



Greetings and Welcome

The 2010 FIFA World Cup has come and gone and one thing is for certain, South Africa did us proud. Sure, the event didn't go without its hiccups and hitches here and there, but we certainly took the opportunity to showcase our magnificent part of the world and we did that in style. Southern Africa will only be able to count the benefits of the World Cup in the months to come, but we look forward to the benefits of sharing in one of the most successful PR and marketing initiatives we could ever hope to be part of. There are rumours that we are setting our sights as high as the 2020 Olympics in Durban, who knows – Africa, after all, is the continent of miracles...

As we are past the 2010 halfway mark, this newsletter is all about taking stock of our various projects – so please enjoy the updates from our colleagues. Should you wish to comment on any of the stories, please don't hesitate to send your email to sandra@asl-foundation.org.



The community-owned Makuleke (Pafuri) region of the Kruger National Park

ASLF Field Guide Training

The African Safari Lodge Foundation has finalised the selection for another round of field guide training, which began on the 19th of July.

There are 12 talented participants from Madikwe, the Kalahari and Makuleke (Northern Kruger) who will be taking part. There has been great

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support from the various participating lodges including Tau Lodge, Jaci's, Etali and Thakadu River Camp in Madikwe; !Xaus and Tswalu in the Kalahari and Wilderness Pafuri Camp and Nkambeni.

Participants were selected based on the recommendations coming out of the 2009 'Best Practice Workshop for Field Guide Training', which took place at the Untamed Africa nKambeni Camp and was hosted by the ASLF, Untamed Africa and the Field Guides Association of South Africa (FGASA).

According to Lindy Rodwell, Education and Training Co-ordinator for the ASLF, the calibre of participants is excellent. 'Three of the candidates already have FGASA level 1 and first aid certificates and two of the participants have worked as trackers in the Madikwe Game Reserve for many years and bring with them a wealth of knowledge of the bush. The four Khomani San candidates bring a knowledge of the ancient and fascinating culture of the bushman'.

She says the diversity of the group will make for a very interesting and exciting course. 'We have Tswana, Xitsonga and Afrikaans speakers, we have employed and unemployed learners, some with bush skills some with none, some with youth and energy and some with age and experience. They all have something to teach, something to share and lots to learn – from both one another and the training providers' says Rodwell.

Due to the findings of the Best Practice Guidelines for Training Local Community Field Guides Workshop (see [ASLF newsletter July/August 2009](#) on the ASLF website) a number of significant changes were made to the training curriculum. Rodwell says, 'We have moved away from the short skills course to a national certificate, the FETC: Tourism Guiding - NQF level 4.

This will provide the learner with a foundation for a career in guiding and not just a skill set that enables him/her to be employed'.

The course, facilitated by Empower-Ed and the ASLF, starts with 10 weeks of fulltime training at the Untamed Africa training facility. Rodwell says, 'During this time the learners will qualify with FGASA level 1, SASSETA rifle handling, first aid and driver's licenses. This will allow them to legally register as guides so that when they go back to their host lodges for the next 9 -10 months of workplace-based training they will be legally able to guide'.

Following the initial ten weeks of training, every student will receive a structured work plan for the following nine months that will consist of a combination of work and theoretical training. A further two ten-day sessions will be given by Empower-Ed.

Rodwell points out the good news that twelve learnerships have been awarded by THETA, and that THETA will provide a monthly stipend for each participant over the 12-month period. She says, 'This will enable the learner to study for an extended period of time while at the same time being able to meet any financial or personal obligations he has on the home front. It also allows the student to cover costs such as personal items, books, food and transport if necessary'.

Peter John Massyn, who heads up the ASLF is heartened by the progress made regarding the training and says, 'Our training is now much more holistic than in it was in the past. We aim to produce not only trained field guides but also well-rounded young professionals who see guiding as a career path that may one day lead to the most senior positions.'

Continued ...

Field Guide Training – Best Practice (at a glance)

Based on the recommendations coming out of the best practice workshop, the African Safari Lodge Foundation has planned and designed a best-practice training programme for Field Guides. As recommended we are:

- *Moving away from the short skills course to Training the FETC in Tourism: Guiding Level 4.*
- *Extending the length of training to one year and doing it via a THETA learnership to ensure a level of mentorship and workplace-based training.*
- *Using Empower-ED as a training provider (the company has many years of experience in training field guides from rural communities).*
- *Adding a significant number of modules to accommodate an inferior education system that will also contribute to narrowing the north south divide.*
- *Including FGASA Level 1 qualification, SASSETA rifle handling and driver training to ensure the trainees have all the qualifications required by the industry.*

Mentorship – The Key to Success

Massyn says that mentorship and the sharing of knowledge is essential to the field guide training programme and explains why, 'Coming from deep rural backgrounds, our trainees tend to lack the exposure and experience that many of us who come from urban environments take for granted. Without the type of close mentoring that Empower-Ed offers, they risk failing to make the transition to structured professional training. With it, they tend to thrive.'

Empower-Ed (a THETA accredited training provider) will deliver, manage and co-ordinate the learning for the qualification, both for the residential and the workplace components. Jenny Cornish, who is managing the programme for Empower-Ed says mentorship is key to the success of the project. 'Within the context of a learnership, mentoring and support is a continuous process. For example, during the initial 3 months, learners will be trained and mentored by a group of highly experienced facilitators that have been selected for their knowledge of field guiding, lodge and park management and entrepreneurship'.

Cornish says that the learnerships aim at qualifying field guides at the highest level of industry practice. She says: 'The choice of applying the learnership concept is because it integrates the nature knowledge and technical skills with the necessary soft skills. Learners will also develop the ability to interpret their knowledge, communicate at a high level and understand the need to provide the highest level guest experience'.

Meet our Learnership Candidates

Themba Yingwane, Matimba Chauke and Leonard Makhubela from the Makuleke community in Limpopo Province

Ricardo Seekoei, Dirk Pienaar, Frederick Padmaker and Mans Maasdorp from Khomani San community in the Kalahari, Northern Cape Province

Joseph Mokolane, Tshepang Nokane, Tshepiso Masimong, Bethuel Kgotsietsile and Lazarus Nokane from around the Madikwe Game Reserve, North West Province

Continued ...

Since 1998, Empower-Ed has gained a wide experience working with learners from rural communities, and has learnt a great deal from their findings. 'The initial challenges of the learners are mainly in their levels of spoken English but if they have notable potential to develop, this major challenge is overcome as they build confidence in their own abilities' says Cornish, 'However, it must be emphasised that the most important criteria for selection is that the person demonstrates the right attributes to work as a field guide and in the service industry'.

The vision for the ASLF and Empower-Ed teams is a long term one. Cornish says, 'This programme is designed to become a training model for the field guiding and lodge industry that can be replicated and deliver well qualified professionals for the industry'.

Michel Girardin, a stalwart of the tourism and hospitality industry will steer this particular training, supported by his colleagues from Empower-Ed.

Developments in the Northern Cape

An RFP (Request for Proposal) has been issued by the Khomani San at Erin, one of the farms returned to the Khomani San in a land claim settlement in 1999, located between Askham and Andriesvale in the Kalahari. The contract was drafted by Webber Wentzel Bowens in Johannesburg on a pro bono basis.

ASLF's Phillipa Holden reports: 'An RFP was issued for a private partner for the development of a hunting and tourism concession on the farm Erin. The ASLF and Webber Wentzel Bowens assisted in this process and proposals are expected in by the 30th July. In the meantime, work is progressing very

well on repairing Erin's fence and there was much joy and celebration at the arrival of the first 20 gemsbok that were kindly donated by Tswalu to the Khomani San in June. A further 80 head of game are waiting to be captured and transported to Erin from Tswalu and any donations towards covering the costs or any further donations of game will be gratefully received by the community'.

Peter John Massyn says this RFP is significant because, 'It marks the first step in the implementation of the Khomani San's larger tourism plan. If all goes well, the community will not only have secured a great deal but also gained the experience they need as they look to roll out the next project planned for the community's land inside the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.'

Developments at Auob Lodge

Peter John Massyn and Ed Humphrey undertook a field trip to the proposed Southern Auob Lodge Concession area in May, together with SANParks Tourism Manager for the Kgalagadi - Dupel Erasmus, and environmental consultants David Grossman and Phillipa Holden.

Humphrey reports: 'The field trip involved re-assessing the feasibility of the lodge site selected by SANParks some years ago, reviewing infrastructure requirements in the concession area, identifying potential activities and activity areas, and assessing potential environmental impacts'.

He says that further information on water availability in the area as well as support infrastructure requirements at Twee Rivieren is required before progressing with the official concession application to SANParks.

From Strength to Strength

The ASLF is also pleased to note that our students from the Khomani San community who are attending the SA College for Tourism in Graaff Reinet are thriving. These seven young women are participating in a year's tuition and are not only doing well in their studies but are enjoying the experience and have become involved in various extra-curricular activities including public-speaking and debating as well as joining the college's netball team. The girls recently went home to spend some time with their families during the college holidays, but are back for the term and are throwing themselves fully into college life once more. We'd like to thank our sponsors and mentors for making this possible.



The Khomani San students in action at the SA College for Tourism in Graaff Reinet



Donations Welcome

The ASLF cannot operate without the generous support of its sponsors. Your contribution will make a difference to rural livelihoods.

Contact Sandra Mombelli, E-mail: Sandra@asl-foundation.org or Tel: +27 - 11 - 646 1391 if you wish to make a donation to a specific project, or our bank details for an electronic transfer are:

<i>Account holder:</i>	<i>African Safari Lodge Foundation</i>
<i>Bank:</i>	<i>Standard Bank, Jan Smuts Avenue, Johannesburg</i>
<i>Branch code:</i>	<i>004205</i>
<i>Account number:</i>	<i>00 700 520 2</i>
<i>SWIFT code:</i>	<i>SBZAJJ</i>

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The Living Culture Foundation

During May 2010, the ASLF invited representatives from the Living Culture Foundation in Namibia to visit the Khomani San community to see if they could assist in establishing a cultural tourism product similar to what has been done in Namibia.

The Living Culture Foundation is a German-Namibian organisation, which focuses on cultural development in Namibia. According to Sebastian Durrschmidt of the LCFN, 'The main aim are the establishments of so called Living Museums, very authentic "cultural villages" which will give business opportunities to the community and the chance to "conserve" and save parts of the traditional culture which would otherwise disappear'.

According to Ed Humphrey, who represents the ASLF in Namibia, 'Two representatives from the LCFN and two members from the Ju/hoansi community at Grashoek participated in the field trip, and the team met with numerous members of the Khomani San'.

Phillipa Holden reports that the visit went very well. 'The four representatives from the Living Culture Museum first visited Oupa Dawid Kruiper and the veld school at Bobbejaanskop in the park, before making presentations to the community at Welkom and at Witdraai in order to explain the concept and the potential it might hold for the Khomani San. The whole concept was very well received and there is going to be a 10-day workshop and follow up visit by the Khomani San to Windhoek at the end of August, to further explore the concept and practice traditional skills in craft making, hunting, song and dance'.

Durrschmidt was just as thrilled saying, 'Everybody showed great interest in the concept of the Living Museums and we are more than positive on possible

cooperation. We also learned a lot about the San of South Africa, about their wisdom and about their problems. I'm sure that this could be the spark to a successful operating Living Museum of the Khomani San in the Transfrontier Park and maybe the initialisation of cooperation with other indigenous language groups in South Africa', says Durrschmidt.

Peter John Massyn says that these kinds of inter-cultural exchanges are very important, 'They allow the people themselves to discover – through discussion and demonstration – how their peers have shared their culture with tourists in a way that they both control and enjoy.'

Update from the ASLF Namibia

The White Sands lodge concession, Bwabwata National Park:

Since approval of the concession and awarding of the head concession rights to the Kyaramacan Association in March 2010, the ASLF has assisted the MET (Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism) concession unit in drafting tender procedures and documentation. Drafts of these were finalized in June and presented to the community and other role-players during a 2-day workshop. It is expected that the pre-qualification stage of the tender will be launched in July 2010.

Bwabwata Hunting Concession, Bwabwata National Park:

ASLF was recently asked by the MET concession unit to assist with drafting tender procedures and documentation

for the Bwabwata hunting concession. This concession is the most valuable hunting concession in Namibia, and the ASLF's work is providing an exciting opportunity to establish industry best-practice in this sector of tourism concessioning in Namibian protected areas. The ASLF is working with the MET concession unit and the WWF-Namibia office in developing this material.

Khaudum lodge concession, Khaudum National Park:

Following the award by the neighbouring communities of the concession operator contract to Namibia Country Lodges in March 2010, the detailed design stage of the Khaudum project has commenced.

Humphrey says, 'Draft designs are expected to be completed in July. Under the concession operator contract, the communities shall invest in a portion of the capital infrastructure in exchange for a higher revenue stream from the operator'.

Hobatere Roadside lodge concession, Kunene region:

Since approval of the concession and awarding of the head concession rights to Ehirovipuka Conservancy in March 2010, the ASLF has assisted the MET concession unit in drafting tender procedures and documentation. Drafts of these were finalized in June and presented to the conservancy and other role-players during a 2-day workshop.

According to Humphrey, 'It is expected that the pre-qualification stage of the tender will be launched in July 2010. At the same time, a project to confirm ground water availability for the concession area has started, and a hydro-geologist was contracted by the ICEMA Project in MET to support this process'.

Hobatere North lodge concession, Kunene region:

Since the award of the head concession rights to the Khoadi //Huas Conservancy in March 2010, the ASLF has assisted the MET Concession unit and the conservancy to prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) document for issue to the incumbent operator for the upgrade and expansion of the existing lodge.

A draft RFP has been prepared and was presented to the conservancy in June, but now needs to be updated before issuing to the operator. Once the final proposal has been accepted by the conservancy, a concession operator contract can be concluded.

Etendeka Lodge concession Kunene region:

Since the award of the head concession rights to the Anabeb and Omatendeka Conservancies in March 2010, the ASLF has assisted the MET Concession unit and the conservancies to prepare a Request for Proposal document for issue to the incumbent operator for the upgrade and expansion of the existing lodge, and the development of a new one.

According to Humphrey, 'A draft RFP was prepared and presented to the conservancies in June, but now needs to be updated before issuing to the operator. Under this concession, it is planned that the conservancies shall raise the capital required for upgrading the existing infrastructure and developing the new lodge'.

The ASLF is one of the grantors for this project along with the ICEMA Project, and it is

hoped that the project will also attract funds from the Millennium Challenge Account once their grant facility becomes available.

The ASLF continues to provide advisory services to the MET concession unit on a needs basis. Specific support provided includes the review and evaluation of development proposals from operators, financial assessments of tourism development proposals, preparation of draft contracts, and helping the drafting of communication between MET and concessionaires.

There is also news that the ASLF under the guidance of Peter John Massyn is developing standard tender documentation and procedures for concessioning in protected areas. 'Namibia is leading the way in the granting of tourism concessions to local communities. If the approach is to deliver to its full potential – and if it is to spread, as we believe it should – we must get it right in Namibia. And this means – amongst many other things – developing the templates and procedures that allow us to implement at scale without having to reinvent the wheel each time.'

Update on Mozambique

Peter John Massyn says, 'We are very excited about developments in Mozambique. The government there has embraced the idea of local communities acquiring ownership of high value tourism and wildlife opportunities. We believe projects such as Covane and Chemucane can influence the mainstream of conservation policy and management so the approach is repeated as Mozambique's huge tourism potential is developed.'



One of the highly anticipated houseboats acquired by the Canhane community for the Covane Fishing and Safari Lodge

Covane Fishing and Safari Lodge

The ASLF's Paulo Mussanhane is pleased to report that things are certainly progressing when it comes to the reconstruction of the Covane Fishing and Safari Lodge, although the journey has not been without its challenges.

He says, 'To date, Covane has managed to clean the area for the campsite facilities, establish the hot water system and finalize the drawings for the lodge extension - this includes the preliminary discussion on the development of the Environment Impact Assessment'. He adds that local staff recruitment has taken place and that more staff will be recruited when the actual construction takes place.

He also reports that a group of 35 American students, from the University of Virginia spent 3 nights at Covane Lodge during the course of May. 'Activities included a visit to the local community, watching traditional dance, playing football with the locals as well as a visit to Parque Nacional do Limpopo, the Dam and the Chokwe irrigation system'. Mussanhane says, 'The interaction with local community was the highlight of the whole experience during their stay!'

Mr. Salomão Valoi, one of the representatives from the Canhane community and former Covane Community lodge manager, said: 'the University of Virginia sends a group of students to Covane every year, and have done so since 2003 and they will continue to do so as long as the lodge is open and offers activities that include interaction with local communities'.

It's all in a name

According to Mussanhane, part of the visiting student group from the US were not happy with the name change from Covane Community Lodge to Covane Fishing and Safari Lodge as in their opinion it takes out the essence of being a community-owned Lodge.

He responds, 'I personally think that the idea is not to replace the name Covane Community Lodge but rather to introduce a commercial name which appeals to anyone looking for a fishing and safari type experience in Southern Africa – and that will be used as part of the marketing ploy for the lodge'.

Glynn O'Leary, who heads up Transfrontier Parks Destinations, the company that will be responsible for managing, marketing and operating Covane Fishing and Safari Lodge under a long-term contract with the Canhane community says: 'In Southern African tourism the word "community" in a destination name has come to imply that guests must pity the community and stay at the destination out of a sense of guilt. It is the vision of all involved that the Canhane Community own a Lodge that is a growing asset to the community, and it should hold it's own in the tourism industry'.

He says that the Canhane community were asked for their input for a name that provided clarity for potential guests of what could be experienced at the Lodge. 'They came back to the operators with the request at the name be changed to "Covane Fishing and Safari Lodge". In addition, the vision is that those members of the community who develop skills in the tourism industry as a result of the progress of the Lodge, do so in a way that allows them to work at other equivalent destinations in Southern Africa should they wish to move'.

Let's have your say about the new name for the lodge.

The Long-Awaited Covane Houseboats

Steve Collins, the ASLF representative in Mozambique is happy to report that the houseboat idea is no longer just a dream for the Canhane community. He reports: 'Two houseboats have been purchased and as soon as we get the license to operate them on the water we will have them delivered to Covane and begin using them'.

Each houseboat has four beds and will no doubt provide a draw-card to the area. The team are waiting for the permits for the houseboats to be launched.

Continued ...

Mussanhane reports that there are not yet specific dates or a timeline to launch the boats. 'At this stage we can guess that it will only be possible to launch the boats in the next two months if the authorities allow us to undertake a simplified rather than a detailed EIA (environmental impact assessment). Although the boats are ready to be launched we recognize that there is no point in bringing them to Massingir Dam without the permission to launch them'.

Q & A with Paulo Pires, Director, ProServ Tourism Mozambique

We asked Paulo Pires, Director of ProServ Tourism in Mozambique about the capacity training that took place with the Canhane community and traders from Massingir Village from the 15th to the 28th of May.

QUESTION: What did the training entail?

ANSWER: *The training was intended for selected members of the Canhane community, besides the President, Carlos Zitha, and Vice President, Alexandre Zitha, a diverse group of community members was selected, based mainly on their level of respect within the community and their ability to train the rest of the community in tourism awareness as well as transmit leadership to the younger members.*

QUESTION: What were the outcomes?

ANSWER: *The final outcome is that the Canhane Community, as owners of the Lodge and the surroundings, have gained basic principles to help negotiate with the private sector and control the basic deliverables of the operation of the Lodge.*

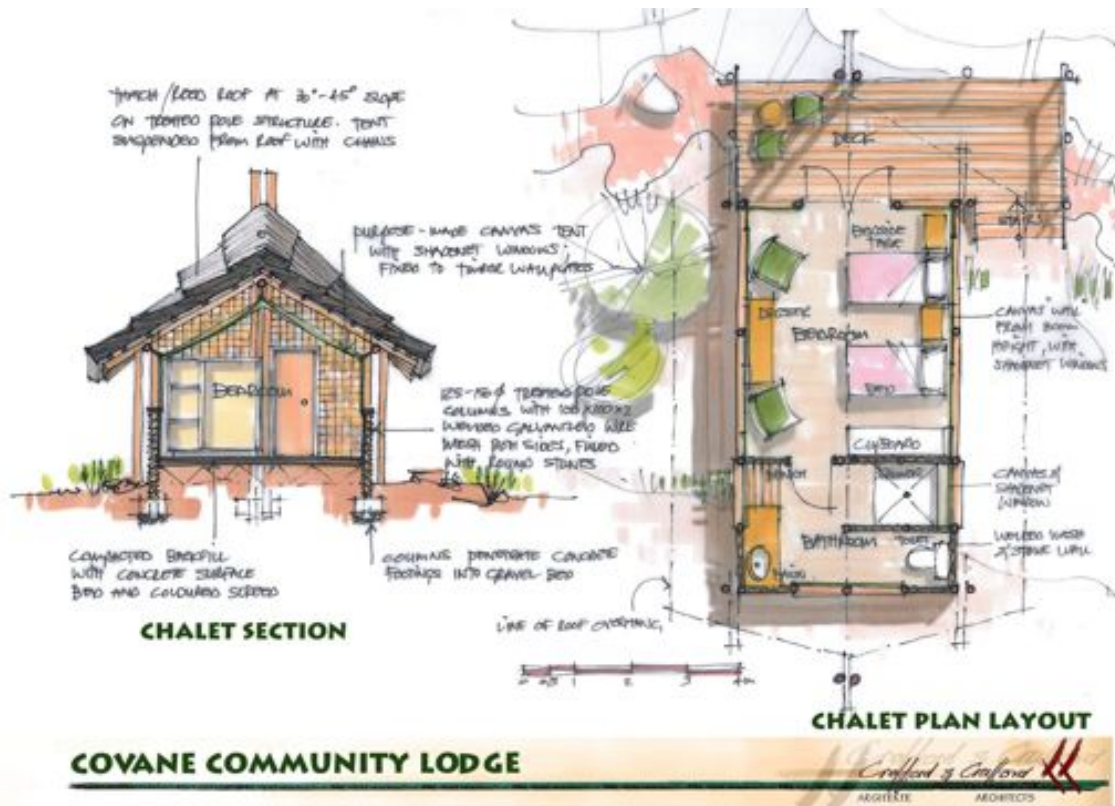
The tourism awareness program helped provide the level of understanding about the tourism industry and the benefits to the community. By being able to develop business plans, community members are able to use the income generated by the Lodge to expand business ventures or offer support services to the Lodge.

QUESTION: What were the challenges and successes of this training?

ANSWER: *The training was challenging in terms of lower literacy levels found – which means that in future materials will need to be adjusted for better learning purposes. However, there was good participation from the trainees all round. We felt that the gender balance and punctuality was good and trainers were able to hold the attention of the participants.*

QUESTION: What's the next step?

ANSWER: *The next step is to provide follow-up mentoring and problem-solving skills in order to promote a continual relationship between the stakeholders. A functional skills training based on the need analysis is the next step and it is expected that the following training programs will be implemented: bartender training; waitron training; housekeeping/front-of-house training; tour guide training, English language training (basic level).*



Architect's drawings for the Covane Lodge chalets

Business Opportunities on the Horizon

According to Mussanhane there is great potential for further business opportunities, he says: 'Technoserve, Lupa, the Canhane Community, Transfrontier Parks Destination and ProServ are committed to identify possible business opportunities that may be part of the tourism development plan and generate additional income to locals. Apart from being a source of income to locals, small business ventures may and will increase the product value and the whole tourism experience.'

Maputo Special Reserve/Ponta Chemucane

The government of Mozambique recently awarded one of the three most valuable sites in the Maputo Special Reserve to a local community known as the Ahi Zamani Chemucane. With the help of the International Finance Corporation, the

community selected a private investor to develop the site in a partnership that promises much.

'The ASLF has signed a MOU with Peace Parks Foundation to assist the community through training and technical support as well as making a R4 million refundable grant available for equity in the project', says the ASLF's Steve Collins. The ASLF will provide transaction advice and organisational support to assist the community as well as provide funding to enable them to become investors in the proposed lodge'. Collins reports that a preferred bidder has been selected but they are awaiting to be officially informed.

Collins says the ASLF will run the process between the bidder and the community legal entity over the next 3 months. The contract must be signed by the bidder and the community by the end of October.

He adds, 'The World Bank will make \$500,000 available as a grant and we will prepare the application on behalf of the community'.

Makuleke

Report Back by Steve Collins

'The ASL Foundation is facilitating interaction between the key roleplayers in the Makuleke region of the Kruger National Park to address the low tourism numbers in their lodges and consequent reduced income to the community. This iconic land claim and conservation project is being threatened by real returns from the land to the community being lower than expected.

It is now 10 years since the settlement agreement was reached and the community embarked on their commercialization program. The Makuleke CPA (Communal Property Association) currently have 4 private partners who have invested over R50 million in 2 lodges and a training camp. There are now a total of 104 beds in the 22 000 hectare concession that is the heart of the Limpopo Transfrontier Park. The Makuleke lodges are struggling to remain financially viable due to a number of reasons including the impact on tourism spending caused by the global recession. As a result the expected income to the community through their leases which are linked to turnover has fallen far short of the predictions made 5 years ago. The CPA requested the ASL to facilitate discussions between them, their concession partners and SANParks to address the problem.

Over the weekend of 16-18 the July, the leadership of the CPA, private investors and SANParks met and agreed on a way forward that could improve income earned by all. Issues that will be addressed over the next 6 months include restructuring the land management system, improving the roads and anti-poaching operations of SANParks, access to Thulamela which is an important historical site outside the concession and agreeing on a future development options. These issues and others will be dealt with in an inclusive Management Plan review being funded by ERM. The expectation is that the plan will be finalised by the end of this year. At the request of all the roleplayers, the ASL Foundation will continue to facilitate the process.

MY STORY TO THE PEOPLE AND HOW I GOT TO BE by Obakeng Medupe

It's a simple way, only tricky to travel and vice versa

Take it from a village boy exposed to all the thrills and spills of having learnt everyday survival skills and having grown comfortable with the brutality of rurality. Growing up I always wanted to give back to Mother Nature but didn't know that one could make a career out of giving back.

Thanks to the little education I had, I came across a term 'TOURISM' and this term began to shed light on the possibilities of making working in nature, a career. I loved this term, it also held the promise that by pursuing this field I would be able to enjoy travel and a passion for animals. It was then I began to go on a journey of exploration.

Soon I got to understand that this specific term is a very vast term in so many degrees.... From this junction I become part of the RANGER V.S FIELD GUIDE confused generation. Today I at least know that a field guide is 'an individual who interprets nature and all its associated activities then passes such information to an audience'. Contrary to a ranger whose role is 'to protect the environment with the responsibility of the flora and fauna's welfare at the same time carrying it out in a more scientific manner'.

It was July 2008 when I applied as a field guide candidate for a four and a half month course held at Numbi Gate for any Madikwe Game Reserve employee and the local community (open to those living villages not further than 70 km around the Madikwe Game

Reserve). After being short-listed from over 100 applicants, I then became part of the 12 (8 gentlemen and 4 ladies) successful Madikwe candidates for the field guide course sponsored by Ford Foundation, managed by the African Safari Lodge Foundation and a host of other sponsors.

On the 15th of August 2008 the course commenced with all candidates being transported to Nkambeni Camp in the Mdluli Concession south of Kruger National Park where boarding and classes were conducted. We were then all provided with study material, uniform, a once-off stipend and transport (to and from classes, educational excursions, game drive and driving lessons AND including trips once every four weeks to Madikwe)

In four and a half months my birthday present was finishing the course successfully, not only that, but also as the top student with four others. In addition we all got a six month's work experience placement with a five star lodge from our local parks.

Today, it is with great pleasure that I have found 'A Place Of New Beginnings' - a five star lodge in Madikwe Game Reserve known as Etali Safari Lodge. In the first four months of my practical work experience I became a 'Jack' of all Etali's Trades and 'Master' of several... Within six months of my practical work experience I was offered a permanent position as a junior 'ranger'(Field Guide).

Up to today I am still a proud member of Etali Safari Lodge and currently I am busy with my Trails Guide qualification followed by my FGASA level 2 Theory examination in October. For me this Field Guiding course was just a stepping stone and I am only limited by my own ambition and capabilities.

Thanks once more to all the sponsors and mentors because I am now a positive contributor to the society and wildlife as a fully qualified field guide. From childhood, striving for success has always been a constant reminder of where I once was as a victim of circumstances. Today I am a victor in the name of perseverance and hard work. This is why I say 'It is a simple way, only tricky to travel and vice versa'.



Obakeng Medupe is a ranger at Etali Safari Lodge (www.etalisafari.co.za) and successful course participant of the ASLF's 2008 Field Guide Training Course.

The ASLF team would like to congratulate Denise Slabbert on the birth of Aidan as well as Paulo Mussanhane on his recent marriage!

Until next time.....
