

# Arabuko-Sokoke Schools & Eco-Tourism Scheme

## ASSETS E-News

November 2008

ASSETS is an eco-scholarship fund that helps needy children attain a secondary school education whilst conserving the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Mida Creek.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

Weeks into the 3<sup>rd</sup> term of year 2008, barely two weeks since the final secondary schools examination started, it is exactly one week before the final primary schools exam starts. 21 ASSETS beneficiaries are writing their end of course exam while more than 400 students from the 8 ASSETS beneficiary schools are expecting to join secondary school next year. This is by far the highest number of potential ASSETS beneficiaries we have ever had since the programme started 7 years ago.

This year ASSETS has just managed to support 217 students in secondary school following a drop in the income earned from eco-tourism activities. Thanks to all who donated towards ASSETS or sponsored a student this year for your donation is what kept the programme running. With increased government efforts in marketing Kenya abroad, we hope for improved tourism earnings next year.

This period has had quite a significant impact in the conservation part of ASSETS. A major tree planting organized by Jonathan Baya, the Community Conservation Officer saw over 600 indigenous trees replanted around Arabuko swamp. All these trees were donated by the ASSETS beneficiaries from the tree nurseries they have been running. A better commitment from the ASSETS beneficiaries is evident from the seriousness portrayed in the parents' participation and subscription to the Muvera wa ASSETS association.

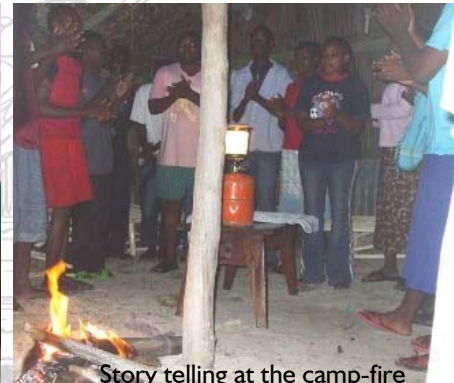
### ASSETS Summer Camp, 2008



Beach Volleyball



Sand Art at the beach



Story telling at the camp-fire

The three days of the camp always catch the students by surprise; before they realise, it is day three and they have to leave! When asked to comment, a majority say the camp is too short and would wish to stay longer at Mwamba Field Study Centre. For the last 3 years now ASSETS has been organising a camp for the ASSETS beneficiaries to expose them to some of the challenges of conservation in their local area and give them an opportunity to participate in some conservation activities.

This was the situation in August when over 40 students attended the ASSETS Summer camp. On arrival the participants normally have no idea of what to expect and to begin with, look a bit out of place. However just after the orientation exercise the students are all over the place and asking all kinds of questions. This year it was FUN!

Among the lessons learnt in the camp include drugs and drug abuse, HIV and AIDS, the environmental crisis today and career choice.



More games at the beach



More games at the beach

A snorkelling trip to the Watamu Marine Park's coral gardens was definitely an unforgettable climax of the camp.

# Forest Enrichment - at the Arabuko Swamp

*A gesture of gratuity to nature, the source of livelihood!*

## **Writes Jonathan Baya, ASSETS Community Conservation Officer.**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August I had organized a tree planting event in collaboration with Kenya Wild life service (KWS), Kenya Forest Service (KFS), Kenya Forest Research Institute (KEFRI) and the Wild life Clubs of Kenya. After a lengthy chat with the new Warden at Gede Forest station, Mr. Korir, I proceeded to the District forest officer, Mr Bernard Orinda who was equally positive about the idea. This activity could however not commence without some professional advice from the Kenya Forest Research Institute who proposed that the planting be conducted around the Arabuko Swamp as we have come towards the end of the long rains. On 29<sup>th</sup> July, the forester Mr. Maganga I surveyed the area to be rehabilitated.

The ASSETS beneficiary parents from Mijomboni donated 700 seedlings of mahogany bean tree, *Azelia quenzensis* and the tamarind tree, *Tamarindus indica*. Initially we had planned to plant all 700 seedlings, but we couldn't manage them all due to hitches in transport.

The activity was officially flagged off by the Forester Mr. Blessington Maganga, on behalf of the District Forest Officer in collaboration with Sergeant Hamisi Mwaluma representing the KWS warden at 10.15 a.m.

12.30 p.m., everybody was totally exhausted sweating and longing for a drink. We decided that we call it a day as by this time the sun was above the head and it the swamp area was very humid. The Chairman of the Mijomboni cluster, Mr. Goddens Baya spoke at length about the ASSETS scheme and appreciated the turn up in general. By 12.45, the 7 representatives from government institutions, 8 community members, 1 teacher and 40 students from Mijomboni Primary School had left. I left the place at 1p.m. leaving behind over 600 trees growing.



Wild Life Clubs of Kenya students planting trees

## **How you can help...**

Annual donations are most helpful as they help to plan in advance the number of students that we are able to support. However, cheques in UK Sterling or US Dollars, payable to A Rocha Kenya/ASSETS, can also be posted to:

**ASSETS, c/o A Rocha Kenya, P.O. Box 383 Watamu 80202 Kenya**

Alternatively, you can show your support for the conservation of the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Mida Creek and the local children, by coming to visit the area.

**Gift aid forms are also available for UK taxpayers.**



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