



THE AFRICAN SAFARI LODGE

F O U N D A T I O N

Greetings and welcome

The months are flying by and 2011 is turning out to be a year filled with exciting challenges and opportunities. This newsletter is a recap of the African Safari Lodge Foundation (ASLF) activities from January to the end of April.

On the PR and communication side of things, we have joined the social network community, so please befriend us on Facebook and look out for our tweets on Twitter. We value these mediums of staying in touch and hope you'll join us on our learning curve as we venture into the Twitterverse and other such places. We have also increased our efforts in terms of publicity and profile and you'll see more regular stories on the ASLF and our various projects in mixed media over the next few months.

As always, if you have any comments, stories or interesting anecdotes you'd like to share with us, please do so. Contact Sandra Mombelli on sandra@asl-foundation.org.

Thanks to grants from The Ford Foundation and various other funders, the ASLF continues to focus on supporting and promoting conservation-based tourism projects that emphasise community/private partnerships as a means of building rural livelihoods and reducing poverty.

Our focus is in southern Africa but we also support several projects in other parts of the continent that use tourism as a means to uplift the rural poor.



Ilha de Mozambique (Picture courtesy of Technoserve)

Inside this issue:

Bhangazi Trust, iSimangaliso Wetland Park

Khomani San, Northern Cape

South African College for Tourism, Student Update

ASLF in Mozambique:

Chemucane Community in Landmark Agreement

South Africa, Makuleke, Limpopo Province Field Guide Training

Namibia

Bhangazi Trust, iSimangaliso Wetland Park

There are few places in the world that can rival the scenic beauty of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park or the significant cultural heritage found in this part of the world.

The Bhangazi community certainly has a story to tell and their ancestral land, which forms part of South Africa's first Unesco World Heritage site, offers much to attract the adventurous traveller.

Between 1950 and 1970,

the Bhangazi people were removed from their traditional land along the beautiful eastern shores of Lake St Lucia (in an area now known as the Elephant Coast). This resulted in a long and arduous land claim that was settled in 1999 and finally gave the community development rights to a portion of land on the southeastern shore of Bhangazi Lake. This site falls within the iSimangaliso Wetland Park World Heritage site – and could

well become a tourism magnet for travellers seeking a culturally enriching experience as well as superb outdoor adventure opportunities.

The ASLF has had a long relationship with the Bhangazi community, stretching back to the early days of their land claim and we continue to provide the Bhangazi Community Trust with day-to-day technical advice. We have recently worked together to prepare a business plan for the development and operation of Bhangazi Lake site. We also support the trust in various other endeavours related to travel and tourism, which are designed to uplift the community and create a lasting legacy for future generations.

The ASLF also conducted a tourism trends survey, commissioned by the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority to help inform the authority's future development plans for the area.



Lake Bhangazi, iSimangaliso Wetland Park

Khomani San, Northern Cape

The ASLF has been providing technical support to the #Khomani San community for a number of years towards the implementation of income-generating tourism projects.

The #Khomani San live near the small town of Askham, some 60km south of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Known as Africa's "First People", this community has lived off the land for centuries and has a wealth of indigenous knowledge and a rich cultural heritage.

However, when the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park was proclaimed during the 1930s (under the apartheid government), the livelihoods and freedom of movement of the Khomani San were

dramatically curtailed. Members of the clans were dispossessed of their access to ancestral land and hunting ground and so the people dispersed and became scattered across Southern Africa.

In 1995, the #Khomani San lodged a claim for the restitution of 400 000 hectares of land in the Kalahari Gemsbok Park (now known as the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park). After years of negotiation, the claim was settled on March 21, 1999.

However, the way forward has not been smooth and, although the land claim was initially a story of hope, there has been very slow progress in terms of turning

tourism into a means for the community to find their way out of poverty. Lack of any real support from the government and internal conflicts as well as existing social problems have done much to hamper progress.

The ASLF's Phillipa Holden says that, although slow, progress is finally being made in certain areas. Discussions are going ahead regarding the building of an ecotourism lodge, but they are still in the early stages and communications between the #Khomani San, ASLF, SANParks and a private funder are continuing. Holden says the idea is that the community needs to form a company that will one day own the lodge outright. She says there also needs to be a focus on a long-term capacity-building programme. "There needs to be a dedicated skills programme to make sure that over time the community are able to take over the lodge and operate it themselves," she says.

Brave new world

For the Khomani San to have a presence in the competitive world of travel and tourism in Southern Africa, it needs to have its own brand identity. Their new website went up in the middle of April, designed by two top Johannesburg agencies Flint Studios and Grid Worldwide Branding and Design. Please go to: www.khomanisan.com and give us your feedback.

In the meantime, a private funder has agreed to put up the money for fixing the fence and reinstating a borehole on a game farm owned by the †Khomani San. SANParks has agreed to stock the area with R650 000 worth of game, of which 60% to 70% should be arriving over the next few months.

The †Khomani San and the ASLF is considering various options and target markets for the eco-lodge. "We are looking at diverse product offerings," says Holden. "In the beginning, income could potentially be generated from walking trails, camping, overland journeys and cultural homestays. We need a more concerted look at how we are going to make that happen."

She says that discussions are taking place with the Wilderness Leadership School.

Holden says it is essential to look at basic needs such as having properly trained people available for when tourists do start to visit the area. Some of the guides are on the ASLF field guide training programme at present and Holden says the community is looking forward to having them back – complete with all the new skills they can share with the community.

Erin, one of the traditional farms south of the Park, was fenced last year, thanks to funding from the community development fund, and Tswalu private game reserve donated 100 head of game to the community.

"Twenty animals were received last year and another 80 will arrive towards the end of 2011. The private funder is negotiating a deal with Tswalu around the purchase of more animals," says Holden.

Peter John Massyn, who heads up the ASLF, is pleased with developments regarding the †Khomani San, he says: "SANParks has agreed to fully integrate the proposed lodge into its reservations system. This is an important breakthrough because the SANParks system has enormous market reach."

The ASLF continues to seek further funding for the †Khomani San to ensure that the eco-lodge becomes a reality sooner rather than later.

Student success stories

As a result of the 2010 training bursaries, seven Khomani San graduates are now on fully-funded learnerships in SANParks parks. The ASLF is always looking for field guiding and hospitality internships for its graduates. Should you be able to assist in any way, please contact Sandra Mombelli at sandra@asl-foundation.org.

South African College for Tourism – student update

Sandra Mombelli is pleased to report that the ASLF has a large group of girls taking up bursaries this year at the South African College for Tourism in the Eastern Cape.

The ASLF has placed 13 young women at the college for a full year's tuition – there are five students from Makuleke (Limpopo province), four students from Madikwe (North West province), three #Khomani San (Northern Cape) and one from Namibia.

Mombelli points out that the ASLF would have liked to place more female students on the programme, but there are a number of problems that still need to be overcome. She says: "One of the big disadvantages we face in the areas we work in is that very few of the girls have adequate schooling qualifications when it comes to maths and basic English. We really battled to get students from Namibia and we weren't able

to find a successful candidate from our project areas in Mozambique."

Mombelli has raised the issue with the ASLF board and plans are being made to deal with the problem in future, possibly by incorporating more basic skills training into the early part of the hospitality curriculum.

The good news is that the ASLF received a grant from an organisation called Swiss Foundation for Solidarity in Tourism to pay for the extras for the girls. "We are very grateful for the grant as it takes care of things like uniforms and transport as well as a basic allowance for necessities. I think the chances are very good that we will get a large number of bursaries again for next year and we should start early to find the right candidates," says Mombelli.

ASLF in Mozambique

The ASLF in Mozambique operates in two main geographical areas: the Maputo Special Reserve and Covane Community Lodge in the south and Ilha de Moçambique and Manda Wilderness in the north.

ASLF board member, Joao Viseu reports that there has been good progress on various projects in the

country.

The Ilha de Moçambique Community Foundation, working with the ASLF and Technoserve, continues to make strides in restoring and renovating historic structures on the island (a World Heritage Site for its cultural value off the coast of Mozambique) and thereby improving living conditions

and job opportunities for the community.

Viseu has been working on the rehabilitation of the headquarters of the Community Foundation on the island. Rehabilitation of the historic building began in December 2010 (with US\$90 000 donated by the US Embassy) and, as a result, 22 jobs have been

created. Work on this project is ongoing with the hope that a full tourism venture could be up and running by 2012.

Another project about which Viseu is passionate is the Macuti Homestays, a selection of traditional houses that are being



converted into homestays for cultural tourists. Viseu says: "The Makuti homestays consist of 20 houses owned by local women, ten of which will be converted into homestays in 2011 and ten in 2011. The aim is to restore the houses to their historic splendour using the original materials."

There will be a restaurant serving local cuisine as well as a laundry to reduce the environmental impact of this tourism initiative.

The project will have far-reaching implications. "We are going to create various routes that will be on offer to tourists as well as (used for) the training of local tourist guides. This will be a quality cultural exchange between tourists and the community in an area whose culture is recognized as a global treasure," says Viseu.

One of the main highlights is the conversion of the old hospital, a handsome building that will house a hotel and conference center. The structure will have 20 guest rooms and six suites but also a jewelry-making workshop and a venue for traditional dance so that delegates will be exposed to the rich

cultural heritage of the island. Viseu says the pressure is on to make a connection with an international conference operator.

The second part of the homestays project is the Zander houses, which will offer 100 rooms. There will also be a bed and breakfast alternative offered.

"The idea is to encourage investment on the island and the adjacent mainland," says Viseu. "Ilha de Moçambique used to be called the Casablanca of South Africa, and perhaps we can restore this place to its former glory."



The old hospital buildings on Ilha de Mozambique



Rehabilitated building on Ilha de Mozambique

A working business model

Viseu says that, in order for the project to work, a business model had to be created to ensure that the community would receive the ultimate benefits. Any profit made from the homestays will go into the community foundation and will be used to rehabilitate more houses on Ilha de Moçambique. There is a scheme in place for the community to repay loans over a period of five years.

Chemucane community in landmark agreement

Another exciting event in Mozambique took place on March 25 2011, when the Chemucane community association signed a 25-year partnership agreement with the Bell Foundation to develop a luxury eco-lodge in the north of the Maputo Special Reserve.

The landmark agreement is the first time a Mozambican community has received long-term concession rights to a prime tourism

site in a major national park, and the hope is that the benefits of this partnership will spill over into surrounding communities to help alleviate poverty in rural Mozambique.

The partnership agreement is a milestone for the ASLF, the Chemucane community and the government of Mozambique.

Read the full story on our website:
<http://www.asl-foundation.org/>



Ponta Chemucane

South Africa - Makuleke, Limpopo Province

In February 2010, the the Makuleke community, who own the northern portion of the Kruger National Park, approached the ASLF to facilitate discussion with the community's business partners as well as SANParks about the future of their land.

The ASLF's Steve Collins says: "The process, which started over a year-and-a-half ago, began when we needed to write up a case study on the Makuleke case. We quickly encountered a range of issues, mainly to do with the fact that the community's expectations were clearly not

being met."

Collins says the ASLF was asked to convene a discussion regarding the management plan for the Makuleke land. "The timing was good because the first master plan was done 10 years ago and needed to be revised. In the meantime, the Kruger National Park management plan became more and more applicable because the Makuleke masterplan was insufficient, and the community risked losing control of their land."

He says the ASLF facilitated a process of discussion between

the tourism operators, the community and government, which led to the appointment of a company to revise the master plan for the Makuleke Region. "In terms of our involvement, we have moved into the background, just allowing the planning process to go ahead. The idea is that, next month, there will be another big workshop of all the stakeholders where the planners will put out various scenarios.

Hopefully, this will lead to a new vision that will guide conservation and tourism on the Makuleke's land."

Collins says that important issues such as the need for new roads and fences, the cost of infrastructure maintenance and the ongoing role of SANParks in the co-management of the Makuleke Region will all be up for discussion. "By the middle of next month, we hope there will be a clear way forward."

Peter John Massyn adds: "There is a need for ongoing support for the community landowner. If



Makuleke region of the Kruger National Park

the community does not take control of the management and development planning of their area, it can have disastrous long-term consequences.”

The ASLF intervention laid the groundwork and got consensus among the role-players that jointly created a vision based on the environmental reality, community benefit and a workable tourism framework. The process should be completed by June 2011.

Field Guide Training

Field guide training continues to be one of the core initiatives of the ASLF. After an intensive three-month training course, ASLF trainees are placed in learnerships at lodges (supported with funding supplied by the Tourism and Hospitality Training Authority - THETA).

Sandra Mombelli says: “The training is done by an organisation called Empower-Ed with Jenny Cornish and Michel Girardin with whom we have worked in the past. So far, things have gone very well, with lots of support for the candidates. There are two months to go at the lodges and then we’ll start discussions to see if any of the guides will be offered permanent employment. If not, we’ll see if we can find positions for them elsewhere.”

Mombelli says funding is an ongoing challenge and that the ASLF is looking to the

Lotto Distribution Fund as well as a possible co-operation with the Peace Parks Foundation to expand the programme over the next few years.

Peter John Massyn says: “It’s all about local people from rural environments gaining new opportunities. We have implemented these projects on a relatively small scale, but we have always had a dual purpose. We’re training individual field guides from disadvantaged backgrounds. These young men and women are being prepared to take up positions that will put them on successful career paths and make them role-models for others from similar backgrounds. But our programme is also about more than the individuals. It seeks to show the way for wider change by establishing a best practice model, by encouraging broader curriculum reform and

seeking to institutionalise these reforms within the South African environment. Part of the process has been to develop a new training approach and syllabus reform that makes the guiding profession more professional while simultaneously making it more accessible to kids from disadvantaged backgrounds in rural conservation areas.

“We have developed a course that consists of a three-month formal theoretical training component with strong mentoring support and soft skills followed by a nine-month on-the-job apprenticeship in lodges.”

Going forward, the ASLF aims to upscale its field guide training in partnership with other organisations. “We are talking to partners on the implementation side of things and this is progressing well,” says Massyn.

Massyn adds that there is a

need to look beyond South Africa's borders. "We need to look at the sustainability of the programme and ensure that it continues to

espouse the core values of ASLF not only in South Africa but also in the other countries where we are active."

Heartfelt thanks

ASLF's Education and Training Co-ordinator, Lindy Rodwell, received numerous letters from students who attended the field guide training in 2010 in the Northern Cape.

"Dear Lindy

With this we would like to individually thank you for being our Godmother, friend, mentor and the best that you have been for us and hopefully still is. Thanks for being there for us during the first leg of the training collaborating for us with Empower Ed, the Sponsors, the Ford Foundation, Tswalu as well as ASLF. Your input has made this a great learning experience and we really hope you do understand the feeling of pride we have towards you."

Mans Maasdorp:

"The learnership is good at the moment; I really enjoy it from the first day that I have arrived here at Tswalu Kalahari Reserve. I have received a welcome that I will never forget. The learnership is still going as planned, we have gained a lot of experience here at Tswalu, the people make it even more good to be part of a team that really work hard to make us feel like Tswalu staff members. The lodge function very well and the treatment, they serve the guests is more than 5 STAR treatment much extra, it makes me want to stay longer at Tswalu. The training is going very well and we have learned a lot about a 5 STAR guest experience and how to handle people. I even start to learn about some birds it is good to work with people with so much experience in conservation. We learn so much from all the staff members from every department alike. I enjoyed the Workshop, Maintenance, Front-of-House, Stables, Housekeeping.

Thanks for your support and the sponsors for believing in us."

Dirk Pienaar:

"Awesome, awesome is what comes to my mind when I think of the journey so far. Tswalu is defanately what we needed for this course to make it a success and so much more. We never thought that it would be so amazing being part of Tswalu it instill a true sense of pride just being able to experience what they doing dayly. Waking up even five O clock in the morning to go to the Stables, Wildlife or Motse the main lodge is such a blessing you want to be part of it, you want to do it. Conservation on Tswalu is endless and you see it in every little thing you



Game drive – L to R Frederick, Ricardo, Mans and Ricardo



Mans interpreting nature during drive

do or experience. From service delivery in Front of House right into Donkey Cart drives. Only thing missing is true Community involvement, all the programs is in place but only the workers benefit at the moment, which is understandable because it's a private setup. Anyway the Tswalu is doing a great deal and WE cannot complain.

"ASLF thank you all for this marvelous opportunity you're giving us and I hope more will come for individuals like us. The sponsors thank you for the funding and this great opportunity. Lins you've been amazing and we really proud of you, Phil you are our pillar of strength and we really pray that you will remain family of the Khomani San, our sister, friend and mentor, same goes for David. Jenny thank you for your support as well and the extraordinary teacher Michel. Hope that nothing will comes our way to disappoint any of you."

Frederick Padmaker:

"I am very proud to be part of this wonderful opportunity and I hope I am not going to disappoint anyone. My time at Tswalu is great especially stables and the Workshop. Everyone really goes the extra mile to accommodate us and make this a wonderful learning opportunity. I will thus do everything in my power to make this a success. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the sponsors, Lindy, Jenny, Michelle and Phillipa but most of all the Tswalu team. Tswalu is a great place to learn from and we will take a lot of knowledge and experience from this great place. Our Journey has just begun and we won't miss a minute of it. Hope that we will receive the same support and guidance from everyone especially from our loving Lindy."

Namibia

The ASLF in Namibia – under the guidance of Ed Humphrey — have had their hands full with concession support activities.

One of the main projects the team has had to deal with is the Bwabwata Trophy Hunting Concession, where the local community owns the rights to a big game quota of considerable value. Humphrey says: “Two concessions between the community association and professional hunters have been signed. We received nine proposals for the two concessions and two hunters were appointed following the evaluation. The combined value of the concession fees is 4-million per annum in Namibian dollars with 20 new jobs created. The concessions also bring a comprehensive training and social investment programme worth about half- a- million dollars per year.”

The White Sands Lodge Concession (close to the Okavango Swamps) was awarded in March 2010. The ASLF team facilitated a tender to identify an

operator and one proposal was received in April 2011 and evaluated. The Hobatare Roadside Lodge Concession on the border of Etosha National Park is also up for evaluation.

“We are also involved with some preliminary work and support with putting together some new community-owned projects, one of which is in Palmwag and another in the Skeleton Coast Park,” says Humphrey. “The Palmwag concession has already been approved by the minister. It’s on the border of the Skeleton Coast Park in the far northwest of the country. It’s nearly 600 000 hectares in size and it’s been agreed by the minister to grant that area to the three neighbouring communities collectively so they will jointly receive the rights. We have been asked to play the role as broker and transaction adviser in the process.”

ASLF director Maxi Louis says: “The draft head contract between government and the communities is in place now and that’s on its way to the minister for approval. Once everything has been approved, the final contract will be

prepared and signed which puts the rights in the hands of the communities.”

Humphrey points out that the ASLF is also currently working on a feasibility study on a new concession inside the Skeleton Coast Park. “This new concession will also be granted to communities bordering the park. It is approved in principle but still needs some feasibility work done before the contracts can be prepared and signed,” says Humphrey.

The ASLF has been involved with the Etendenka Lodge Concession since 2006. Humphrey says: “We have received the final proposal from the incumbent operator and we are at a stage now where we can make a final recommendation for the award of the operating rights of the private partner.”

The team says that there has been slow but steady progress regarding the Khaudum Lodge Concession in the northeast of the country. “The operator has concluded the environmental

assessment for the new lodge and the two new camps in Khaudum National Park. They have a clearing certificate, the design was

finalised and approved by the ministry, so now the construction will start," says Humphrey.

The camps should be open for business in time for Namibia's peak tourism season later this year.

For images, interviews and more information, contact Sandra Mombelli at The African Safari Lodge Foundation: Tel +27(0)11 646-1391/1301. Email: sandra@asl-foundation.org

The African Safari Lodge Foundation is on Facebook. Visit our page and "Like" us!

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/African-Safari-Lodge-Foundation/100193306724406>

For latest news from the ASLF you can now also follow us on Twitter.

