



Greetings and Welcome

We live in exciting times indeed, as we speed towards the end of yet another productive year with the African Safari Lodge Foundation (ASLF). In this issue we focus on the extraordinary story of the †Khomani San people in the Northern Cape. And we give you insight into the conservancies bordering the Khaudum National Park in Namibia. As always, we appreciate feedback so please feel free to email us at: sandra@aslfoundation.co.za



Kalahari sunset

Khomani San Indigenous Knowledge Systems Project

Recognised as members of South Africa's First Peoples, the remaining †Khomani San live near the small town of Askham, some 60 kilometres south of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The broader †Khomani San community - including all extended family members - consists of fewer than 500 people, approximately 300 of whom are resident in the area. This is a community boasting a wealth of indigenous knowledge and a rich cultural heritage. These are a people who have lived successfully off the land for

centuries, yet in recent times were reduced to a state of dire poverty and neglect.

The modern †Khomani community has a rather harrowing history: when the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park was proclaimed during the 1930s (under the apartheid government), their livelihoods and freedom of movement were dramatically curtailed. Members of the clans were dispossessed of their access to ancestral land and hunting ground, and so the people dispersed (some as far as Namibia).

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Manufacturing traditional ostrich egg beads at a roadside stall

Soon after advent of South Africa's democracy (1995), the !Khomani San lodged a claim for the restitution of 400 000 hectares of land in the Kalahari Gemsbok Park (now the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park). After years of negotiation, the claim was settled on the 21st of March 1999 with much celebration.

A Tale of "Sad Neglect"

The situation simply got worse and worse, and deteriorated to the point where the South African Human Rights Commission got involved and convened a formal inquiry, and subsequently highlighted evidence of 'sad neglect' by the State as well as contravention of basic human rights (October 2004).

Phillipa Holden and David Grossman have been working with the !Khomani San for over

However, what should have been a story of hope and transformation became one of decay and disillusionment. In the years after the land claim was settled, little development took place due to lack of any real support from the government and divisions within the community.

a decade. Looking back, Holden says, 'Things were a mess from 1999 and only started coming right in late 2006. The reasons for the chaos included a lack of post-settlement support to the community, isolation and marginalization, lack of service delivery by government agencies, corruption and fraud within the community's management committees, lack of capacity and residual racist attitudes towards the Bushmen'.

Enter: The African Safari Lodge Foundation

In August 2007, a grant was received from the Ford Foundation's Indigenous, Tribal and Traditional People's Global Fund for the !Khomani San Indigenous Knowledge systems (IKS) and Land Project - to be administered through the African Safari Lodge Foundation. This marked a turning point in many ways.

The grant was used by the Foundation to facilitate the rebuilding of the community's cultural identity, re-establishing the people's connection with

their ancestral land in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and supporting first visits to the park by elders and youths for the revival and transmission of Indigenous Knowledge (IK), including tracking, medicinal plant use and other cultural activities.

Another key focus was the building of capacity so that the !Khomani San may effectively manage and benefit from their land in and adjacent to the Park, through the following measures:

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- The provision of capacity-building and technical support to the Park and Traditional Committees, better equipping them to carry out their mandate in respect of sustainably managing and developing their land, in order that benefits and livelihood opportunities may flow to the community.
- Technical assistance with land use and ecotourism planning including the development of management and business plans.
- Development of a core group of guides, game farm assistants and community rangers that can work in the Park and on land belonging to the people.
- Exchange visits with other local and regional communities in similar situations in neighbouring countries with insight and knowledge to share.
- Engaging with DLA in order to ensure that the provisions of the settlement agreement are honoured

Holden says, 'The ASLF has supported Grossman and me as technical advisors to the #Khomani San. We have worked with the community since 1999, but with no or little financial support until 2007. In addition to the technical expertise that we provide, the funding has enabled training and capacity building to take place and has facilitated a reconnection with the land in the park, to which people now have access and where they are now able to enjoy their rights.'

A further cause for celebration was the establishment this year of an office for the community's Park and Traditional Committees from where they can run their affairs and go about the business of managing their land both inside and outside the park.

Challenges and a Commitment to Change

For Holden, Grossman and the ASLF team, there have been many obstacles along the way. Grossman says: 'The biggest challenge has been translating the essentially simple vision of the original claimant community into reality. Divisions in the community and a dire lack of post-settlement support have made this difficult. The community are also terribly isolated and historically marginalized and these factors have added to the difficulty in transforming the situation'.

An essential part of the ASLF's work, is trying to restore some kind of dignity to the #Khomani San people. Holden says, 'The San people have been abused and mistreated for centuries and restoring dignity and a sense of self worth is fundamental to achieving the vision articulated by the people'.

'A wealth of indigenous knowledge is on the brink of being lost. We really need to do something urgently before it all slips through our fingers. These are the last of the world's first people.'

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However, there have been positive changes over the years, according to Holden. 'The community are starting to take responsibility for their own destiny, realizing that they cannot rely on help from outside and that it is up to them to make it work, of course - they require support in this.'

Grossman and Holden point out that the #Khomani San are tired of conflict and corruption and as a result, a new leadership has emerged. 'Certain members of the community have emerged as leaders and are working hard to build the community and advance the agenda for the common good. They are attempting to exercise some measure of control over their and their children's destinies as opportunities emerge, despite on-going difficulties. Women are also playing an increasingly important role in these efforts'.

The African Safari Lodge Foundation has noted a definite turn around in the situation. 'People don't feel so helpless. Opportunities are starting to present themselves and the #Khomani San people are more aware of their rights AND their responsibilities. There is so much more hope that the future will be positive for them,' says Holden.

Grossman adds that being able to interact with the land once again has made a huge difference. 'The demeanour and general well-being of people soars when they are enabled to freely roam their land, especially their sacred land in the Park'.

The Future

For Holden, Grossman and the African Safari Lodge Foundation, there is still much work to be done. Holden says, 'The development vision of 1999 is slowly becoming a reality. A number of positive initiatives in the park and on the farms have or are about to commence. These will require ongoing technical and financial

support for a period of time, whilst people become increasingly empowered and able manage their own affairs. The various enterprises also need to get past the start-up phase and become self-sustaining'.

She also points out that the communication flow between community members still needs to be improved and that the role that each individual and each group needs to play – must be better understood. 'The Department of Rural Development (previously Department of Land Affairs) has a number of obligations that still need to be honoured in order to resolve outstanding institutional and governance issues'.

The ASLF is currently conducting a tourism scoping exercise and will assist the the #Khomani San to prepare a tourism development plan to assert their development rights in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park as well as on their own land bordering and to the south of the Park. Watch this Space.

The Youth

The ASLF have also noticed that the development of the youth is a key area requiring intervention. Holden says, 'The youth have energy and want a different life to that of their parents, but are suffering from poor education in general and extremely limited exposure and very few opportunities'.

She points out that there are serious social problems that need to be addressed including: malnutrition, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancies, violence, etc. 'These need special focus to ensure that the community is physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually healthy – allowing them to take advantage of

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opportunities and building a meaningful future for themselves’.

With the ASLF funding, several community workshops have already been held, addressing the most pressing issues, and further funding is presently being sought to support an in-depth three-year health and well-being programme.

Grossman says that there are a few youth-focused programmes that will assist in introducing young people to their ancient heritage in a meaningful way. ‘There is a programme called Imbewu and its all about getting elders and youth back to the Park – this is a joint initiative between SANParks and the Wilderness Leadership School. We really are beginning to see constructive partnerships emerging, adding impetus to the transformation of the situation from a sad tale of neglect to a success story’. Fields trips such as these, where the youth get to spend time with the elders, will no doubt enrich the lives of both.

Holden says, ‘There are virtual libraries of knowledge locked up in the memories of the elders, knowledge of how man and nature interact, knowledge relating to powerful healing values of plants and animals. Much of this knowledge has already been lost as elders have passed on with no or little chance to transfer their knowledge due to their tragic circumstances and being cut off from their land and heritage. Now we have a small window of time before the last remaining elders pass on, for the children and youth to walk and live on the land with them, and learn from their elders – the old ways, rituals and ceremonies, healing arts, hunting, how nature works, understanding of the cosmos, the stories, etc – an incredible heritage that must not be lost – the First of the First People, Our Ancestors’.

Preparing lunch in the cooking shelter during a community meeting at Witdraai



Making Dreams a Reality – Support a Student

The ASLF needs your help in sponsoring 6 or 7 young women from the †Khomani San community who have been accepted to study tourism and hospitality at the SA College for Tourism in Graaff Reinet. These young adults will be participating in a year's tuition. Most aspects of the course are covered, however, we need R 70 000 (US\$ 10,000) to cover transport to and from the Kalahari to Graaff Reinet (twice during the year), uniforms and some spending money to cover toiletries and basic personal items. As these young women come from impoverished backgrounds, any donations would be greatly appreciated. Please help to make a lasting difference to the future of the †Khomani San . Contact Sandra Mombelli at sandra@asl-foundation.org or Phillipa Holden at phillipa@hixnet.co.za or call: +27 (0)11 646 1391



A Story of Hope

Holden and Grossman say the †Khomani San story is one of hope because, 'It contains the potential, as yet not fully realized, to redress what was almost a complete genocide of an essentially gentle people, and a terrible tale of neglect. They have come from rock-bottom, literally living on the side of the road – to being proud land-owners, increasingly taking charge of their own destinies against the odds. The people need to take their place in the world as equal and empowered global citizens, with a voice that is heard so that we might share the wisdom they have'.

Grossman sums it up beautifully when he says, 'We have seen how the self-esteem of people increases when they are given responsibilities and the means whereby they can start shaping their



*Top Left: Oupa Dawid Kruiper with a Kalahari Tracker
Top Right: Cybertrackers
Bottom Right: During a recent youth HIV/Gender workshop*

own future. As you present people with real choices, the outlook becomes more positive – because there is light at the end of the tunnel, they can then rise to the challenge and there is space for possibility.'



Computer training at the newly established Bushman Council Office

From General Helper to IT Consultant

The Barbara Raats is no ordinary woman, and her life is perhaps one of the best examples of illustrating the tenacity and spirit of the #Khomani San people. She was engaged as general help to the new community office. When the position of GIS/Cyber ranger Coordinator came up, she showed an interest and aptitude for computer work. Barbara applied herself and practiced her new-found skills with huge passion and commitment. She also attended a short course in GIS at the Southern African Wildlife College, courtesy of the Peace Parks Foundation, and is now not only computer literate, but competent in basic GIS skills. 'She now co-ordinates the activities of the Cyber ranger team, builds the database and develops maps for conservation, land monitoring and management purposes.'

Not bad for someone who started out as a general helper...

The Last of the World's First People...

San culture has been strongly influenced by the climate and their ancient occupation of this territory. The San emphasize that their view of life has been to accept nature and live with it, rather than attempt to transform the world to suit human needs. An economic and cultural system that was non-hierarchical, with a rich spiritual life ensured peaceful co-existence of people in this arid land. San knowledge systems are based on the complexity of biodiversity, ancient technologies and environmental management.

Today, San elders across Southern Africa are concerned that the knowledge of the old people is dying out. Poverty, denigration of human life and aggressive racism have all had an impact on the physical, mental and spiritual health of these First Peoples, and it is often a challenge to the youth to understand the world of their ancestors.

Grossman says, 'A wealth of indigenous knowledge is on the brink of being lost. We really need to do something urgently before it all slips through our fingers. These are the last of the world's first people.'

ASLF Support to Conservancies Bordering Khaudum National Park in Namibia

by Ed Humphrey

Khaudum National Park extends over 3,842 square kilometres. It is bordered by Botswana to the east and communal land and conservancies to the north and south. Only the border with Botswana and a 55 kilometre section of the western border of the park are fenced, ensuring that wildlife can pursue ancient migratory routes in and out of Khaudum, including to the Okavango Delta, 150 kilometres to the east.

Khaudum is one of the few refuges where rare and endangered species such as roan antelope and African wild dog can roam freely, underlining the park's important conservation status. In addition, Khaudum is the only park in Namibia that protects large expanses of the Northern Kalahari Sandveld forest and woodland biome.

KAZA – Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area

Khaudum is also part of a larger Southern African conservation area that includes iconic destinations such as the Kwando / Zambezi / Kavango / Linyanti and Chobe Rivers, Victoria Falls, Okavango Delta, Tsodilo Hills, Chobe National Park, Khaudum National Park, and Bwabwata National Park. This greater 'five-countries' region is widely perceived to be vastly underdeveloped and to have significant untouched tourism potential. In order to tap this promise, the region has recently become the focus of the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA), an ambitious initiative that will have far reaching implications for the region's tourism industry.

KAZA encompasses an area of about 300,000 square kilometres, straddles the international boundaries of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and includes numerous proclaimed national parks, game reserves, forest reserves, conservancies and wildlife management areas. As KAZA matures and stimulates transboundary benefits and opportunities, tourist numbers passing through Khaudum National Park are likely to grow. This will have a positive impact on the growth of tourism in the area.

A Brief History

For many years Khaudum was settled by the Gciriku community and used as an important traditional hunting and natural resource harvesting area. In December 1982, an agreement was signed between the Administration for Kavangos and the Department of Agriculture and Nature Conservation to proclaim Khaudum as a State protected area (along with Mahango and Popa Falls). Under this agreement, it was decided that 15% of all park entry revenue and 50% of proceeds from trophy hunting and game sales would be paid to the traditional communities of the area. It was also agreed that the neighbouring communities would retain their right to harvest timber, reeds and thatching grass, as well as their right to cancel the agreement and restore the land back to its original status.

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Based on 1982 agreement, the Administrator General of South West Africa approved the declaration of Khaudum as a game park in 1988 and Khaudum was officially gazetted in February 1989. In accordance with a Cabinet Decision of 1999, Khaudum's name changed to Khaudum National Park in 2008.

Following the promulgation of legislation in 1996 allowing residents on communal land to obtain rights over wildlife through the formation of conservancies, three conservancies were registered around Khaudum – Nyae Nyae in 1998, and Muduva Nyangana and George Mukoya in 2005.

Despite the formation of conservancies, the promised benefits from Khaudum, have been limited to occasional meat from game harvests. There has been no revenue sharing from park fees or from tourism operations at Khaudum and Sikeretti camps. Under a Cabinet Decision made in 1999, MET is to provide conditional tourism rights inside of Khaudum to the neighbouring communities.

Proposed Development

Following the approval by Cabinet of the Tourism and Wildlife Concessions Policy in 2007 and formation of a concessions unit and concession committee in MET, a long-term tourism concession was finally awarded to the Gciriku community (comprising the Muduva Nyangana and George Mukoya conservancies, and Gciriku Traditional Authority) in May 2008.

With assistance from MET, the community conducted a tender process to identify a private partner

to help the conservancies with the development and operation of their concession. Following this tender process, Namibia Country Lodges (NCL) was selected as their preferred candidate. The NCL proposal recommended the development of accommodation facilities at the Khaudum and Sikeretti in the park, including the refurbishment of the existing campsites. The proposal envisages the development of two eight-tent camps and two nine-site campsites together with the necessary support infrastructure. A number of guided activities were also recommended in the proposal. At the time of submission, NCL estimated that the total capital investment required to start the project will be in the order of N\$5.5m. The ASLF has been assisting the community to negotiate and draft the concession operator contract, which is to be signed shortly.

To lever additional benefits from this concession and accelerate the delivery of these benefits, the conservancies intend making a capital contribution to the project of at least N\$1.5 million. The ASLF has assisted the community to raise the money through a grant programme offered by the Integrated Community-based Ecosystem Management Programme (ICEMA) housed in the MET.

Community Benefits

In terms of the draft agreement between the conservancies and NCL a number of direct and indirect benefits will accrue to the community. These include:

- a) Concession fees payable for the concession rights granted to NCL in terms of the concession operator contract
- b) Capital repayment and return fees payable for the financial

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*Khaudum
National Park,
Namibia*

- contribution made by the conservancies to the fixed assets
- c) Direct employment of local people at the lodge
 - d) Procurement of local goods and services during construction and operation, such as thatching grass, poles, fire wood and reeds.
 - e) Support to local businesses such as craft makers and vegetable producers
 - f) Support to community projects such as chilli manufacturing to help prevent impacts from elephants on crops etc.

According to NCL's forecasts, it is expected that the conservancies will reap approximately N\$280,000 in concession fees during the first year of operation, increasing to approximately N\$740,000 in year five and up to N\$1.5 million in year ten. It is expected that when the project is in full operation at least 80% of the employees will come from the local community, with outsiders only being recruited for key positions if there are too few skilled people available locally.

Acknowledgements

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Quote of the Month:

'For the living life is a story and a song'

- Ben Okri

Forthcoming Attractions...

In our next newsletter look out for:

- More on the ASLF's activities in Namibia