerning the contractors involved in the project. This information is outlined as follows:

1. Construction of Wardens' Unihuts:

Sukajos Limited executed the construction of wardens' unihuts at a cost of Kshs. 2,523,801, with completion achieved in June 2020. Regrettably, due



to encroachments and illegal activities by criminal gangs in the Ranch, the structures have been vandalized.

2. Installation of Tented Camp and Toilets:

Chenduu Contractors Company carried out the installation of a tented camp and toilets, incurring an expenditure of Kshs. 1,326,110, and completed it in June 2020. Just like the wardens' unihuts, the structures have been vandalized due to the incursion of outsiders into the Ranch.

3. Opening and Grading of Access Road:

The task of opening and grading the 33-kilometer access road was entrusted to Munlex Co. Ltd, based in Kitui. They executed this project at a cost of Kshs. 4,763,202.20 and successfully completed it in 2017. However, there is now a need to regrade the access road to facilitate improved game viewing experiences.

Committee Observations/ Findings

Mr. Speaker Sir, the committee's observations can be summarized as follows:

1. Absence of fencing around the area has resulted in several issues, including encroachments, attacks by lawless individuals, and the unfortunate loss of wildlife as they cross the bustling Mwingi - Garissa Road.
2. Inadequate accessibility to the conservancy, particularly during the rainy season, is due to the poor condition of access roads.
3. There is serious diminishing of the wildlife particularly the giraffes which have migrated to other areas due to massive invasion by the squatters hence the human wildlife conflict.

4. A good chunk of the conservancy has been farmed by the squatters leading to a serious environmental degradation as well as causing the migration of the wildlife.
5. The conservancy has been invaded by land speculators who have settled on some parts of the conservancy as squatters. The invasion has led to conflict among the various competing parties some of whom are from outside Kitui County. As at the time of our visit one person had allegedly been killed due to this conflict.
6. The Yatta B2 management has not been able to prevent the invasion of the conservancy by squatters despite the fact that they are the custodian of the conservancy. According to the clerk of the management committee Mr. Festus Kamwilwa, the Yatta B2 management lacks the capacity to prevent grabbing of the conservancy hence contributing to the displacement of the wildlife and degradation of the environment by the squatters and other encroachers. However, Mr. Kamwilwa informed the committee that they had gone to court in order to obtain a court order to enable them evict the squatters.
7. Besides going to court, the Yatta B2 management had also informed the Ministry of Lands, Housing, Infrastructure, and Urban Development about the encroachment hence the ministry's need to take action to remedy the situation.
8. Yatta B1 and Katoteni leases have expired, and these conservancies have been acquired by South and Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) and various private individuals.
9. The County government has assigned five rangers in the conservancy who simply do not have the necessary capacity to patrol the area. The rangers lack transport means, firearms for safe protection, uniforms for



identification, health cover and hardship allowances. They do not also have access to adequate water and electricity.

10. The ranger's camp within the conservancy comprises of four units, which were vandalised by a group of individuals purportedly from neighbouring Machakos County.
11. Due to the ensuing insecurity concerns and inadequate housing, the rangers vacated the camp and are currently stationed at the nearby Kanyonyoo Market.
12. The conservancy contains a river that has become a target for sand harvesting activities.
13. The conservancy has three earth dams namely Kitune earth dam and Muisye earth dam which are completely silted and Kaburu earth dam which is partially silted. It also has three boreholes, two of which are active.
14. Frequent wildfires are a concern, often due to the activities of charcoal burning by the intruders.

Specific Committee Recommendations

Mr. Speaker Sir, the committee makes the following recommendations to address the various issues and challenges faced Kanyonyoo Wildlife Conservancy. That the County department of Tourism, Hospitality and Game Reserves Should;

1. Install proper fencing around the conservancy to prevent encroachments and protect wildlife.
2. Improve access roads leading to and within the conservancy to facilitate transportation and access for both rangers and visitors.

3. Take immediate steps to facilitate eviction of all squatters and land speculators from the conservancy. To achieve the desired results, the department should involve the ministry of Lands, Housing, infrastructure and Urban Development (LHIUD), Yatta B2 ranching scheme and the relevant security agencies.
4. Work with the ministry of Lands, Housing, infrastructure and Urban Development (LHIUD) with a view to reviewing the 99-year lease granted to Yatta B2 ranching scheme and look at the possibility of revoking (cancelling) the lease since they have failed to prevent grabbing and encroachment of the conservancy which has been entrusted to them.
5. Equip rangers with firearms or non-lethal deterrents for self-defence and to deter lawless individuals. Further, provide them with appropriate transportation, such as vehicles or off-road bikes, to improve their mobility and patrol efforts.
6. Ensure adequate housing for the rangers within the conservancy to encourage them to stay within the conservancy for better monitoring and response to threats.
7. Work with relevant authorities to prevent illegal sand harvesting in the river within the conservancy and implement monitoring and protection measures to safeguard the river's ecosystem.
8. Develop and implement a fire prevention strategy, including monitoring and early detection of wildfires.
9. Conduct public awareness campaigns to discourage charcoal burning activities within the conservancy.
10. Invite the KWS to help in developing mechanisms and strategies of protecting the conservancy.



3.2 Kalundu Dam Eco-Park

Mr. Speaker Sir, the concept for Kalundu Dam Eco Park emerged in 2016 as a response to the growing demand for recreational facilities in Kitui town. Situated in Kitui Township Ward, it stands as the first dryland beach in Kenya. This visionary project was initiated during the first County Government whose leadership was the current Governor. The master plan then envisioned a diverse array of amenities, including a sand beach, parking lot, children's playground, visitor shades, swimming pools for both children and adults, resting benches, installation of litter bins, a touristic footbridge, a small animal orphanage, a nature trail, and kiosks for rental by the members of the public. Such facilities would be used in selling drinks and other food stuffs to the visitors.

Mr. Speaker Sir, Kalundu Dam possesses significant potential for water sports tourism and serves as a platform for youth empowerment through job creation. With Kitui town boasting a population of approximately 100,000 residents, it is projected that at least 10% (10,000) of these individuals and their families would frequent a recreational facility within the town.

Moreover, it is imperative to note the inadequacy of existing recreation and tourism facilities in Kitui town and its environs. Kalundu Dam Eco-Park enriches the tourism circuit by connecting Nzambani rock, Ikoo valley, and Kanyonyoo wildlife conservancy. Its strategic location along the Kitui – Ithookwe tarmac road ensures easy accessibility for visitors from Kitui town, show grounds, airstrip, and nearby schools.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Kalundu Dam Eco-Park boasts a plethora of promising tourism and leisure amenities. In the ideal situation the Eco park would offeras

bird watching and water sports tourism, diverse boat options including canoeing, rowing, paddle, traditional, and powered boats for short-distance excursions. Additionally, the park would feature nature trails, botanical gardens, a Cultural Center showcasing Kamba artifacts, curio shops, children's play areas, swimming pools, fast food eateries, and shop bandas for visitors to enjoy.

Committee Observations/ Findings

Mr. Speaker Sir, the committee made the following observations;

1. The Eco park lacks a proper fence thus allowing uncontrolled movements in and out of the park for both human beings and animals.
2. A retaining wall for the children's playground was initiated but remains incomplete. Other incomplete projects and which require further funding and completion are; the parking area, the sand beach, shades with benches, children's pool with slides, adult swimming pool, touristic foot bridge, animal orphanage, nature trail and kiosks for rent.
3. Currently the entry to the park and the use of the dam is free.
4. Inadequate landscaping efforts were evident.
5. Two gazebos were constructed, but their quality was subpar.
6. Five security lights were installed, though one has been subjected to vandalism.
7. Plastic bottles and bags have accumulated along the dam's edge due to downstream flow from the uptown area.
8. The Eco park lacks litter bins hence causing littering.
9. Overgrown trees surrounding the dam and fallen branches have become potential hazards to the river's integrity.



10. The committee was informed that the park is manned by twelve rangers whom we did not find on site. Their absence raised the question of their commitment to the assigned duties and probably explains the reason for the presence of a herder whom we found grazing his cows at the park but who upon interrogation insinuated that he was known the rangers.
11. A private investor constructed a restaurant next to the Eco park and pre-empted the county tourism plans by duplicating all planned developments, including boat rides, and food kiosks.
12. At the onset of the project, the Tourism department exhibited disorganized planning, resulting in a lack of efficient fund utilization.
13. The ablution block was poorly maintained and not in use. This obviously puts off potential tourists.

Specific Committee Recommendations

That the County department of Tourism, Hospitality and Game Reserves;

1. Repairs and reinforces the porous fence in order to prevent uncontrolled movement of people and animals as well as prevent vandalism of the facilities inside the park.
2. Allocate resources and manpower to complete the retaining wall for the children's playground and all the other incomplete projects.
3. Increase efforts to improve landscaping, focusing on greenery, pathways, and aesthetics.
4. Ensure the timely completion of the gate and gatehouse to enhance security.
5. Assess the quality of the gazebos and consider refurbishing or rebuilding them to meet required standards.

6. Repair the vandalized security light and implement additional security measures to prevent further incidents of vandalism.
7. Initiate a cleanup campaign to remove plastic bottles and bags from the dam's edge.
8. Regularly trim overgrown trees, grass and remove fallen branches to prevent hazards.
9. Engage in discussions with private investors to ensure complementary developments within the Eco park.
10. Allocate funds for restroom facilities' refurbishment and maintenance, including hiring additional personnel.
11. Reevaluate planning and funding allocation for efficient resource utilization and enhanced project management.
12. Once the Eco park is complete, the County government should put in place mechanisms of collecting revenue either as gate charges or a one stop charge to cover usage of any other available service within the facility.

3.3 Ikutha AIC Historical Church

Mr. Speaker Sir, Ikutha Africa Inland Church (AIC) stands as a testament to the early missionary efforts in Africa. In 1885, Johannes Hoffmann and his missionary group arrived at Ikutha, where they established a church, their residence, a pastor's dwelling, and accommodation for workers. This pioneering endeavor marked the genesis of the first AIC church in the eastern region, a significant milestone in the history of Christianity in the area. Recognized as a tourist site in 2015, the church compound holds profound historical significance.

Mr. Speaker Sir, an additional noteworthy structure within the church grounds is the second church constructed by the missionaries in 1886. Despite its



current state of disrepair, this historic edifice still stands, bearing witness to the passage of time. Johannes Hoffmann's legacy endures, as the cemetery within the church compound serves as the final resting place not only for him but also for his children and workers who passed away during that era, preserving their memory for generations to come.

Committee Observations/Findings

1. Only the roof and the entrance door have undergone modifications; the rest of the structure constructed primarily with stone and mud remains unchanged.
2. The initial dwellings which comprised of thatched huts near a majestic baobab tree have endured harsh times, with their foundations remaining in a preserved state.
3. An ancient bell, historically used to call villagers for church services and gatherings, remains in its original location, now serving as an intriguing point of interest for tourists.
4. A monumental tree, originally planted by indigenous scholars associated with the institution, holds significant cultural and historical importance.
5. Missionaries installed a well, providing vital water resources to the community, now standing as a testament to their contributions.
6. The church faced the threat of demolition due to its location within a road reserve but was safeguarded through petitions made to the Second County Assembly, preserving its historical significance.
7. Despite its historical and cultural value, no financial investments have been made in its upkeep. However, through collaboration with the Kenya Broadcasting Channel (KBC), the site was featured on a program

titled "Magical Scene Kenya," potentially enhancing its visibility and recognition.

Specific Committee Recommendations

That the County department of Tourism, Hospitality and Game Reserves Should;

1. Conduct a comprehensive structural assessment of the second church structure to ensure the its safety for visitors as well as stability.
2. Develop a conservation plan to preserve the church's original structure and maintain its historical authenticity. The department should therefore partner with the Kenya Museums in order to carry out the necessary structural repairs.
3. Consider designating the church as a historical landmark to attract preservation funds and attention.
4. Recognize and document the cultural and historical importance of all structures on the site (the stone foundations for the first church, the bell, the tree, the well and the graves), establishing protective measures for their preservation.
5. Create informative displays or signage to educate visitors about the historical significance of the huts and other structures.
6. Advocate for legal protections and historical designations to prevent future demolition threats.
7. Develop a comprehensive marketing and awareness strategy to increase visitor numbers and funding.
8. Should seek partnership with local or national tourism agencies to promote the site as a heritage and tourist destination, hence increase awareness in and out of Kenya for potential tourists.



3.4 South Kitui Game Reserve

Mr. Speaker Sir, the South Kitui Game Reserve, gazetted in 1979, spans an area of 1,833km², falling under the custody of the Kitui County government. Positioned adjacent to Tsavo East National Park, it features an altitude ranging from 1,829meters to 3,994 meters above sea level.

To safeguard the reserve from encroachment, the County government proposed constructing an entry gate at Tulima and establishing a cutline during the 2016/2017 fiscal year. The cutline aimed to demarcate the reserve from community land, curbing illegal activities and bolstering wildlife conservation efforts. However, encroachment persists, hindering wildlife influx due to activities like herding and charcoal burning.

In 2019, a joint effort by the County Government of Kitui and the National Interior Ministry multi-agency team successfully evicted encroachers from Enyali and Kalalani. Kalalani, formerly a primary school constructed by Tana River County for encroachers, now serves as a Ranger's camp manned by KWS rangers to thwart encroachment by camel herders from the neighboring Tana River County.

Committee Observations/Findings

1. There is human settlement and pastoralist activities in some parts of the reserve which have led to degradation of the environment, accommodating nearly 5,000 illegal inhabitants, cattle and camels from the neighboring counties, some allegedly linked to terrorist groups.
2. The grazing of cattle and camels by the illegal inhabitants within the reserve has led to migration of the wildlife from the reserve. Occasionally the displaced wildlife have strayed into the farms around

the reserve hence causing immense losses to the farmers. According to the Tourism department officers, the destruction of the farms, has caused the ministry significant amounts of money in terms of compensation of the destroyed crops to the farmers.

3. Allegedly, the illegal immigrants from the neighboring counties have settled in the reserve to find pasture for their cattle as a result of adverse climate changes in their counties. We observed hundreds of camels grazing within the reserve while enroute to the Kalalani ranger's camp.
4. Poor road infrastructure leading to the reserve and within the reserve hampers accessibility hence limiting tourist activities and effective policing of the reserve by the Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) rangers.
5. The reserve is policed by rangers from the Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) who are stationed at Kalalani Rangers camp formerly a primary school built by the Tana River County government for the encroachers.
6. The Ranger's Camp comprises of three structures two of which are class rooms and one which houses the rangers and doubles as their communication office. The structures were in a dilapidated state and lacked power connectivity.
7. The rangers camp is served with water from a nearby borehole done by the Tana River County government and which is powered by a fuel generator posing sustainability challenges due to the high cost of fuel.
8. There was poor phone network connectivity in the rangers camp hence compromising security efforts due to poor communication.
9. To prevent further settlement of the illegal inhabitants in the reserve and conflicts with the local community the County government of Kitui had initiated discussions with the County government of Tana river geared towards fostering security and stability within the two county



boundaries. To this end, the county government of Kitui was to go ahead with the construction of the Kona Kaliti police station. The police station has for a long time been opposed by the neighboring Tana River residents.

10. The reserve does not have an entry gate. Rutgil construction company was awarded a tender for the construction of the proposed Tulima gate. Even though the contractor was brought to the site the project did not take off as the contractor cited security threats from the illegal inhabitants.
11. The funds allocated for the proposed Tulima gate were then diverted to a cutline project in 2017 but the project too faced subsequent delays and challenges due to the same security threats.
12. In the FY 2021-2022 the county government awarded a contract for a sum of 1.7M in an attempt to kick start the cutline project. This did not work as an immediate conflict with the inhabitants arose disrupting the work leaving destruction of the small stretch of the 3.5kms which was to be done.
13. Collaboration with conservation partners in the tourism industry is crucial for operationalizing the reserve. To this end the ministry had received support from Sheldrick Wildlife Trust who had pledged Kshs. 70M for fencing of the game reserve provided the county government committed themselves first with seed money. The county government had also received support from the then cabinet secretary for tourism Ms. Peninah Malonza who had promised to commit Kshs. 50M towards fencing of the western and northern boundaries of the game reserve.

Committee Specific Recommendations

That the County department of Tourism, Hospitality and Game Reserves should;

1. Seek support of the national government security agencies to enforce eviction of illegal inhabitants and encroachers to safeguard the integrity of the game reserve and preserve security. This would make the game reserve safe and secure for tourism activities.
2. Implement community engagement programs to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts and create awareness of the importance and value of the game reserve.
3. Prioritize road infrastructure improvements to enhance accessibility to the game reserve hence improved tourist visits and enhanced security through ranger patrols.
4. Renovate Kalalani Ranger's Camp facilities and explore sustainable energy solutions such as solar panels for the borehole and the camp facilities.
5. In collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) train and deploys county government rangers to the game reserve to help enhance security and protect the wildlife. Enhanced security within the reserve will help in fast-tracking of construction of the Tulima gate entry and the marking of the cutline.
6. In collaboration with the County department of Administration and Coordination of County Affairs to fast track construction of the Kona Kaliti police station. The police station will help enhance security between Tanarive County and South Kitui.
7. Makes follow ups with the Cabinet Secretary for Tourism and Sheldrick Wildlife Trust to deliver on their promise for funding and also approach



other potential and willing tourism partners for funding and technical support.

8. Approaches and partners with phone network providers such as Safaricom and Airtel to improve connectivity in the camp and the game reserve as a whole.
9. Excavate water pans to attract and retain wildlife within the reserve.

3.5 Mutomo Reptile Park

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Mutomo Hill Plant Sanctuary, established in 1964 as a botanical garden, additionally a proposed reptile park in 2015 under the purview of the County department of Tourism and Natural Resources was also introduced. The envisioned park, situated at Mutomo Hill, aims to enrich tourism opportunities, particularly for schoolchildren, and contribute to research endeavours such as venom harvesting for anti-venom production.

Contractors involved in the project included:

1. Taraji Company Limited: Completed boundary wall construction in October 2018.
2. Gameco Company: Commenced entrance gate and sentry construction but abandoned the project.
3. KAKESU Contractors: Undertook parking ground construction but abandoned it in 2018.
4. Vanrich General Merchants: Completed the snake house structure but awaits cage installation, ceiling, flooring and water piping.
5. Kapuriee Professional Services: Completed snake pit construction but requires additional works like fencing of the pit.
6. Rukajo Suppliers Ltd: Successfully graded the access road to the reptile park in 2023.

Committee Observations/Findings

1. Initial projects in the FY 2016/2017, including gate construction, were left unfinished by contractors.
2. The snake house does not have a properly constructed ramp for access by people living with disability.
3. Essential aspects within the snake house, such as the ceiling, interior flooring, water piping and proper window panes, remain incomplete.
4. Several components of the reptile park, including the snake pit and its fencing, require construction.
5. Access to the reptile park is through three gates A, B and C. while construction of gates B and C are complete, construction of gate A and the sentry house is yet to be completed. Construction works on the landscaping, and the ablution block are also pending.
6. The reptile park compound and the access road to gate B were bushy and unkempt.
7. The crocodile pen and nature trail design are yet to commence.

Committee Specific Recommendations

That the County department of Tourism, Hospitality and Game Reserves should;

1. Prioritize the completion of gate A and the sentry house.
2. Fast track collaboration efforts with the Kenya National Museum experts to expedite snake cages installation within the snake house.
3. Ensure timely completion of the ceiling, ventilations and installation of grills for environmental control within the snake house.
4. Initiate construction of the snake pit and surrounding fence to enhance safety for visitors and reptiles.



5. Fast track installation of interior flooring and water piping in the snake house for ease of operations.
6. Rectify the steep ramp entrance to meet accessibility standards and enhance safety for people living with disabilities.
7. Expedite car parking area completion and landscaping for enhanced functionality and aesthetics.
8. Initiate ablution block construction to provide essential facilities for visitors and the county workers.
9. Arrange for bush clearing around the snake house area and open the access road for better visibility and accessibility to gate B.
10. Commence crocodile pen construction to diversify reptile species housed in the park.
11. Design nature trails to enhance visitor experience and educational opportunities.

3.6 Mutitu Hills -Birds Watching Site IBA 067

Mr. Speaker Sir, Mutitu Forest Reserve, nestled in Kitui East within Mutitu Hills, gained gazettelement in 1974. Spanning 1986 acres and rising 5148 feet above sea level, the forest boasts both indigenous and plantation varieties, with **Terminalia brownii** reigning as the dominant tree species. Recognized globally as the 67th Important Bird Area (IBA), Mutitu Hills shelters iconic bird species, including the renowned **Hinde's babbler**. The County Government, in collaboration with Nature Kenya, has championed efforts to secure international recognition for this site, elevating its status and fostering global conservation interest. The hill offers ideal terrain for nature trails, hiking, and camping, attracting nature enthusiasts and adventurers alike. In

2015-2016, the department extended support to the site group, providing essential equipment such as cameras, binoculars, and guidebooks.

Committee Observations/Findings

1. The famous Hinde's Babbler bird was not sighted due to its special timing of appearance. However, the committee was informed that the SSGs know the timings and location of the birds which timings we were meant to understand should be very early in the morning.
2. The Department of Tourism, Hospitality, and Game Reserves, in conjunction with Nature Kenya, has spearheaded various initiatives to bolster conservation efforts within the designated area. These include public engagements, boundary mapping, rapid bird assessments (RBA), and establishment of site support groups (SSGs) consisting of 36 members.
3. The Site support groups (SSGs), integral to conservation endeavors for both the hill and its avian inhabitants, have received substantial backing from Nature Kenya.
4. Nature Kenya has conducted extensive training for SSGs, covering topics ranging from biodiversity to eco-tourism, enhancing their capacity to contribute meaningfully to conservation.
5. The SSGs have undergone governance, advocacy, and financial management training, augmenting their effectiveness in conservation activities.
6. Indigenous communities are actively involved in bird species protection and tree planting initiatives, fostering environmental stewardship.
7. Membership fees for SSGs are set at Kshs. 200, with each group developing its work plans to guide activities.



8. The SSGs have established seedling nurseries, furthering conservation efforts.
9. The lack of clearly defined nature trails poses challenges to visitors and conservation endeavours.
10. The department envisions transforming the site into a research hub, accentuating its scientific and conservation significance.
11. Essential equipment provided to the SSGs includes binoculars, cameras, guidebooks, and GPS devices, facilitating bird identification and monitoring.
12. County game rangers are deployed to monitor the forest, safeguarding against illegal activities and preserving biodiversity.
13. Capacity building and exposure tours for the SSGs remain necessary to glean insights from successful initiatives elsewhere in Kenya.
14. There is poor road network which impede access to the forest reserve hindering easy access by tourists.
15. The Kenya Forest Service houses at the base of the hill are in a dilapidated state and they are no longer in use posing an accommodation challenge to the Kenya Forest Service wardens who are supposed to oversee protection of the forest.

Committee Specific Recommendations

That the County department of Tourism, Hospitality and Game Reserves should;

1. In collaboration with the Kenya Forest Service and Nature Kenya, map out and establish clear nature trails within the Important Bird Area (IBA) to enhance visitor experience while preserving natural habitats.

2. Organize exposure tours for the SSGs to learn from successful conservation initiatives across Kenya, expanding their knowledge and efficacy.
3. In collaboration with the county ministry of Lands, Infrastructure, Housing and Urban Development work to improve the road network leading to the forest reserve to enhance accessibility by tourists.
4. Collaborate with Kenya Forest Service and ensure renovation of the houses to provide the necessary and proximal accommodation for the wardens.
5. Seek for funding from potential tourism partners to establish a scientific research hub, which is important in promoting conservation efforts culminating to increased tourist visits.
6. Foster tree planting initiatives through collaboration with indigenous communities, educational institutions, and religious organizations, to promote environmental stewardship.
7. Provide ongoing support to SSGs, including resources, capacity building, and monitoring, to bolster their conservation efforts.
8. Collaborate with SSGs and other relevant actors to develop and promote eco-tourism activities, generating income and supporting conservation.
9. In collaboration with KFS and other relevant actors conduct outreach and educational campaigns to raise awareness about conservation among local communities, schools, and churches, emphasizing their role in environmental protection.
10. Market the hill to private investors in tourism industry as an ideal location for setting up of a hotel as well as both tented camp and campsite.



CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 KEY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Speaker Sir, in light of the observations above, the County department of Tourism, Hospitality and Game Reserves should;

1. **Develop a Comprehensive Tourism Strategy:** Formulate a detailed tourism strategy and policies that outlines specific steps to leverage Kitui County's natural attractions, historical sites and hospitality facilities. This strategy should encompass marketing plans, infrastructure development initiatives, and community engagement programs.
2. **Foster Collaboration and Partnerships:** Facilitate partnerships between the National government, public and private sectors, investors, and local communities to drive tourism development. Such collaboration should lead to among others, development of hospitality training facility(s) to train workers to work in hotel and tourism related fields within and out of Kitui County; Hence generating revenue as well as creating job opportunities.
3. **Invest in Tourism Projects and Infrastructure:** Allocate adequate resources towards improving and completing county projects and infrastructure such as the South Kitui Game Reserve, the Kanyonyoo conservancy, the Kalundu Dam Eco park, Mutomo reptile park, roads, signage, and recreational facilities just but to mention a few in order to enhance, accessibility to the tourism sites, the visitor experience and increase revenue.
4. **Enhance Security Measures in Game Reserves:** Collaborate with relevant agencies to implement robust security measures in the SKNR including

the Kanyonyoo Conservancy to evict the squatters, illegal herders and combat poaching, charcoal burning, farming and any other illegal activities within the game reserves and the conservancy.

5. Increase Departmental Budgetary Allocations to Develop County Tourism Infrastructure and Promote Tourism as an Economic Driver:

Serious under funding of the Tourism department has been the main undoing and cause of the snail-paced development of the department's projects leading to a prolonged period of actualization. There is therefore need of raising awareness within the County Executive of the importance of allocating adequate resources to fund the sector's development projects and activities. The upshot of increased funding will be completion and operationalization of the county funded projects hence increased tourism activities leading to increase in own source revenue, employment and business opportunities for the people of Kitui County.

6. Market South Kitui Game Reserve: Actively promote the South Kitui Game Reserve as a prime tourist destination through marketing campaigns targeting both domestic and international tourists. To reap maximum benefit of the reserve therefore the County government should partner with the national ministry of Tourism and Wildlife to construct a bridge across river Tiva hence connecting the reserve and Tsavo East National Game Park. The bridge will enable tourists to cross over to the reserve and back to Tsavo East with ease.

7. Provide Field-Based Training for Rangers: Organize field-based training programs for rangers working in Kitui County's game reserves and conservancies in collaboration with KWS to enhance their effectiveness in protecting wildlife and the environment.

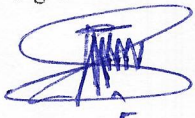


8. **Install Electric Fence and Diversify Wildlife Population:** Install an electric fence in South Kitui Game Reserve along the border with Tana River County and around Kanyonyoo Wildlife Conservancy. The fencing off of the reserve and conservancy will enhance security, protect the wildlife and solve the human wildlife conflict. Additionally, diversify the wildlife population within the reserve to attract more foreign tourists.
9. **Resume construction of the South Kitui Game Reserve Cutline and the Tulima gate:** The cutline is important in informing the local communities of the reserves boundary hence discouraging encroachment and illegal grazing by the local communities. The gate will serve as an entry land mark to the game reserve as well as be a point of collecting revenue through the gate charges paid by tourists to the game reserve.
10. **Fast track the signing of the Memorandum of Understand (MOU) with Kenya Wildlife Services for the effective management of the South Kitui Game Reserve among other collaborative areas of common and mutual interest.**

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker Sir, in conclusion, the oversight tour conducted by the Committee has provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing tourism, hospitality, and game reserves in Kitui County. The detailed observations and recommendations reflect a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand and underscore the importance of holistic and sustainable tourism management practices. It is imperative for the County Government to prioritize the implementation of these recommendations to unlock the full potential of Kitui County as a premier tourism destination in the region. By investing in infrastructure, policies, and partnerships, Kitui County can harness its rich cultural heritage and natural assets to drive economic growth and enhance community livelihoods.

Mr. Speaker Sir, allow me to end the presentation of this report by quoting one Mr. Gilbert k. Chesterton who said **“The traveler see what he sees, the tourist sees what he has come to see.”** We must therefore work hard and develop our county tourism facilities and place them in a competitive edge with the rest of the Country to give a reason for tourists to come to Kitui County.



ANNEX I
PHOTOGRAPHS

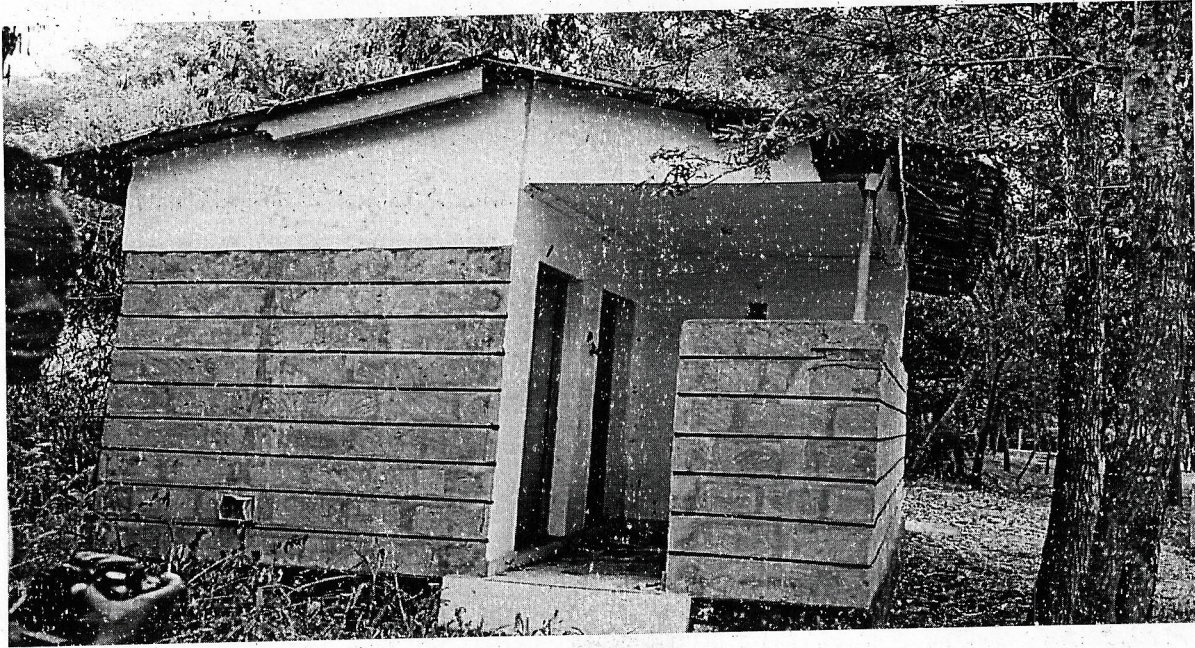


Figure 1 Ablution Block at Kalundu Dam Eco Park.

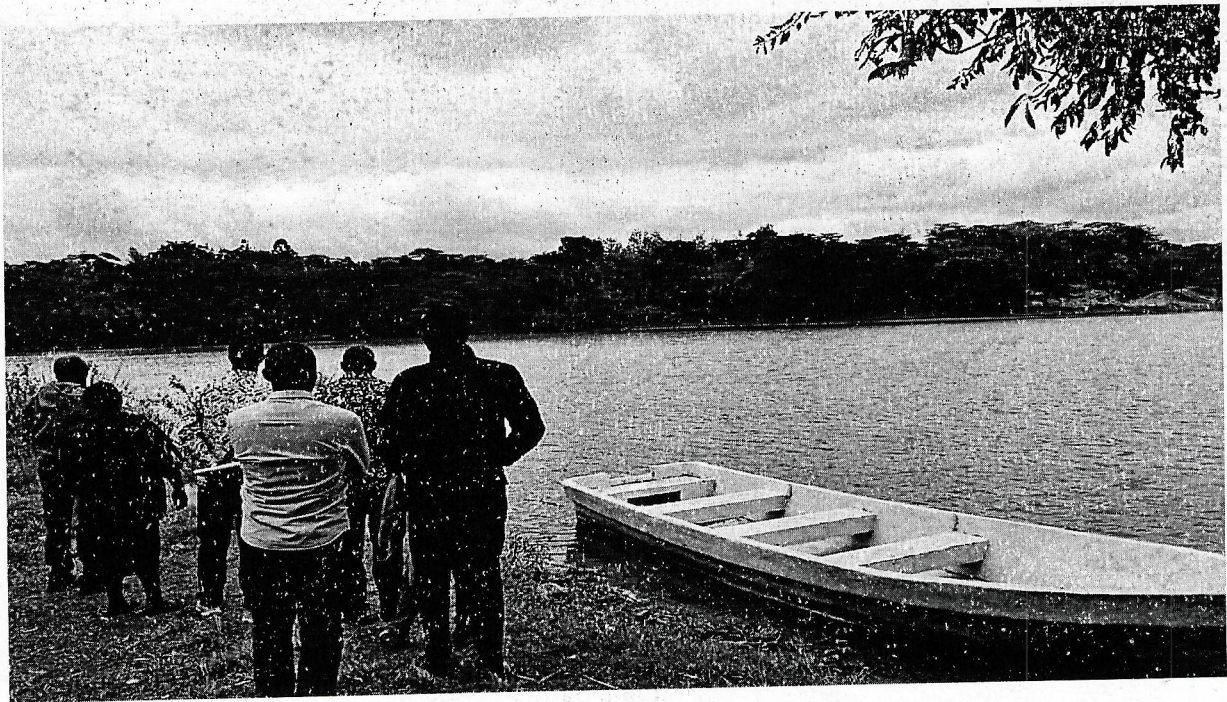


Figure 2: Members of the Committee being briefed on the history and status of the Kalundu Dam Eco Park.