



Greetings and Welcome

A warm welcome to the second African Safari Lodge (ASL) Foundation newsletter. We'd like to thank those who gave us both positive feedback and constructive criticism on our first newsletter – it is much appreciated. We encourage you to continue to communicate with us in terms of content, news and comment.



ASLF community field guide trainees at the Untamed Africa training facility

Best Practice Guidelines For Training Local Community Field Guides Workshop

The Best Practice Guidelines workshop for training of field (nature) guides took place from 22-24 June 2009 at the Untamed Africa nKambeni Camp (Kruger National Park). The workshop was jointly hosted by the ASLF, Untamed Africa and the Field Guides Association of South Africa (FGASA).

'There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the workshop and our proposed group of 20 participants expanded to a final 34, to accommodate the demand. It

was important that many of the field guiding industry players were represented', says Lindy Rodwell, Education and Training co-ordinator for the African Safari Lodge Foundation.

The workshop was facilitated by Jonathan Wigley from WESSA (Wildlife Society of Southern Africa). The presentation and discussion sessions on the first morning raised questions and highlighted key issues around the professionalization of nature guiding. These were grouped into

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three areas of focus for breakaway discussion groups, namely: i) finding and selecting guides ii) training and education methods iii) the role of THETA (Tourism Hospitality Education Training Authority) and FGASA.

The groups were asked to identify challenges and find solutions in charting the way

forward for *Best Practice Guidelines*. Rodwell says, 'Each group was asked to make a presentation of their recommendations. After each presentation there was a discussion addressing how to incorporate the solutions into *Best Practice Guidelines* for informing future training sessions'.



John Ditsele from Molatedi village – Head Guide at Etali luxury lodge in the Madikwe Game Reserve

Key findings:

⇒ Leadership and Long-Term Vision lacking

The first issue that came to light was that the guiding industry lacks cohesive strategic leadership and offers no long-term vision in terms of transformation and human capital development. 'The result of this', says Rodwell, 'is that there is limited interaction between THETA and industry players partly due to the fact

that there is no representative body in existence'.

Proposed solutions included the possibility of registering a professional body for the field guiding subsector to work with THETA, DEAT (Department of Environment and Tourism) and other national associations to develop a cohesive strategic leadership and long-term vision.

⇒ Competency and qualifications

The second significant finding at the workshop highlighted the fact that there is a perceived spilt, by the industry, in the competence of field guides with a FGASA/THETA qualification versus those with just a THETA qualification. 'The result is that employers are looking for guides with both FGASA and THETA certificates,' says

Rodwell.

Proposed solutions included establishing a national standards and moderating body under the guidance of THETA to ensure that the same standard of assessment within the guiding industry is set and maintained by all accredited providers and assessors around the country.

⇒ Short NQF level 2 skills training courses vs NQF level 4 (Certificate) diplomas

When THETA was introduced there was a need for a short NQF (National Qualifications Framework) level 2 skills training course to facilitate the registration of a large body of existing professional guides as a legal requirement. Rodwell says,

'There was consensus at the workshop that this short skills training course has played a necessary role but is no longer in line with industry needs and is in fact contributing to breaking down the value of guiding as a career.'

To receive more information on the outcomes of the workshop, contact ASLF Education and Training Coordinator Lindy Rodwell, at Lindy.R@global.co.za

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There was a number of proposed solutions including:

- a) doing away with the NQF level 2 skills training course
- b) incorporating it into the NQF level 4 (Certificate) diploma to become the entry level qualification for guiding.
- c) promoting the relationship between lodges and training providers– to make better use of learnerships and promote mentorships and possibly apprenticeships.
- d) reviewing the qualifications of trainers and assessors to ensure they have adequate training and assessment skills, and are not just subject experts.

⇒ Employment Issues

As a result of the historical focus on the quantity, not quality, of nature guiding graduates, there are many inadequately qualified black field guides who are unable to secure employment. 'It was proposed in discussions that the industry needs to retrain existing guides to the NQF level 4 standard rather than train a crop of new guides', says Rodwell.

⇒ Lack of Transformation

Lack of transformation in the guiding industry was identified as a major problem that required urgent action.

Rodwell says, 'Through standardizing the assessment process for the industry the perceived split in the competence of field guides with a FGASA/THETA qualification (who are predominantly white) versus those with just a THETA qualification (who are predominantly black) would no longer be relevant.'

⇒ Guiding as a Career

Historically the majority of field guides have been white males, often going into field guiding as a gap year or a stepping stone to lodge management, with the result that field guiding is not treated as a sustainable professional career by the lodge industry. It is, as a result, poorly paid (with an emphasis on tips to top up salaries) preventing career guides from participating in the formal economy, and career pathing is either not offered or very limited.

'Solutions included transforming the industry so that lodges are employing a larger number of individuals who are career guides and who will pressure the industry to professionalise guiding'.

⇒ Education Realities

During the workshop education system weaknesses were acknowledged as a social reality and language was identified as a barrier to learning. 'Proposed solutions included:

"The workshop was certainly a success in terms of identifying a number of key problem areas, but also in proposing a series of actions to unify and transform the industry."



Game drive in the Madikwe Game Reserve with a community field guide

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developing Best Practice Guidelines for selecting and training guides – including compensating with innovative support mechanisms, and reviewing and developing appropriate learning support materials to accommodate education system weaknesses,' says Rodwell.

It was also discussed that the revised NQF qualifications need to incorporate unit standards that take into account second language speakers. Reflexive competence should be the goal of guided training and where necessary training should be extended and bridging courses introduced to help overcome education system inadequacies.

Key Actions:

'A number of key actions came out of the workshops and the ASLF has offered to play a role in facilitating the recommendations and suggestions from the workshop,' says Sandra Mombelli.

The ASLF will distribute the proceedings including a document detailing the recommendations coming out of the workshop, together with a FGASA proposal for a national standards and moderating the body. ASLF will monitor all feedback.

The Foundation is working with WESSA and selected workshop participants to design and manage a 'Best Practice' field guide training course that will use Learnerships and be based on partnerships between the training provider and participating lodges.

Adam Pires of the Conservation Leadership Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust is working closely with WESSA and other colleagues to review transformation in the guiding sector.

In addition, the ASLF (along with FGASA and WESSA) will collate all current learning support material used by WESSA, THETA and FGASA accredited training providers, and will assess how these materials should

be adapted to accommodate second language speakers and education system weaknesses. Several participants have also been asked to assess the adequacy of the current THETA and FGASA unit standards.

Participants were asked to review the THETA qualification, NQF Level 4 guiding unit standard that was recently up for comment. CEO of FGASA, Grant Hine, had a meeting with SAQA (South African Qualifications Authority) after the workshop and reported back that their key concerns regarding the workshop have been addressed. ASLF's Lindy Rodwell reports, 'Once the qualification is registered, by SAQA, THETA will apply for the scoping of this qualification with SAQA so that training providers can develop learning programmes for approval so the qualification can be offered to the guiding fraternity. In order to ensure that the qualification is appropriate and meets industry needs, industry will be able to add elective (specialist) unit standards after the qualification has been registered'.

The way forward:

'Until there is a representative body in place, the ASLF will play a key role in facilitating and co-ordinating recommendations from the workshop', says Rodwell.

She advises that ASLF will work with WESSA to incorporate ideas and solutions from the workshop into *Best Practice Guidelines* for informing future training workshops (the deadline for this being the end of September).

Rodwell points out that Untamed Africa and the lodges in Madikwe and the Kruger (in partnership with WESSA) will apply for learnerships and will facilitate an NQF level 4 training course that implements the *Best Practice Guidelines*, to be used as a case study to further

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refine the *Best Practice Guidelines*.

The ASLF will work closely with FGASA, THETA and key industry players to do the following:

- Through a process of consultation with the nature guiding sector, assess if a professional body for the field guide training industry is required and if so define the role of that body and how it fits into the national initiative to professionalise the guiding industry.
- Work with THETA and FGASA to lobby DEAT, DOT etc regarding the recommendation for a national standards and moderating body under the guidance of THETA.
- Ensure that the industry NQF level 4 qualification is appropriate and meets industry needs and where necessary facilitate that industry adds elective (specialist) unit standards after the qualification has been registered.

'The workshop was certainly a success in terms of identifying a number of key problem areas, but also in proposing an series of actions to unify and transform the industry. We hope, this workshop will have far-reaching consequences', says Rodwell.

For more information about the workshops, please contact Sandra Mombelli at the ASL Foundation or Lindy Rodwell: lindy.r@global.co.za

*Best Practice
Guidelines for Training
Community Field
Guides Workshop
participants*



The ASL Foundation will facilitate another training course for field guides from deep rural backgrounds, putting into practice the lessons learnt from the workshop. For more information, contact us at sandra@asl-foundation.org.

Khomani San Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Land Project

In the next newsletter we will focus on some exciting developments regarding the Khomani San Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Land Project - which is administered through the African Safari Lodge Foundation.

In August, 2007, a grant was received from the Ford Foundation to facilitate the rebuilding of the Khomani San community's cultural identity. Re-establishing the people's connection with their ancestral land in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park has been a critical element of the project, as has been the facilitation of the transmission of indigenous knowledge between generations to ensure that this valuable cultural heritage and knowledge is not lost. Assisting the San to effectively manage and develop their land in and to the south of the park has also been a core focus of the project, in order to ensure that the community derives a sustainable flow of benefits from this rich natural heritage.

The ASLF have provided technical support and capacity building to the Traditional and Park Committees in order to equip them to carry out their mandate of sustainably managing and developing the land. Further to this, an office has been established from which the Park and Traditional Committees can conduct their business.

There has also been a focus on developing a core group of community rangers, nature guides and game farm assistants that can work in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and on land belonging to the Khomani San people.

The ASLF has facilitated the first visits to the park by elders and youths for the revival and transmission of indigenous knowledge and there has been a focus on rebuilding of cultural, community and individual identities.

Read more about the various initiatives in the next newsletter when we interview Phillipa Holden, Project Manager for ASLF.



For more on the Khomani San project - look out for the next issue of the ASL Foundation newsletter

Oupa Dawid Kruijer explains the importance of this place to Peter John Massyn and Ed Humphrey of the ASLF and Meg MacKenzie, a volunteer assisting the Khomani San, during a visit to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

Khaidum Concession Operator Agreement Concluded

In 2008 the Gciriku community was granted a 20 year tourism concession inside the Khaidum National Park, which is a 384,200 hectare protected area situated in north eastern Namibia. The concession rights allow the community to re-develop and operate two tented camps and campsites in the park. After recognizing the need to appoint a private partner to assist them with implementing these concession rights, the community was assisted in conducting a tender process.

Following this process Namibia Country Lodges (NCL) was appointed as their preferred partner. The ASL Foundation has supported the community to negotiate an operating partnership and has prepared the contract documentation with inputs from all relevant parties. It is expected that this agreement will be signed before the end of August 2009. In addition to this support, ASL has facilitated the acquisition of R1.5 million in co-financing to be used by the community as a capital contribution to the project. NCL has guaranteed fees and returns to the community (without operational risk). This deal is a first of its type in the region.



*Khaidum
National Park,
Namibia*

Quote of the Month:

'I speak of Africa and golden joys'

- William Shakespeare

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.asl-foundation.org

Forthcoming Attractions...

In our next newsletter look out for:

- An in depth look at the Khomani San Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Land Project
- More on the Khaidum concession