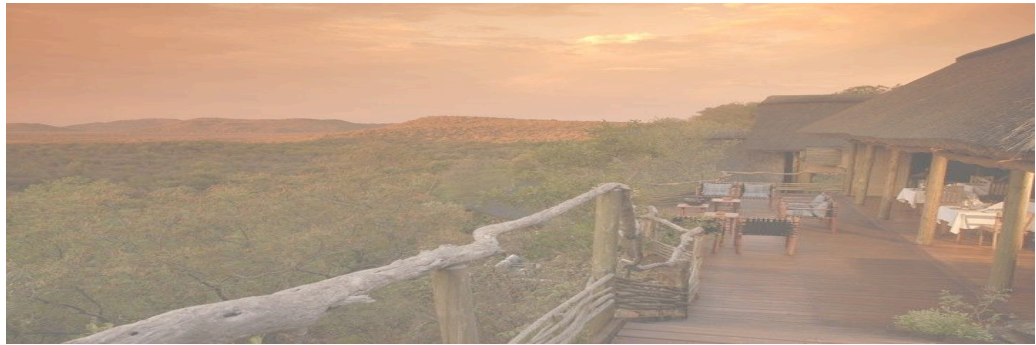




African Safari Lodge Foundation

Greetings and Welcome

A warm welcome to the first African Safari Lodge Foundation (ASL) newsletter. The aim of this monthly newsletter is to keep you informed of our events, activities and initiatives – and to encourage you to further interact with our team as we create conversations around community involvement in nature-based tourism. We would appreciate any feedback that you may have for us on the various issues discussed in each newsletter. We encourage you to email us on: sandra@asl-foundation.org if you have any suggestions or comments.



Buffalo Ridge Safari Lodge

The ASL Foundation at a Glance

The ASL Foundation was set up in 2007 to continue the work started under its predecessor - Mafisa Planning & Research - with a focus on South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia. The ASL's mandate is to transform local livelihoods in Africa's deep rural areas - using nature and the environment as the tools for upliftment and empowerment of residents. We recognise and acknowledge the poverty experienced in many rural communities and understand that by creating programmes

designed to educate, inform and enlighten - we can make a real and lasting difference. The safari industry - which is growing in leaps and bounds - holds huge potential to improve livelihoods in rural communities. In pursuing this ideal, we have partnered with numerous safari lodges and sponsors to ensure that we fulfil our mandate. Please see our website as a further source of information regarding our history, initiatives and partners. Visit: www.asl-foundation.org.

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Finding Common Ground

The Ford Foundation is actively involved in supporting poverty alleviation projects across the globe. The Foundation recognises the need to encourage the exchange of ideas (and solutions) on a grass roots level so that participants can learn from each other – the common ground being a nature-

based environment.

Over the past 18 months, the Ford Foundation and the ASL have been involved in an exchange of knowledge, expertise and life skills between rural communities in both India and South Africa.



Pafuri/Makuleke case study presented at the South African workshop

South African workshops

The ASL commissioned several case studies on the use of nature tourism as a force for alleviating poverty. The first set, covering southern Africa, was presented in Johannesburg during May 2008.

We invited participants from Equations (an ASL partner focusing on tourism advocacy in India) and others from projects and initiatives across India. Southern African participants came from Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa. Case studies included examples from Madikwe, Makuleke (Pafuri Triangle); Phinda, Rocktail Bay, Bulungula in South Africa; Torra Conservancy in Namibia; and Manda Wilderness in Mozambique. SanParks contributed with a presentation on concessions in the protected areas under their custodianship

and a representative from Namibia facilitated a valuable discussion on that country's approach to concessions and the development of the unique Kunene People's Park, which is currently underway in the north west of Namibia.

The workshop encouraged vigorous debate amongst the representatives – there was robust exchange and many networking opportunities.

After the workshops, the international delegation had the opportunity to see theory in practise when they visited Buffalo Ridge and Thakadu, two lodges in Madikwe owned by local communities. The response was very positive, and all parties felt that the exchange had been worthwhile on many levels.

All the Southern African case studies are available on the ASL Foundation website at www.asl-foundation.org

The India Exchange

A year later (May 2009) a southern African group made their way to India on a similar exchange. As with the previous leg of the journey, some case studies were commissioned - taking a look at nature-based

tourism opportunities in India, with a particular focus on the home-stay communities in the Ladakh area (supported by The Snow Leopard Conservancy).

Continued ...

A group of 16 participants (from South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique) left Oliver Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg for New Delhi – not knowing quite what to expect on the other side of the globe.

Three case studies were presented at a series of workshops in Delhi. It soon became clear that – although participants were dealing with challenges on opposite ends of the world – the issues of nature-based tourism and rural communities are essentially the same the world over. This is particularly true in post-colonial countries where issues of land tenure, wildlife scarcity, skills shortages, market integration and cultural change are common challenges.

This networking and learning opportunity was followed by a homestay visit organised by The Snow Leopard Conservancy. Learning in scenic Ladakh – including exposure to the Buddhist culture – provided an excellent platform for the exchange of ideas. What was particularly notable was how The Snow Leopard Conservancy have been instrumental in assisting villagers to secure their homesteads from the snow leopards through a multi-pronged education programme that helped them to understand that the animals were worth more alive than dead.

The southern African team learnt a lot about wildlife and

human conflict management as well as the important role that culture plays when offering an 'authentic' homestay experience. Basic issues were also explored, such as the dry composting toilet system as well as a unique conservation insurance scheme. Again, the response was very positive from both the southern African visitors and our Indian hosts.

Rebecca Phillips Marques, Tourism Officer of Quirimbas National Park, said the homestay aspect of the journey was a time of great inspiration and learning. 'The level of interaction with the host family, and authentic cultural exchange was inspirational and something that I hope to improve in our programme,' she said. Marques pointed out that she learnt a great deal from the visit. 'I learnt that there is a need for greater interaction with host families and greater insight into local culture. I now aim to transform our homestays from essentially an accommodation option to a cultural experience', she said.

Marques also pointed out that finding out about the livestock insurance scheme that has been put into place at The Snow Leopard Conservancy was certainly something she would like to adapt to her tourism community as an example of how to mitigate human-wildlife contact.

Nerosha Govender from the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority pointed out that a

"although participants were dealing with challenges on opposite ends of the world - essentially the issues of nature-based tourism and rural communities are the same the world over."



Ladakhi women in traditional dress, Ulley village, Ladakh, India

Continued ...

global exchange of this nature is extremely beneficial. 'It was a very valuable learning experience for all participants,' she said, 'We were not only afforded the opportunity to view community based initiatives from a different perspective, but also had the

opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas with the other participants from South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia. The workshop has been instrumental in helping us to better understand community-based tourism initiatives.'

For more information on the Ladakh Himalayan Homestays see www.Himalayan-Homestays.com.



The participants are welcomed by community members at Ulley village, Ladakh, India

Confluence of the Indus and Zaskar rivers Ladakh, India



The ASL Foundation is establishing a 'Google Group' to enable ongoing discussion between the participants of both the southern African workshop that took place during May 2008 and the Indian workshop in May 2009. Please e-mail sandra@asl-foundation.org should you wish to join this discussion group

Best Practice Guidelines Workshops

Mafisa Research & Planning implemented two programmes to train young people from rural backgrounds in field guiding and conservation. Last year, 20 students from Madikwe and the South Kruger Park took part in a further training programme. These experiences threw up many challenges that needed attention if field guide training is to serve the needs of both lodges and rural communities.

The Best Practice Guidelines workshop for training of field guides (from deep rural areas) will take place from 22-24 June 2009 at the Untamed Africa nKambeni Camp (just outside Numbi Gate in the Kruger National Park). The Ford Foundation sponsored the workshop and all costs were covered for invited participants.

The truth of the matter is that there are not enough qualified black field guides in Southern

Africa, and the workshop aims to create best practise guidelines to effectively train people from deep rural backgrounds. The workshop will consist of a number of presentations followed by question and answer sessions. There will also be various discussion groups to practically incorporate ideas and lessons learnt. The main focus is to examine the challenges and issues facing the schooling of rural guides in field training in a real and meaningful way. There is no doubt that the training industry needs to be transformed and these workshops are certainly a step in the right direction.

For more information about the workshop outcomes, please contact Lindy Rodwell, consultant to the ASL Foundation:
lindy.r@global.co.za.

For more on the Best Practice workshop – look out for the next issue of the ASL Foundation newsletter

Training programme and upgrade of Covane Community Lodge

The ASL has received a grant from the Ford Foundation to upgrade and refurbish Covane Community Lodge situated on Massingir Dam in Mozambique (south of the Limpopo National Park). The project will not only include the refurbishment of the lodge but also dedicated

training of the hospitality staff as well as capacity building programmes. The upgrades and training programmes will commence around the beginning of August 2009 and are scheduled to run until 28 February 2010.



ASLF Field Guide trainees at Untamed Africa training facility

ASL signs MOU with CREST



The ASL signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Center of Responsible Travel (CREST) on 8 May 2009. This came about after the ASL took a group from southern Africa to participate in the Traveller's Philanthropy Conference hosted by the organisation (previously known as CESD) in Arusha in December 2008. The MOU acknowledges the commitment of the two parties to promote responsible travel and to network and assist each other to pursue mutually beneficial opportunities across the board. For more information on CREST, please visit www.responsibletravel.org.

News from Namibia

The ASL has been involved in various projects in Namibia. In particular, we have actively supported (with co-financing from ICEMA) the new concessions unit of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to prepare pro-poor tourism plans and then award high-value tourism rights to communities living inside and next to protected areas. The ASL support includes facilitating partnership contracts between the state, communities and private sector companies. This is being done in line with Namibia's newly passed National Policy for Tourism and Wildlife Concessions on State Land (2007).

Quote of the Month:

'Traveller, you must set out
at dawn. And wipe your feet upon
The dog-nose wetness of the earth.
- *Wole Soyinka*

Forthcoming Attractions...

In our next newsletter look out for:

- Updates on the Khomani San Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Land Project
- Updates on the training workshops and findings

Until next time...

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.asl-foundation.org