

COMMARK TRUST
AFRICAN WORLD HERITAGE FUND

FORTS & CASTLES OF GHANA

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Report 4

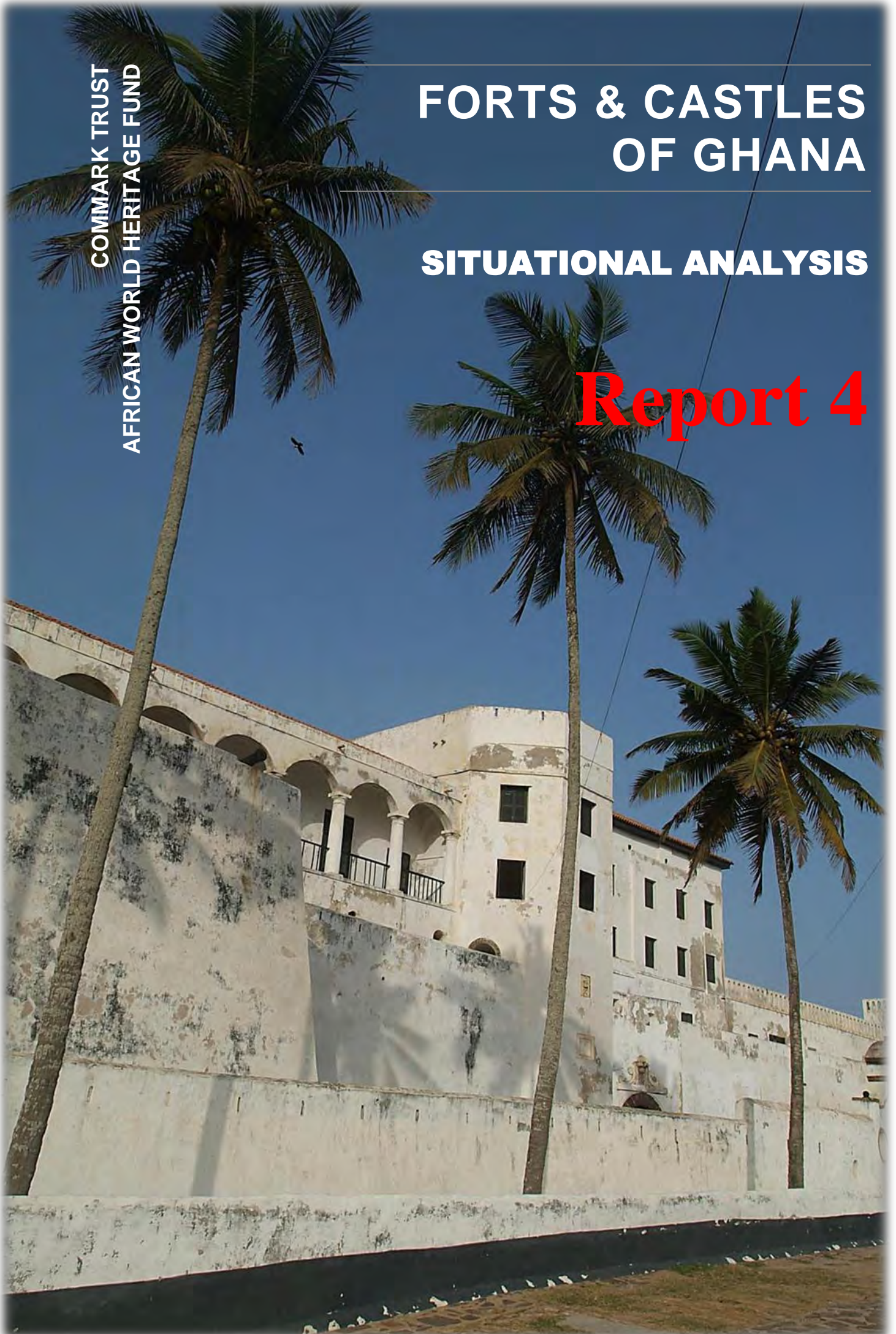


Table of Contents

Background and introduction	3
Situational Analysis	7
Site description	10
Institutionnel arrangement.....	13
Tourism	16
Site management	17
Stakeholder relations.....	19
Opportunities for enhancing monument value	22
Recommendations	25

1. Background and Introduction

The African World Heritage Funds has a mandate to support the effective conservation and protection of natural and cultural heritage in Africa. Though effective investment and sustainable management, Africa’s World Heritage Sites will be catalysts and frontrunners in stimulating broad-based socio-economic growth for the benefit of its people.

These objectives translate into several activities of which “conservation and site management” forms a key component. The fund wants to understand how best to develop Africa’s WHSs and unlock their potential benefits for neighbouring communities and stakeholders through tourism.

In close cooperation with the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the ComMark Trust (Now ComMark Tourism Trust), the AWHF is undertaking a series of situation analysis aimed at ensuring local economic development and creating acceptable mechanisms of sharing costs and benefits with those communities living with protected resources.

A short list of sites has been carefully selected to incorporate a variety of sites whose analysis can be beneficial for similar sites across the continent. Emphasis during this phase is placed on covering a wide variety of **natural** and **cultural** heritage sites to allow for a comparison with other documented systems of resource management across Africa. Criteria for selection include:

Type of heritage site	For cultural sites these include rock art, buildings, complete towns, ruins, religious sites, etc. For natural sites, these include national parks and sacred natural forests and wildlife reserves.
Setting	A mix of urban, peri-urban and rural sites is chosen as it influences, amongst others, community involvement, pressure of carrying capacity and benefit distribution issues.
Listing	Ranging from recent to some 30 years ago to understand evolution of management arrangements
Threat	Low or high threat levels to the conservation of the site influences the possibilities of tourism as a tool for economic benefits and a contribution to conservation.
Community involvement	This includes amongst others, level of formal involvement, perceived relationship, opportunities and community organisation.
Tourism use	Current (visitor numbers) and potential for tourism utilisation at the resource and the management & control of tourism in general. This is to be quantified into actual jobs and/or income generating opportunities. Sites with traditional (high-use) and non-traditional tourism destinations have therefore been chosen.
Market linkages	Instances of high local use and value of the heritage site create different dynamics compared to sites with high international drawing power. This is especially the case with religious sites and these have therefore been included.

Benefit sharing	What mechanisms are currently in place to share benefits from the site. Community based conservation sites will be compared to those where such is not formalised.
Access	Access to sites can be actively controlled (fencing) or is naturally controlled through weather/seasonal challenges of other factors influencing the management of the site.
Location	Where the site is located in relation to urban and/or tourism centres influences the appropriate management systems and has been incorporated in the short list.

ComMark Tourism’s objectives aim to create a meaningful participation of the poor in tourism across Africa as consumers, employees and entrepreneurs. In addition to addressing policy and regulatory reform on a national level, Commark feels that good practice can speed up the transformation agenda of the tourism system in individual countries to become more beneficial for the poor. Implementing such a system around iconic world heritage sites will create a high level profile and showcase appropriate tourism benefits structure and responsibilities for the poor.

In addition, heritage sites serve a strong local demand which forms a key requisite for the development of local tourism consumers essential to create a truly sustainable industry in Africa.

To date, site analyses at Twyfelfontein Rock Engravings (Namibia) and Kilwa Kisiwani Ruins (Tanzania) and Great Zimbabwe Ruins (Zimbabwe) have been conducted.

Selection of Ghana’s Forts and Castles

The selection of the Forts & Castles’ World Heritage Site is based on its unique situation: located in West Africa with a relative small tourism market; 30 individual entities, forming one single proclaimed world heritage site and the slave trade history which dominates the story of the forts and castles and creates a vital link to present day life across the Diaspora.

West Africa:

Tourism is the world’s largest industry and can be an economic locomotive bringing employment, economic growth and earnings in foreign currency for (West) Africa. Tourism is not directed to commercial or population centres but in most cases towards natural and cultural resources. Consequently, tourism has the power to play a significant role in areas of a country where other commercial activities are limited. International tourism to developing countries is significant and increasing. The growth rate in international arrivals to low- and lower middle- income countries between 1990-2001 were 97.5%. 2001 – 2008 it was 71.4%.

The growth in regional visitor arrivals is largely based on increased business travel which is generally high yield. Increase in leisure travel sees an interesting pattern of “local knowledge operators”. West African nationals, residing in tourism source markets like to the U.K, Germany and the U.S.A are increasingly organising conducted tours to their subsequent

motherland. Their local insight enables efficient itineraries that become popular and serve a pioneering role in tourism development. Ghana and Benin are experiencing rapid growth with these types of charter tours.

Air access to the sub-region is still expensive and likely to remain so for the future although air charter traffic has increased. The Gambia has recovered after seeing a decline in visitor arrivals (winter-sun destination), which experts feel was due to emphasising the sun & sea niche too much. Tourism has in recent years also developed an “eco profile” where sustainability has been in focus. Community development and the sustainable conservation and use of the environment are the key components involved in ecotourism development across the world and therefore apply to West Africa as well.

The West African sub region hosts the powerful ECOWAS economic unit comprising of 14 members. ECOWAS has for some time now discussed the possibilities of joint tourism development and a common visitor visa regulation. This can substantially strengthen their share of the current growth in visitor numbers. In addition, Accra/Ghana is becoming an important hub in West-African air travel supported by a modern airport facility. However, support for tourism development in the region is inconsistent and ad-hoc and not coordinated on regional level. Tourism master plans have been developed for all nations but programme support is limited to smaller, national initiatives. Addressing the image problem of the region as a tourism destination is something that should be coordinated on a regional level. The slave coast history (and the gold coast history) are themes that link the nations together and could be used to promote tourism and development cooperation in the Diaspora.

Individual sites versus single product:

Ghana’s World Heritage Site is factually a collection of some 30 individual structures dotted along the 550 km coast line along the Gulf of Guinea. The sites are predominantly clustered in two administrative regions and in 2 metropolitan areas. The history of each fort and/or castle is different with various occupational forces having initiated the construction and/or trade operations. Each fort and/or castle is therefore unique in terms of characteristics which the basis for this assessment.

There is also a big difference in the state of the physical structure, access and location, involvement of local government & traditional leadership structures and the current (lack of) visitation. In terms of management, the Ghana Museums & Monuments Board (GMMB) is the national authority responsible.

The challenges facing the custodian organisation of heritage sites in emerging markets often relates to limited resources and therefore the necessity of prioritising actions, and in this case, individual sites to support. Discrepancies occur between individual sites and GMMB emphasises the castles at Cape Coast and Elmina. Other buildings are sporadically supported through donor funded projects.

Character of the World Heritage Site:

The Forts & Castles of Ghana are remnants of a time in history which changed Africa and the world forever. The slave trade that originated from many of these structures has permanently changed the plight of families across the Diaspora. As most of the forts and castles form a reminder of that period in history, they are the sole tangible link (together with Goree, Senegal) for many residents of the new world with their roots in Africa. This creates an emotional connection in which the pragmatic challenges around site conservation and economic utilisation, and possible benefit creation, need to be developed and operated.

In many ways, the forts and castles are true WORLD heritage sites as they are European structures built on African soil, and a remnant of the (dubious) first steps in global trade and colonialism that followed. Linked to the new world through the slave trade, it therefore presents a valuable and unique account of history on a truly global scale.

In addition, and related to this, is the ever increasing people's pressure on the sites. The communities grow ever larger amidst urban settlements laid-out for only a fraction of current population numbers and the limited livelihood options create encroachment of the sites which causes real concern for the conservation status.

2. Situation Analysis

2.1 Historic overview

The list of national monuments specifies 30 forts and castles. 22 of these are structurally intact (see list 1 where the Fort as Kumasi has been left out), eight are ruins and three (Fort Royal & Fort McCarthy at Cape Coast and Fort Fredericksburg at Amanful) have not been located). The effective list of coastal forts and castles therefore totals 21.

The forts and castles of Ghana were constructed between 1480 and 1790 by a mixture of Portuguese, English, German (Brandenburg), Swedish, Danish and Dutch traders. The vast majority has seen multiple-ownership over the years, either through forceful occupation, sale or being re-occupied when deserted by other nations. The Dutch, English and Portuguese have dominated the construction and occupation of the gold coast forts & castles.

There are three distinct types of structure found:

1. **Lodges:** often seen as miniature forts or indefensible trading forts build of earthen materials or wood and serving as a temporary structure.
2. **Forts:** permanent durable structures of brick and stone, forming the majority category. These trade forts were able to defend themselves, housing military and up to 50 guns and some were specialist military structures in defence of trade.
3. **Castles:** St. George, Cape Coast and Christiansborg Castle are complex and large structures that cover a much wider area than the forts and host more complex buildings and defence mechanisms of over 100 guns.

The construction took place mainly for the protection of positions and personal, both against European rivals and hostile African communities. The first was the Castle of St. Georges at Elmina in 1482, forming the oldest European stone structure south of the Sahara. Many other forts followed; the majority of them built in the 17th century when (north) European rivalry was at a high point.

Over time, the function of the forts changed. In early years they were a 'ship at permanent anchor' hosting all the functions normally found on a European trading ship and organised much in the same way with a civilian administrative staff and a military garrison. Later, these forts became administrative and economic focal points for urban development along the 'gold coast'. In the late 17th and early 18th century, the Atlantic slave trade enhanced the position and functions of the forts as slave depots which until today shapes the common understanding of Ghana's forts and castles.

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1. Fort Appolonia at Beyin
 2. Fort St. Anthony at Axim
 3. Fort Gross Friedrichsburg at Princesstown
 4. Fort Metal Cross at Dixcove
 5. Fort Orange at Sekondi
 6. Fort St. Sebastian at Shama
 7. The Fort at British Komenda
 8. Fort St. Jago at Elmina
 9. Caste of St. George at Elmina
 10. Cape Coast Castle
 11. Fort Victoria at Cape Coast
 12. Fort William at Cape Coast
 13. Fort William at Anomabu
 14. Fort Amsterdam at Abandzi
 15. Fort Patience at Apam
 16. Fort Good Hope at Senya Beraku

17. James Fort at Jamestown, Accra
18. Ussher Fort at Ussherstown, Accra
19. Christiansborg Castle at Osu, Accra
20. Fort Frederiksborg at Old Ningo
21. Fort Prinsenstein at Keta

Ruins:

- a. Fort Dorothea at Akwida
- b. Fort Vredenburg at Dutch Komena
- c. Fort Vernon at Prampram
- d. Fort Nassau at Mouri
- e. The Little Fort at Anomabu
- f. Fort at Tantumquerry
- g. Fort Augustaborg at Teshie
- h. Fort Batenstein at Butre

List I.

In the 19th century the functionality of the forts started to decline and some were abandoned all together. In the 20th century, the importance of keeping the buildings as important historical and cultural monuments gained momentum leading to the placement on the UNESCO world heritage list in 1979.

The maintenance of the buildings was already a well documented problem during construction and operation and remains so until today. Wrong use of material, lack of skilled labour, permanent humidity, rain seasons, access to fire wood, limited availability of base materials, etc. formed obstacles in constructing and maintaining the structures and the current custodian faces many of the same challenges due to a lack of financial resources and skilled labour.

The transition from utilitarian usage of the forts and castles to monument status and conservation efforts to achieve that effect was gradual and ambivalent. In some cases, even today the transition has not been made as is the case with Christiansborg Castle in Osu¹

Conservation efforts started as early as the 1920 when the British government formally recorded the need to preserve the decaying forts along the gold coast and started small renovations at the castle in Elmina. The emphasis on town development along the coast left many castles abandoned or being temporarily used for an array of activities ranging from post office, port master, prison, and residence or police quarters. In Accra, this has been the case for James Fort serving as a prison until 2007!

Since independence in 1957 the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board is responsible for all the Forts and Castles and they were proclaimed national monuments in 1972.

Especially from the 1980s onwards, the tourism aspect became an important issue in the development of the forts and castles. Elmina and Cape Coast started to offer guided tours by trained tour guides, the buildings were regularly touched up, and eventually museums were opened in both castles. From the 1960s onwards different foreign parties became involved in the restoration of the forts under the supervision of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board.

¹ M. Doortmont in: The Castles of Ghana, 2006

Since the 1980s, the forts and castles have become important focal points for African American tourists, looking for their African roots. This attention has also heavily emphasised the slave trade history, which in turn has given rise to the highlighting of those aspects of the buildings that can be interpreted easiest in slave trading terms: the dungeons and slave prisons and the so-called doors of no return, through which the slaves finally left their homeland into a life of slavery and misery. In some publications and announcements the castles, are specifically named 'slave forts'. Although the era of the Atlantic slave trade is in terms of its social and economic impact extremely profound, it does not cover the whole story. For the Ghanaians, for instance, to this day the forts are a symbol of the colonial era more than anything, else. More recently, European, Ghanaian and Americans from different walks of life have been reassessing the position of the forts and castles as an evocation of the mutual cultural heritage between these three continents.

The most recent developments, also in line with a changing approach to World Heritage sites by UNESCO, is that the forts are no longer seen as isolated monuments, but rather as integral part of the communities in which they stand. Historically, the forts and the surrounding towns had a complex symbiotic relationship. This was lost when the forts started to lose their function in the 19th century. Although the forts were seen as an important motor for the attraction of tourist, there is very little economic spill-off from these visits. This conclusion has led to a number of developments in the Central Region of Ghana in which efforts are made to 'lure' tourists into the town's and at the same time to amplify the towns' ability to cater adequately for tourists, both from Ghana and abroad.

2.2 Site description

It goes beyond the scope of this report to describe each individual fort and castle. The site description will highlight the different characteristics of the buildings; type, setting, state, usage, access and products & services and how they currently relate to visitor use.

In general, the Forts & Castles of Ghana provide a highly impressive attraction. Spread along the coast they form a truly nationwide attraction and each individual building has a potential unique take on history. They also vary in size from the complex and large castles to the small, intimate and almost romantic lodges and trade forts often found supporting stunning vistas.

	Description	
Type	• Lodge	a miniature forts or indefensible trading forts build of earthen materials or wood and serving as a temporary structure
	• Fort	permanent durable structures of brick and stone, forming the majority category. These trade forts were able to defend themselves, housing military and up to 50 guns and some were specialist military structures in defence of trade
	• Castle	complex and large structures that cover a much wider area than the forts and host more complex buildings and defence mechanisms of over 100 guns
Setting	• Urban (peri-urban)	buildings in the middle of a (peri) setting are affected by people pressure and livelihood activities ranging from smoking of fish, boat building, fishing, residential dwellings as well as the use of heritage buildings and grounds as sanitary facilities.
	• Rural setting	any setting outside of highly populated areas attracts overgrowth and limits control although it also incurs less population pressure
	• Seafront	direct seafront setting creating conservations challenges through water erosion, corrosion, algae ad mould formation.
	• Hilltop	hilltop settings are affected by erosion and exposure to wind and sun and lack control. Access is often hindered as driving up to the building is often difficult
State	• Ruins	those structures where roof, doors and windows are missing or walls have collapsed
	• Under threat	those buildings where certain sections are dilapidated

	• Unknown	Listed properties that cannot be located
	• Conserved	those buildings that are being looked after and basic repairs done.
Usage	• Private	buildings leased to private individuals or businesses or used by government and closed to the public (staff housing).
	• Public	buildings open to the public for free or drawing an entry fee.
Access	• Signposted	the road to the actual building is clearly marked.
	• Fenced & controlled	if possible visitors are likely to be confronted with begging or harassment at the site
Products & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum: permanent or temporary exhibition and curator function • Shops: souvenir shop, artisan shops • Guide services: standard guided tours of the building • Caretaker staff: GMMB staff member • Restaurant: Food & beverages for sale 	

The individual structures lack a complete and cohesive visitor product which makes it difficult to perceive the sites as a single heritage site. Some buildings are well maintained, easy accessible and have ample visitor facilities and trained staff on site. Others are difficult to find, lack clear access regulations and offer empty rooms or collapsed ruins without any interpretation.

This in itself is however valuable as it forms a reflection of the history of the forts and castles that have, through time, been constructed, destroyed, abandoned and rebuilt which



is in many instances quite visible just by looking at the structures. Each structure tells a different story; they were constructed for different reasons, portrait different relationships between early African nations and Europe and reflect early global trading.

The value of the forts and castles has varies aspects; there is the historic value found both in its usage and in the architectural structure; and there is the present value found in the place and linkages the building has in the livelihood of the people that live there.

The current visitor product is however extremely limited. Only two proper visitor experiences exist. These are found at the Castles of Cape Coast and Elmina and are therefore fairly similar in experience. A third exists at Ussher Fort and is basically the same as in the Central Region sites.

The overall descriptive account of the majority of the intact forts and castles as visitor products conclude:

- Empty buildings lacking interpretation
- Poorly signposted and often difficult to find
- Unclear access requirements
- Unclear staff status, non-uniformed and lacking identification
- Use of monuments as residence and/or office accommodation limits visitor option
- Printed rules and regulations (including entrance fees where applicable) missing
- Poor ground demarcation and encroachment of site
- Limited and un-demarcated parking
- Uncontrolled traversing by local residents and instances of begging, hawking and harassment.
- Use of grounds as unofficial ablution facilities and waste dump site
- Those structures boasting a visitor product place high emphasis on slave trade history limiting the incentive to visit various structures (e.g Cape Coast & Elmina).
- Structures are isolated and alienated from the host community with limited exceptions where community libraries are housed within the fort.
- No temporary exhibitions drawing return visitors.
- Shops stock limited variety of products and majority of products are unrelated to the site and community.



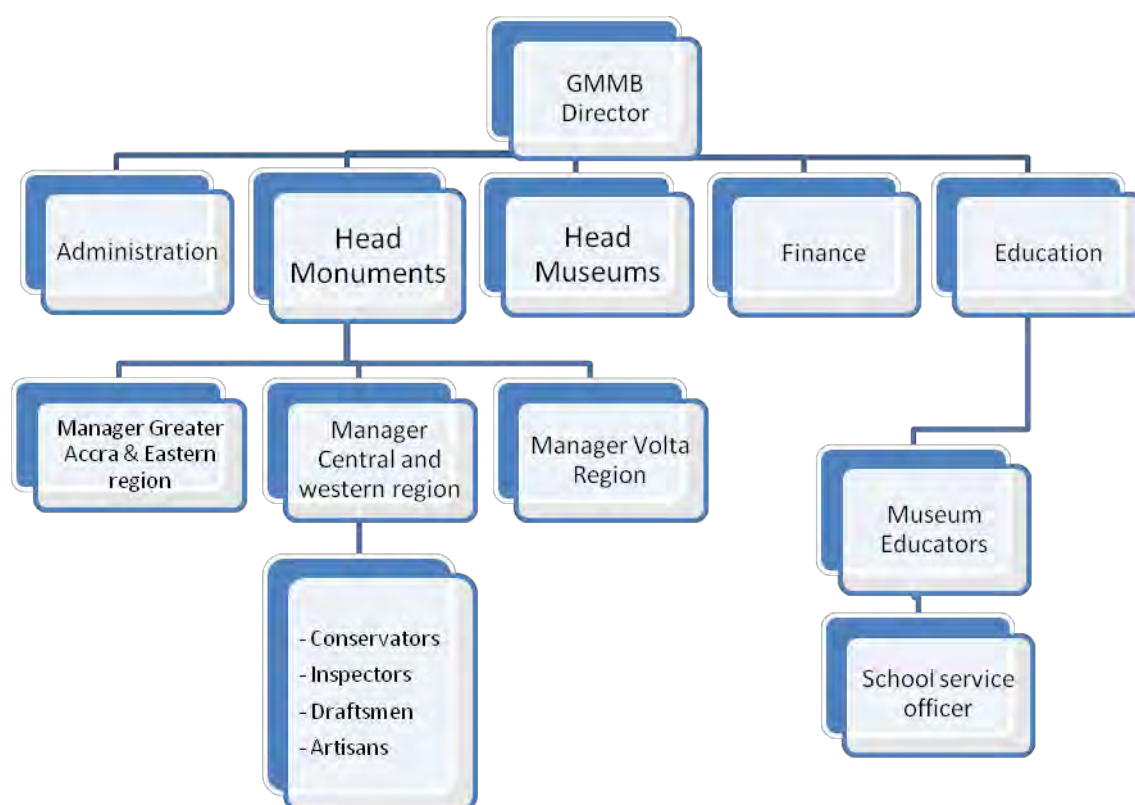
In the recent past, there have been several interventions that addressed these issues but little sustained changes occurred. They are still essential to the enhancement of potential community linkages that forms the objective of the AWHF intervention.

2.3 Institutional arrangements

The monuments are administrated by the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB). It is the country's heritage organisation established under an Act of Parliament in 1957 as a result of a merger of the Interim Council of National Museums of the Gold Coast and the Monuments and Relics Commission. Being the legal custodian of Ghana's material cultural heritage, the board is guided by a National Museum Degree (1969), National Monuments Instrument (1972) and the National Museums Regulation (1973).

The Board comprises three main divisions namely: the Museums, the Monuments and the Division of Administration. Late 2009, no actual board was in place with all positions vacant and the executive director reporting directly to the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture.

The board structure encompasses close to 300 positions nationwide of which the majority are administrative and maintenance (support) functions.



The organizational structure includes a regional manager in the Upper West and Upper East regions which have been omitted here as no forts and castles occur there. The boxed division under Central and Western Regions applies to all the regions and is not replicated to make the illustration readable.

Although efforts to draft a new policy and strategy have been ongoing since 2004, the current, outdated organizational structure and legislation still determine the functioning of the GMMB. The organization is heavily under-resourced and barely able to administer itself.

Development efforts are dominated by external (donor) resources. In the recent past, these included:

- The EDF funded Elmina Cultural Heritage and Local Economic Development Programme
- The Endowment Fund of the Ghana heritage Conservation Trust (USAID)
- Natural Resource Conservation & Historic Preservation Project, Central Region (USAID)

In addition, several research and documentation efforts with regard to selected forts and castles have been conducted by a variety of institutions.

Although by no means a definitive list, these project efforts have been criticized by GMMB staff and other stakeholders as being stand alone initiatives that have not been linked to ongoing efforts of the board and have not been able to maintain a contribution to heritage management after the project came to an end. In fact, well-intended donor support has merely increased the GMMB assets in need of maintenance creating even more pressure on the small budget of the organization.

The organigram does not make provision for a business development officer. This has contributed to limiting the potential linkages of donors to ongoing efforts by the board and created the project structure that has increased GMMB cost centres without creating alternative income streams. The title of museum educator and school service officer are too limited for a modern visitor product in 2009 which influences efforts to address sustainable utilization of the forts and castles further.

The regulations stipulate the duties of the board with respect to monuments as follows:

- **Protection of monuments by ensuring they are at all times preserved in good condition and that the grounds and courtyards in, or adjacent to a national monument is kept clean and tidy, free of rubbish and unnecessary undergrowth and to remove every unauthorized board, notice or advertisement from a national monument.**

These regulations do not adequately reflect the requirements needed to address the management of a world heritage site. No mention is made of tourism and business utilisation to contribute to the costs of heritage conservation which should be addresses urgently. Already faced with limited resources, the GMMB has, in the recent past, been

given additional responsibilities with the transfer of properties from the prison authorities;
James Fort being the latest addition.

Tourism

The development, control and promotion of tourism are the responsibility of the Ghana Tourist Board under the guidance of the Ministry of Tourism.

Tourist arrivals to Ghana have seen a healthy growth and latest statistics indicate close to 700,000 visitors in 2008. Growth markets have been identified around health tourism, leisure tourism (river cruises) and conference tourism supported by the construction of a new Meriot and Möwenpick Hotel in Accra.

The country's heritage product is important for all visitors and the location of forts and castles along the entire coastline makes it possible for all visitors to visit at least one of these sites.

The GTB and the private tourism sector umbrella organisation GHATOF (Ghana Association of Tourism Federations) express concern about the passive nature of the visitor experience at forts and castles. The countries Forts and Castles are a primary attraction with international drawing power for both North American and European markets but visitors are offered a guided visit that replicates itself at different sites visited.

Linkages to the (urban) vicinity around the forts and castles are hardly made and limited involvement of communities occurs. Published itineraries limit the visitation of forts and castles to Cape Coast and/or Elmina for guided tours. Only individual travellers and some special interest tours visit other GMMB controlled sites (mainly in the Western Region).

GTB has regional offices in all of the nine administrative regions although their role is primarily around quality control (inspections) and to serve as information office. The GMMB does not have a formulated tourism mandate and the organisational structure does not identify a tourism and/or business development role. No memorandum of understanding between the GMMB and GTB exists.

The **Ghana Tourist Board** was established by the National Redemption Council Decree (NRCD) 224 in 1973 as amended by the Supreme Military Council Decree (SMCD) 80 of 1977. It is the main implementing agency of Ghana's Ministry of Tourism. As the implementing agency of tourism policies its functions include [1] The regulation of tourism enterprises; [2] the promotion and marketing both in and outside Ghana; [3] carrying out research and studies on trends in the tourism industry and [4] facilitating the development of tourist facilities and products. The later includes, amongst others, [a] collaboration with relevant public sector agencies for the development of tourism infrastructure; [b] formulation of strategic framework and plans for Area Development Schemes within the identified tourism zones and routes to ensure environmental conservation and cultural preservation of resources.

2.4 Site Management

Each of the buildings across the country has significant historic value which differs from one another. But as a visitor product, there is at present no distinction between the forts and castles other than the physical shape of the building.

The regional heads are responsible for management of sites within their administrative area. This means that the Central and Western Regions are accountable for the vast majority of buildings:

Western Region	6 Forts	2 Ruins
Central Region	8 Forts, 2 Castles	4 Ruins
Greater Accra	2 Forts, 1 Castle	1 Ruin
Eastern Region	1 Fort	1 Ruin
Volta Region	1 Fort	

The Central Regions alone hosts 50% of the proclaimed heritage site which is managed, together with the Western Region (totalling 79%), from the GMMB offices in Cape Coast Castle.

The management and utilisation of the sites differs greatly from building to building. Much of the current structure of utilisation is based on random events and historic linkages which have led to the GMMB needing to improvise and accommodate a wide scope of management approaches of its forts and castles.

Actual tourism related management is limited to a few of the buildings with Ussher Fort, Elmina Castle, Fort St. Jago and Cape Coast Castle providing the most comprehensive visitor services and charging visitors for entry. Tour guide services and souvenirs shops are available at Elmina Castle and Cape Coast Castle as well. Caretakers, sometimes acting as guide, are present at Fort Anthonio, Fort William and Fort Amsterdam.

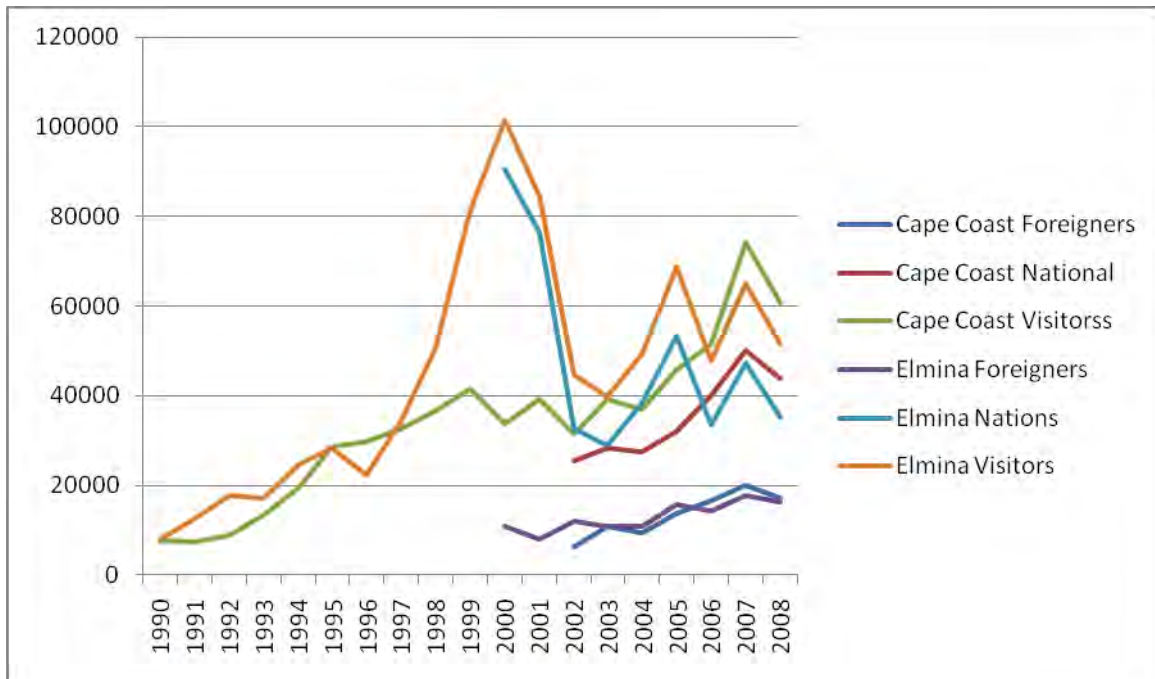
Third party use as accommodation, administrated through a concession/lease agreement is in place at Fort Patience, Fort Appolonia, Fort Metal Cross and Fort Good Hope.

Other third party use occurs at Fort Orange (staff housing for Ports Authority), Fort San Sebastian (District offices), Fort William (library), Fort William/Lighthouse (GMMB staff housing) and Fort Christiansburg (seat of government). This effectively excludes these buildings from any visitor function for which remuneration can be obtained.

The rationale behind and approach to any of these management structures is unclear and undocumented. There are obvious explanations behind the use of the sites as staff accommodation although this is in direct conflict with the conservation objectives and negative effects of domestic and office usage are evident, especially through severe shortcomings in kitchen and sanitation provisions.

The lease of monument sites for commercial accommodation establishments also lacks a regulatory framework and the process has been reactionary and lacks business principles such as performance clauses, due diligence and a clear and transparent public tender process.

Figure 1 Visitor trends at Elmina & Cape Coast



The presence of artisan outlets at Cape Coast and Elmina also lacks a clear management agreement. The type of artefacts sold (quality, diversity amongst outlets, locally made?) and the performance of such outlets are not monitored and merely a rental fee applies.

ENTRANCE FEES

Cape Coast & Elmina Castles

Ghanaian adult: ₵1

Ghanaian student/scholar: ₵0.5

Non-Ghanaian adult: US\$ 7

Non-Ghanaian Student: US\$ 4

Non-Ghanaian Scholar: US\$ 2

Use of private camera: ₵0.5

Visitor statistics are only available for the castles at Cape Coast and Elmina but these draw the vast majority of visitors.

The financial administration of GMMB sites is centrally controlled. Income earned at Cape Coast and Elmina goes to the central accounts of GMMB and is dispersed against work plans and budgets. Entrance fees for the Ussher Fort, Elmina and Cape Coast Castles are the same.

The various sites lack a clear positioning as different product or even as complementary products; differences and linkages between different sites are not clear and the experience is the same as interpretation doesn't go beyond a guided tour emphasising the slave trade.

Why the visitor numbers to Cape Coast have surpassed Elmina for both national and foreign visitors is not clear. Anecdotal evidence points at the ease of access to Cape Coast over the highly congested Elmina and better control by the municipality over loitering and harassment. Elmina has had recent support in the development of visitor products that include walking tours, restoration of buildings in town and the opening of a tourism office which makes the visitor trend even more interesting for GMMB to explore further.

2.4 Stakeholder relations

The stakeholders around the forts and castles can be divided into three categories: private sector, government and communities. The community differs in size from site to site as does the local authority which varies from district assembly to metropolitan authority. Additional government stakeholders include the Central Region administration. The private sector stakeholders comprise of the general industry and some individual concessionaires.

Community relations:

The 'community' living around the various Forts and Castles is not easily identified. The relationship between the GMMB and the various communities is in an infant state of development and only in Cape Coast has this relationship been somewhat structured through revenue sharing. At other sites, community consultation has only occurred through project interventions.

It is in general difficult to define the boundaries of 'a community' in urban settings. The obvious starting point would be residents living adjacent to the buildings which can be determined through property ownership as title deeds exist in almost all instances around the forts and castles.

This however doesn't address the highly important issue of livelihood activities around the buildings which draws community members for daily activities to the direct vicinity of the forts although they might reside quite a distance away. As the coast of Ghana is home to communities almost exclusively relying on fishing, these activities are dominant at all sites. This causes an unintentional conflict with conservation efforts as:

- The sheer number of people congregating on small parcels of land adjacent to the monuments creates a sanitation problem.
- The economic activities take place on bare pieces of land that lack proper infrastructure leading to heavy erosion neighbouring the monument buildings.
- Some of the livelihood activities like smoking of fish cause direct damage to grounds and buildings
- Informal housing at slopes and the access paths created cause major erosion problems.
- The un-built grounds forming part of the monument sites are perceived as 'public open space' and are being utilised by community members.

- Many community members use the sea-front (beach, rocky outcrops) as ablution sites and the perceived 'public open space' around the forts and castles is a preferred location.

All these issues create pressure on the preservation of the monument and constitute a relationship between buildings and people that cannot be ignored. If one is to look at community relations with monuments, merely identifying residents in the vicinity of the buildings omits too many stakeholders.

The only formalised community involved occurs at Cape Coast where a payment is made to the traditional leader of the area adjacent to the Castle. There is however no transparency what that money is used for.

There seems to be a lack of interest and understanding of the potential value of the monuments amongst the community. Various donor funded projects have tried to create awareness and understanding and encourage individual entrepreneurship around heritage tourism but a certain apathy still prevails amongst the majority of community members as if the buildings are something for 'other people' and not a part of the present day livelihood of the residents.

Private sector:

There are three direct private sector relationships whereby accommodation facilities have been established within a monument building; Fort metal Cross, Fort Good Hope & Fort Appolonia. The details of these arrangements are unclear and it is documented that no public call for expression of interest has occurred which makes an assessment of the value and performance of the agreement impossible.

The same applies to the private souvenir shops and eateries that exist at Elmina and Cape Coast Castles. These agreements are also not publically monitored and no published rules and regulations on the type of products for sale exist.

Private sector tour operators have no preferential status at GMMB sites. There is no pre-paid possibility whereby operators can purchase access tickets in advance in Accra. Because of the limited number of actual 'products' available at the 30 sites, there is little the industry can purchase and agreement that can be made. The untapped potential needs to be addressed first.

Local government:

Various district assemblies and the Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly have drafted plans for the economic development of their areas which includes a tourism component mainly focussing around the forts and castles and other historic buildings.

To date, these have not been supported by any formalised agreement between the GMMB and the local government institution. Although courteous and friendly relationship exists, there is no action oriented approach around the monuments as engine of growth for local economies yet.

The enabling environment for an improved utilisation of the historic buildings needs to come from a planning process on assembly level and, most importantly, the implementation of agreements. Many concerns raised relate to the unauthorised activities on monument grounds, harassment at the site, poor road access, poor signposting, etc. The tourism office in Elmina was supposed to play a coordinating role in Elmina Town and pilot a new approach to tourism development outside the actual district assembly structure. To date, there is little evidence that this has been successful.

3. Opportunities for Enhancing Monument Value

The role of Forts and Castles in local economic development can be huge as it forms a unique resource in a global context. Although other African nations are home to historic buildings of similar nature, the numbers and variety found along the coast of Ghana is unique.

It is that variety found in the actual shape of the building, its function in history, its location and the historic linkages with European nations that needs to be captured and interpreted into a quality visitor experience. This will ensure an increase in revenue which contributes to the maintenance of the buildings as required by the status of World Heritage Site.

From a management perspective, the fact that some 30 individual sites form a single world heritage site, creates an interesting and unique dynamic. To enhance the visitor product at such world heritage site and integrate neighbouring communities into benefit structures is therefore untested territory.

To enhance the value of the world heritage site, it is proposed to give consideration to the adaptation at following levels: [A] Product & Interpretation, [B] Access and [C] Management Structure.

[A] Product & Interpretation

The current 90% empty and un-interpreted spaces found in the combined forts and castles of Ghana cannot all be turned into visitor attractions from which income can be derived. It is important to select individual structures based on appeal and location and create distinctly different product. The visitor experience should merit a (an increased) payment or the creation of other benefits for the neighbouring communities. Following is proposed:



- **Thematic emphasis:** Individual sites should be selected to inform visitors about [1] slave trade, [2] construction, design and 'management' of forts & castles and [3] contact, trade and integration with indigenous populations.
- **Regional spread:** While taking current travel patterns into account, especially the visitation of Cape Coast and Elmina, an emphasis should be made to spread visitor numbers across the entire coast line by ensuring the thematic emphasis proposed is developed at selected sites including the Volta and Western region.

- Non-guided products: at smaller forts, or sites with difficult access or at ruin sites, the presence of staff is a high cost factor that can be overcome by the creation of self-guided interpretations such as information panels, booklets or poetry pedestals.
- Non-historic use: a few sites can be selected to be used as accommodation and/or food/beverage outlet. This happens currently at three forts but such agreements should be structured better and additional ones publically solicited.
- Sustainable visitor linkages: modern visitor products should be introduced by GMMB as income generating opportunity. The introduction of a 'laser scroll' where visitor can enter their name on to an endless scroll of names that 'exits' through the gate of no return to depict the relationship with the Diaspora; the construction of a "wall of remembrance" where name tags can be added; see www.ehrafrika.com for more ideas.
- 3D exhibition: there should be 'furnished' forts and castles to complement the current empty rooms interpreted by a guide. This will make it easier and therefore more rewarding for visitors to understand life at these buildings in years gone by.

There is a high need to complement the current guided product that leads visitor to an abundance of empty rooms and makes interpretation the sole responsibility of the guide. The exhibitions in the Cape Coast and Elmina Castle are of professional quality but require urgent upgrading and basic maintenance.

[B] Access:

The access to the forts and castles and their grounds needs to be controlled and demarcated better. This is of high importance as it enhances the sense of space and therefore people's perception of entering a 'managed' property which in turn increases visitor's willingness to pay.

It also means managing community access better and ensuring monument property is no shortcut from A to B or, worse, a public ablution facility.

Rules and regulations regarding access need to be clearly visible at the entry to the grounds, including fees due where applicable, opening times, management partners and communication numbers (email) for further questions, compliments or complaints.

Staff of GMMB, or any formal partner of the board in managing the buildings needs to be uniformed or display proper identification. This also contributes to the overall appearance of the site and the feeling of appreciation by visitors.

A mix of free-of-charge and admission sites needs to be created. Not all sites, especially the ruins or those located at inaccessible sites, justify the payment of an entrance fee. Needless to say that the interpretation at those sites can only be the bare minimum and should consist of permanent information boards in several languages.

[c] Management Structure:

To ensure that the proposed enhancement of products and access create benefits for the communities around the world heritage site, some adaptation to management structures needs to be made:

- Cooperative management structure: In line with the Joint Management Committee thinking of UNESCO, various site stakeholders meet regular in a formal structured manner to discuss relevant issues. It should ideally not be seen as a 'cost' to be covered by GMMB's site management but much more as a platform to enhance the value, and reduce costs of conserving a world heritage site. The **Forts & Castle Stakeholder Committee** could, for example, consist of GMMB Regional Manager, representatives of the traditional authorities, local economic development officer of the assembly and a representative of the private tourism sector. Issues to be addressed could include: access by local residents, special events, ground management, information, statistics, tariffs, local economic development etc.

An improved cooperation with the neighbouring community is important for both parties. The value of the site towards its neighbours is currently largely intangible: it has historical significance, but little economic value in the sense of generating income to communities. The missing link of the site to current community practices it potentially dangerous for the preservation of the site. Finding ways of exploiting this community relationship with the site to the benefit of the community and tourists represents an opportunity. This could involve visitors meetings and/ or interacting with community members to better understand the relevance of the site.

In additional to a cooperative management committee structure, the GMMB could explore setting up a Community Development Fund, which it appoints trustees to along with representatives of traditional structures in the area. This trust could develop a plan to highlight and prioritise socio-economic projects to address community needs. It could derive an income from a number of sources, all of which would need to be considered in more detail in a separate project scoping process, to possibly include:

- An apportionment of visitor fees once the site becomes operationally profitable
 - Investment into the redesign of town tours and restoration of old buildings through a home owner scheme as piloted in Elmina.
- Concessions: organised, constituted community membership organisation with detailed benefit distribution plans and identified responsibilities can apply for a tourism concession at selected forts which should be endorsed by the Stakeholder Committee. It is unlikely that the community will exploit such a concession themselves as appropriate skills and experience are not found in abundance in Ghana in general. It is expected that a reputable private sector operator should be found through a transparent and public bidding process to operate the concession against a strict performance agreement. The revenue of such a concession falls to the constituted community organisation.

- Staff structure: to enable the above mentioned, consideration should be given to the adaptations of some job descriptions and positions at GMMB. A community liaison officer and a business development officer will add tremendous value to the implementation of the proposed enhancements at selected monument sites. The business development officer should be a regional position, critical in the Central and Western Region, and coordinate the commercial aspects of the forts and castles by soliciting and looking after concession agreements, entrance fees, merchandising, etc. The community liaison officer should form a permanent link with neighbouring communities and raise awareness and understanding of the value of the monuments sites. The current efforts to include communities in heritage planning have happened on project basis and this has lacked continuity. The inclusion of such a liaison person, also responsible for the dialogue with district and metropolitan assemblies, will ensure a permanent dialogue is established and mutual trust can be built. The board should further consider the creation of a tourism officer at head-office who can monitor the visitor product and ensure consistency exists and be responsible for the promotion of the individual sites in close cooperation with the GTB.

[D] Others

Craft production and sales: the current sales outlets in the castles at Cape Coast need to upgrade their products on sale. The items will be subject to a joint committee approval on quality and type of craft so as not maintain a link with the world heritage site. A unique collection of craft items is to be developed and sold and the quality of crafts and pricing will be done by the producers themselves. Within the region there are several systems for the grading and pricing of crafts which will create additional skills and understanding of pricing principles with the craft producers. The GMMB's business development officer could be involved in this as well as the creation of an authentic "Ghana Forts & Castles" brand.

An official, professional booklet of each of the major sites should be produced that includes not only scientific facts of the site, but also profiles (individual) community members and their use, perception, values of the site which will enhance the relationship of communities with the site whilst promoting it to visitors.

Loyalty cards: there is potential for the introduction of a loyalty card which allows for free access and should cost the equivalent of two adult entrance fees. This card should be marketed amongst the neighbouring communities to lower the threshold and ensure that community members perceive the buildings as an integrated part of their livelihood. It will further allow for the participation in community programmes as initiated by the community liaison officer.

4. Recommendations

The challenge in creating an adequate and sustainable relationship between Ghana's forts and castles and its community neighbours, rests in making choices. The subtle differences between the 28 buildings (and some ruins) needs to be matched with location, access, enterprise possibilities and GMMB needs to drive that process from a position of strength based on its own strategic thinking and with the (proposed) staff positions to support it.

It is recommended that stakeholders around the forts and castles of Ghana seek to:

- Assess the identified options for enhancing the value of the site in the context of GMMB strategy and management objectives of the world heritage site;
- Allow constituted community groups a primary lease of selected sites for commercial tourism ventures along strict rules and regulations;
- Introduce creative products at lesser visited sights to attract visitors
- Appoint community liaison officers with a mandate for continued community awareness creation and dialogue;
- Standardise commercial outsourcing and introduce a public call for expression of interest;
- Select 3-4 sites that can be offered as accommodation lease which includes a community benefit scheme (job creation and training) as integral part of the agreement;
- Introduce non-guided products as business product for GMMB
- Introduce formal branding of craft and souvenir items at profit-sharing basis with constituted communities
- Introduce the position of business development officer at regional level (Central & West) and a tourism officer position at Accra Head Office;
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