

Name of your organisation

Chole Mjini Conservation &
Development Co Ltd

Section 1 - You and your vision

1. Why do you think your organisation deserves to win this Award? (300 words)

We have pioneered a successful model for responsible tourism in a beach environment by building a tree house lodge on a small island that enhances and sustains the natural beauty and conserves the wildlife and cultural heritage of the site for travellers to share, whilst working for a remote community to bring real benefits and to empower them to manage their own destiny.

We have been developing and practising Responsible Tourism on Chole Island in the Mafia Island Marine Park (MIMP), Tanzania since 1993. We have made it possible for many in our community to get an education, decreased infant mortality and improved health care, introduced new skills, boosted employment and participation in the mainstream economy and we have built the capacity to determine the direction of change, make strategic decisions and implement plans. We have brought real, quantifiable positive change and we have unquantifiably changed the aspirations of the children of Chole, who previously were barely reached by mainstream government, bilateral aid, or NGOs.

We promote and support marine and cultural heritage conservation, directly by serving on the MIMP Advisory Committee, by founding and running the Mafia Island Whale Shark Conservation Society (WHASCOS), by establishing a sanctuary for fruit bats and by restoring, shoring-up and rebuilding ruins of cultural heritage importance. Indirectly, by soliciting funds for others to rebuild old buildings, by raising awareness, supporting NGO's such as Sea Sense and creating employment and alternative livelihoods that relieve the pressure of natural resource exploitation.

We deserve to win this award for what we have achieved and for developing a model that is already being replicated. We are excited that this model could be more widely emulated by the private sector to build islands of skill and hope that drive conservation and development to sustain remote communities.

2. What is your organisation's most significant achievement in terms of responsible beach tourism? (250 words) *Please provide evidence to support this statement.*

Developing and demonstrating the powerful paradigm for development through responsible business.

In 1993 there was only one person on Chole Island that had proceeded beyond primary school, one person in formal (salaried) employment and only one bicycle. Together with the community and donors we built classrooms, teacher's housing, a small hospital, market, and a Woman's Centre. We raised funds for the construction and recurrent funding of a kindergarten, library, learning centre with computers. We have provided 164 Scholarships, already have eight University graduates, 94 Form 4 leavers, and have given many young people skills, like English and Computing, who now hold permanent jobs and are no longer dependent on the diminishing natural resources.

Our business ethos has made it possible for parents of children born in this remote community to keep their children healthy and plan for their education from kindergarten through to University.

Over twenty years we have helped the economy of Chole Island to grow from around \$15,000 per annum to at least \$150,000 per annum (measured in 2013), with tangible quantifiable indicators of wealth (such as cars, outboard engines, motorcycles, TV's and solar panels all earning income for their owners, more than 100 bicycles that take young people to and from school and to jobs). We measure our success by the number of people we have managed to uplift.

The viable business, UK-based charity, organizations on Chole Island that administer the donations, guest bed night levies and day visitor tickets ensure that continued development can be sustained.

3. What is your vision for your organisation (in terms of responsible beach tourism) in the next 2 years? How will you measure it? (200 words)

The vision of our organization is one of 50 years. We undertook to educate two generations of Chole children and we are half way there. In the next two years we will

- a) improve profitability to ensure long-term sustainability- (to be measured in dollars).
- b) increasingly outsource guest activities to local entrepreneurs –(measured by recording the extent of outsourcing of the guest experience (\$'s) and guest satisfaction via questionnaires and their comments on sites such as Tripadvisor)
- c) expose more young people to marine and beach tourism issues through internship programmes – (measured by the number of participants)
- d) launch a new project to investigate the underlying cause of anaemia on the island. For many years we have intervened to alleviate anaemia through deworming, treatment of malaria, giardia and amoeba, vitamin and iron supplements, and daily feeding at the kindergarten. This study will look again at the root causes – (to be independently assessed by peer-reviewed publication)
- e) expand our English language programme to include primary and pre-primary children, using the Genki English Language multi media training programme- (measured by testing "reading ages" in English and ensuing pass rates at school).

4. What does responsible beach tourism mean to you? Why is it important for your organisation? (200 words)

From a tourist perspective, we believe that responsible beach tourism is about minimizing negative impacts on the destination, while maximizing positive outcomes.

From a business perspective, it is about conducting a competitive beach-based tourism business venture, such that we can live in and nurture our environment and community and empower our neighbours to manage the changes that threaten to overwhelm them, whilst enabling them to respond to opportunities that may arise from the operations of our business, through empowerment by education, local employment, local procurement, stimulating entrepreneurship and other community development priorities, and supporting these goals by both facilitating the process and by fund-raising.

Our ethos is summarised in our mission statement: "We are committed to responsible tourism that brings real benefits to our community and supports wildlife conservation".

We are fortunate to be living at this interface between tourists and a remote community that attracts beach tourism. By upholding the principles outlined in our responsible tourism policy document, we are able to lead meaningful lives and make a living, whilst making it possible for visitors, who want to make the world a better place, to do so on their holiday.

5. Do you have a responsible tourism policy or equivalent? Yes/No. (if yes, please upload it as a supporting document when you submit this questionnaire).

YES - attached

Section 2 - Your organisation

1. Please give us a brief overview of how you contribute to responsible beach tourism - initiatives, policies and practices, aims and objectives etc. (600 words)

Aims:

To educate two generations of Chole children and to work with (through facilitation and fundraising) our community to build infrastructure and human capital for the Chole people to have the capacity to manage their future in a rapidly changing world.

To create and sustain a lodge that provides a unique, environmentally conservative, and eye-opening holiday experience, whilst serving as the dynamo to make the primary aim possible.

Objectives:

Build treehouse accommodation with minimal footprint and impact on environment.

Maintain a low carbon footprint during operations.

Support local economy while building and running the lodge

Set up local institutions to support development processes that foster participation between the village and the company for positive change.

Support local entrepreneurs.

Conserve the built heritage, local culture, crafts, oral traditions, music, etc.

Policies:

Mission statement: "We are committed to responsible tourism that brings real benefits to our community and supports wildlife conservation".

Environmental and social policy (*attached*)

Contract with village cementing our seminal agreements (*attached*)

Constitution documents for the Chole Social Development Society, Chole Economic Development Society, and Chole Society for Women's Development (*available on request*)

Practices:

Training of all front line staff to brief and guide our guests to live in-keeping with our policies.

Briefing guests about the environment and culture reinforced by room booklet and information (*available on request*)

Local fabrication & design to minimise imports and boost local economy.

No diesel generators and limited solar power for lighting for the guests to experience life without electricity and to lower our carbon footprint.

Composting toilets to minimise water use and prevent contamination of the shallow freshwater aquifer.

Water and energy efficient hot water heating system, using <20ml kerosene per shower.

Cooking with coppiced firewood to limit use of fossil fuels.

Sailing dhows and 4-stroke engines to minimise fossil fuel consumption and oil pollution of marine environment.

Waste management.

Bed night levy of US\$10.

Designated community liaison person, who works with community leaders, guests and donors to develop and manage projects.

Quarterly reconciliation and annual auditing of development expenditure to encourage transparency and best practice in implementation and expenditure of community funds.

Initiatives:

Set up of three democratic, nationally registered Chole societies to build capacity and ensure community participation in decision making and management of funds raised from bed-night levies, day-visitor tickets, Chole Mjini Trust and other donations.

Facilitation of studies on Chole looking at sociological and anthropological issues, collection

of oral histories, archaeology and conservation of Chole ruins, and study of anaemia on the island.

Ruins conservation in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities. Training of local artisans resulting in a successful bid for funding from Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism for village council to conserve significant village ruins.

Founding of WHASCOS, raising awareness of whale sharks, facilitating self-regulation of related tourism activities, introducing mechanisms of revenue collection for local government, and research.

Established a sanctuary on Chole for the Seychelles fruit bat, *Pteropus seychellensis* resulting in significant increase in their number.

Hosted and funded a pre-pilot program called "Talk to your Baby" (Zungumza na Mtoto Mchanga) on Chole and surrounding villages, which is now being piloted nationwide.

Pre-piloted solar power options in collaboration with Solar Aid, resulting in solar installations at secondary schools in Mafia and the current national distribution of micro lights for households nationwide.

Twenty-year on-going programme of "Empowerment through Education" (Uwezeshaji wa Elimu) of school support, scholarships, English and computer instruction from kindergarten through to tertiary students and including school dropouts.

Set up the Chole Mjini Trust, to raise money for education and health care on Chole Island. Currently, providing scholarships for secondary and tertiary study and recurrent funding for the kindergarten and Chole Learning Centre.

2. Please give us a brief overview of your organisation in general - the main activities, where it operates, the ownership model, how it is funded. (600 words)

The lodge is owned by the Chole Mjini Conservation & Development Company Limited, a limited liability company funded by the founding directors. The tourism lodge is run as a for-profit entity.

Our founding principal was to be an agent of positive change for our local community and our aim was to develop a stable business that would sustain at least until we had educated two generations of Chole children. This paradigm for development, with community-driven initiatives with support from the company, has brought development, where government and NGOs did not reach.

Chole Mjini Lodge, located on Chole Island in the Mafia Island Marine Park, Tanzania, is a tree house lodge, with only seven units, nestled among giant baobab trees on the seashore of a small inhabited island that has many ancient ruins. We, the founding directors - Anne K. de Villiers/ M.Sc development professional and Dr. Jean P. de Villiers / a Ph.D molecular biologist, used our many years experience in research and project management to build the lodge by hand, together with local boat-builders, and then, together with the village elders craft a model for responsible tourism that is based on the conservation of the abundant marine wildlife, the built and other cultural heritage and the outstanding natural beauty of the area. Guests are offered a high quality, value-for-money holiday experience that gives them an opportunity to make a positive change and encourages the notion the conservation of nature and heritage has immense value and that less can be so much more. The lodge provides upmarket accommodation for international tourists, who want to make a difference

through their holiday and it offers a unique and authentic experience rather than a luxury one in the traditional sense of the word. We do offer comfortable beds, cold drinks, warm showers, excellent fresh food, dhow sailing, guided snorkelling and SCUBA diving on the protected reefs of the marine park, walks through the village of Chole to see the giant fruit bats, the many ruins or the dhow boat yard or to neighbouring islands, trips to coastal baobab forests, the ancient ruins of Kua (early 12th century) and seasonal turtle hatching on remote east coast beaches. The lodge also offers responsible marine encounters with seasonal giants, like the humpback whales and whale shark. We also offer relaxation and picnics in multiple locations on sandbanks in the marine park, in the tree houses or gardens of the lodge that are always flanked by sea views.

All of our staff are recruited locally with preference given to Chole Island residents, regardless of formal education. Our kitchen and house-keeping departments are staffed by women. In-house training and internship also provides opportunities for young people to gain experience in the tourism industry and many are now working in other hotels.

The lodge is the heart-beat of the Chole development projects, with a bed-night levy of US\$10 per person per night and day visitor ticket sales providing sustained and regular income to the community. Networking and fundraising from our guests provides additional skills and income allowing for more ambitious development projects and all important educational scholarships.

The Chole Mjini Trust encourages donors to make an annual or monthly payment so that annual income can be estimated and budgets planned and funds allocated accordingly. The budget is planned by the local community executive committee and presented to the trustees annually. Once the budget is approved, according to funds available the funds are disbursed quarterly, reconciled quarterly and audited annually.

3. What have been the biggest challenges to your work, and how have you worked to overcome them? Please be as transparent as possible. (400 words)

Please provide evidence to support this statement.

Community development requires investment of time and money:

Money alone is corrosive in a small, poor community. We have had to make a significant long-term commitment of both our time and money. The on-going administrative support to the process, cultural translation and bridge funding provided by our business over time has facilitated development 'on the front line' and enabled smooth engagement with multiple development partners.

Capacity development and expectation management:

In 1993 only one person on Chole spoke English and had secondary education. Project development, implementation and appraisal is profoundly difficult in an environment, where no one reads and the democratically elected leaders manage by memory through discussion, rather than referencing minutes, tables and reports. By facilitating education of young people we have created more competent office bearers that build transparency and trust because they are able to report coherently to their membership and village council.

Political interference:

As new leaders are elected in democratic cycles of village government, Ward & District councils and National elections, young, aspiring politicians attack our company and the Mafia Island Marine Park. We are a target because we are one of the biggest employers and source of funds and we, as foreign investors, an easy political scapegoat. Surviving this kind of periodic political recklessness has taught us the value of the paper trail – contracts, minutes of meetings, attendance registers, bank statements (no cash transactions), multiple

signatories, regular reconciliation of expenditure and annual audits of accounts.

Culture Clash and poverty:

Donors, development agencies, NGO's are very goal oriented. Our community is far more process driven. Potential donors often impose goals and time-lines to satisfy their budget-year constraints. In our community issues are discussed until consensus is reached, irrespective of deadlines. Hence, issues need to be tabled well before you would expect to do so and we often need to facilitate this engagement.

Theft and the unwillingness of a small community to punish offenders is also a challenge. We have been fortunate that shrinkage has been minimal but dealing with theft requires using culturally-appropriate authority, such as the village elders, rather than outside authority like the police.

Corruption, jealousy and abuse of power by Government officials:

Local Government leaders often try to access Chole funds. We have learnt to keep all our paperwork "ducks in a row" in case officials come on "fishing expeditions" for permits, licences, visas, registers, certificates of incorporation, memorandum of understanding etc.

Section 3 - Your impacts and relationships

1. How does your organisation benefit the local community/communities where you work? Are they involved with your responsible tourism business/initiatives? (250 words) Please provide evidence to support this statement.

The Chole Project is a partnership between the Chole Village and the Company. Our areas of cooperation and responsibility are defined in a minuted agreement (1993) that was subsequently converted to a contract (2007).

New projects and objectives are tabled and approved through village council and general assembly meetings.

The CSDS executive sub-committee (known locally as the Harambee "pull together" committee) is mandated to set annual objectives and manage funds raised by the company for the implementation of existing projects. The committee comprises representatives from the company and governance groups on the island.

For more information and details of the Chole Project and funds raised through the Trust please see annual reports and accounts (choletrust.org) and view the video <http://youtu.be/5E2tYIigZWA>

The Hotel contributes approximately USD 18,000 per annum from the bed night levy paid to the Social and Economic Societies. The Chole Mjini Trust raised a further USD 48,000 in 2013 for school scholarships and education.

We have 26 full time staff and a further 20 people are often recruited depending on construction work and occupancy at the hotel. The different societies engage approximately 40 leaders in the community. The health centre, kindergarten and learning centre, under management of the Chole Societies, directly employ 15 people and many young people further volunteer in the Learning Centre. Local purchases of seafood, fruits, rope, building materials for the hotel push income into the local economy. Local fabrication (curtains, cushions, mats, wall materials, and mosquito nets) and construction employ local artisans.

2. In what ways do you encourage travellers to have more responsible beach holidays? Consider economic, social and environmental aspects. How do you measure the success of your communications? (250 words)

Please provide evidence to support this statement.

The way that we run Chole Mjini Lodge invites guests to leave their busy lives and associated norms behind, to live in tune with the rhythms of the sun and moon, to connect with nature, the marine, cultural and community environments and, in the process, discover that less can be more and that their tourist dollar can be a positive force for development. Room literature and guest briefing helps to explain our ethos.

We encourage our guests to take guided village walks, so as to understand the local culture through the eyes of their hosts. "The Chole Booklet – The History and Environment of Chole Island in the Mafia Archipelago" is also offered for sale to all incoming guests (all proceeds going to the kindergarten).

We often dine with our guests to share with them our journey and vision for the future, whilst benefiting from their insight and experiences elsewhere. Many become friends, some become donors and we thank the extended Chole family for helping us pull this together.

A USD 10.00 bed night levy is included in the cost of staying at Chole Mjini and this is paid quarterly to the Village Societies.

Success is measured by how many people choose this holiday, revisit, how much they get involved and/or give through the Chole Mjini Trust, and what impression they communicate about their interactions with the people on the island and our expanding, word of mouth, digital footprint.

3. What have you done to promote best practice in responsible beach tourism in the industry? How have you measured your success? (250 words)

Please provide evidence to support this statement.

Put into practice the tenets of our policies and welcomed those who have chosen to emulate our practises, for example Pole Pole Lodge, Shamba Kilole Lodge on Mafia and Kisampa Lodge near Saadani. Consulted to help a gas company launch a similar corporate social responsibility model on Songo Songo island.

Representation on the MIMP Advisory Committee and in establishing WHASCOS, we have influenced what is expected of new tourism ventures within the park and the District. Councils in other villages are now negotiating with new investors for similar agreements modelled from Chole. We are cited by the Tanzania Investment Centre as an example of responsible beach tourism.

Through WHASCOS, we campaigned for autoregulation of tourism with whale sharks through accepted 'codes of conduct' and persuaded the Mafia District Council to introduce a \$10 per head fee for whale shark tourism that now begins to bring in significant revenue to the District (about \$18,000 last season) giving animals a significant LIVE worth.

We organized the beach hotels of MIMP to file for a Judicial Review of a new fees regulation to redirect revenue generated in Mafia away from the communities within the park and the District, contrary to the parent legislation. This on-going legal battle has served to expose many of the investors to conservation issues and opened dialogue with beach tourism investors all over Tanzania.

Recently the BBC chose us as one of 5 must see tree house lodges and Lonely Planet rates us in the top ten eco-lodges worldwide.

Section 4 - Other information

Year organisation started	1993	Your name	Anne & Jean de Villiers
Country	Tanzania	Job title	Owners & Company Directors
Number of guests/travellers per year (if applicable)	500	Phone number	+255787712427
Website	cholemjini.com	Email address	2chole@gmail.com
Social media links	You tube video: http://youtu.be/5E2tYIigZWA choletrust.org kitukiblu.com www.facebook.com/chole.mjini www.facebook.com/KituKibluWhaleSharks	Skype name	anne.k.devilliers

Section 5 - Final comments and references

Is there anything else about your initiative/organisation/work you would like us to know? (200 words) *This might include web links to articles about your organisation, Awards you have won, or anything else not covered by the earlier questions.*

Please follow hyperlinks for further information:

Launch of [SolarAid](#) on Chole was facilitated by the organised structures that were put in place by us, and made it possible for them to work in this remote village. It improved the lives of people, who have long dreamt of night-lights and basic power, but have not been able to afford it.

Independent reviews:

A tree house hotel on an island called Mafia must be the epitome of exotica! Here's a look at a tree house [eco-lodge](#) in Tanzania that's been practicing Responsible Tourism long before it was considered "in".

Time has forgotten this once thriving island community, and a surprisingly soulful hotel has grown up among the ruins. Almost naïve in its simplicity, [Chole Mjini](#) is a departure from the commercial hotels found on Zanzibar and an inspiration for responsible tourism.

www.bbc.com/travel/.../20130808-five-over-the-top-treehouse-hotels

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/02/25/travel/africa-treehouses/>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel-tips-and-articles/lonely-planets-top-10-eco-stays-for-2014#ixzz3BUheeO3e>

<http://africanluxurymag.com/chole-mjini-lodge/>

His Excellency Jakaya Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, presents the Presidential Award for the best oil and gas sector [corporate social responsibility](#) in Tanzania in 2012. SongoSongo island. (*5 yr plan and project design by Anne K de Villiers as a consultant 2009/12 and modeled on lessons learned from the Chole Project*).

Names and contact details of your chosen referees in the boxes below.

Referee 1	Referee 2	Referee 3
Name: Chris McIntyre Position: Managing Director Organisation: Expert Africa chris.mcintyre@expertafrica.com	Name: Louise de Waal Position: Director Organisation: Uluntu Africa louise@uluntuafrika.com	Name: Valerie Burgener Position: Manager Marine, Organisation: WWF International Vburgener@wwfint.org