

## **Optimising community benefits from conservation**

### **Visual tourism versus hunting in the Makuleke Contractual Park in South Africa's Kruger National Park.**

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#### **Introduction**

TRANSFORM (Training and Support for Resource Management) is a joint program of the German and South African governments. Its main objective is to assist in the development of policy and models for community based resource management (CBNRM) in South Africa based on several pilot sites. TRANSFORM has supported the Makuleke CPA and SA National Parks since 1996. The program helped the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism to produce a set of CBNRM guidelines for South Africa based on the Makuleke and other experiences. The South African Government highlighted the Makuleke model at the World Parks Congress in 2003 as one of their most successful Community conservation projects.

#### **Background**

The Makuleke community lived in an area now known as the Pafuri Triangle in South Africa on the border of Mozambique and Zimbabwe in relative peace prior to 1969. To the south of them they had witnessed the expansion of the Kruger National Park from where it was first established near Nelspruit towards their area. In 1969 some of their worst fears came true when conservation officials arrived with soldiers and trucks to take them 80 kilometers to the South West. To discourage them from retuning they were forced at gunpoint to set fire to their huts and livestock kraals. They were dumped in 3 areas to the south outside the Kruger Park, placed under the control of a Venda chief and told to rebuild their lives. (See Figure 1)

The area they were placed in was very different from the one they had been forced to leave behind. Their old area was abundant with both animal and plant resources and had permanent water. Their new villages of Ntlaveni, Makuleke and Mabilingwe were typical of the apartheid homelands with little agricultural potential, far away from urban work opportunities and no exiting community infrastructure.

From 1969 until the first democratic vote in 1994, the community developed their new villages but never gave up hope that one day they would be able to go back to their land which was now a part of the Kruger National Park. Once the election had taken place and the new government announced that they would embark on a program of returning land to communities that had lost it under apartheid, the Makuleke community were one of the first to lodge their land claim. In late 1994 they embarked on a process, which with lots of

outside support from human rights lawyers and conservationists ended in a historic agreement between the community, the state and conservation. The agreement restored full ownership rights to a newly formed Communal Property Association (CPA). The CPA is a legal entity, which gets formal ownership of the land, and is able to enter into agreements, which will benefit the community without placing the ownership of land in jeopardy.

### **The negotiated agreement**

The agreement between the CPA and the state, including South African National Parks (SANParks) established the following

- a) The 22 000 hectares would be owned by the CPA but would remain a part of the Kruger National Park for 50 years as a contractual park.
- b) The CPA and SANParks formed a Joint Management Board (JMB), which drafted a Development and Conservation Management Plan to guide JMB decisions.
- c) The CPA has full commercial rights to the land excluding agriculture and mining. Notable the term “sustainable use of natural resources” is used which is understood to include hunting. The main envisaged long-term use is conservation and tourism.
- d) The JMB must make an effort to pass on conservation skills to the CPA who plans to eventually take over the full management function. In the meantime SANParks do the day-to-day management.
- e) It commits the CPA to good governance including using an open tender process to exploit the commercial opportunities.

The agreement has now been in operation for 5 years and the JMB has been a difficult institution that has not always worked the way the drafters of the agreement envisaged. Recently the decision to appoint a full time operations officer for the JMB will hopefully to make things easier and more effective.

### **The South African tourism context**

Since 1994 tourism has increased dramatically in South Africa, this includes both foreign and domestic tourists. Foreign tourists that were concerned about apartheid did not visit the country and the majority of South Africans were racially excluded from many tourism sites under apartheid. Given the possibility that tourism can create jobs the government has pursued it as a foreign income earner and job creator. They often quote the figure of 10 tourist will create 1 permanent job. One of South Africa's biggest attractions is our natural or wildlife facilities, therefore much of the tourism marketing has concentrated on promoting them. Given this publicity the following figures have emerged

Photographic tourism is the largest section of the tourism market and is growing faster in South Africa than any where in the world. R34.3 billion ( US\$3.4 billion) was earned from foreign tourists in 2001. This makes up about 4.5% of GDP and given the current trends it is expected that tourism will account for 9% of GDP by 2014. SA was the only country to still see an increase in tourism after September 11. Last year there was a 10% increase in foreign visits.

Hunting Tourism has also increased since 1994. It is estimated that R500 Million (US\$ 71 million) a year is earned directly by hunting sales. There has been a 5.6% growth per year in the number of game ranches operating.

### **The Makuleke hunting and tourism developments**

Given that mining and agriculture were excluded by the agreement, the only options for generating income and benefit for the community were hunting and tourism. A conscious decision was taken to use hunting as a way to generate quick money while the tourism planning and concessioning process took place.

#### Hunting experiences

The first hunt took place in 2000 with the hunting of 2 elephants and 2 buffaloes as agreed in the JMB. An outfitter who applied to the CPA through an open tender process to do the hunt organized the hunting. He then sold the hunting rights onto foreign hunters. This process also involved some of the CPA members going to Nevada with the outfitter where they managed to generate a lot of publicity and got the highest prices for their animals. The hunt took place at a time when South Africa had stopped culling elephants in their National parks and the negative publicity around the hunt put pressure on the government to stop the hunt. Hunting for profit is currently not allowed in any of South Africa's National Parks. However after layers and conservation officials relooked at the agreement it was decided that the Makuleke CPA did indeed have a right to hunt elephants and other animals as long as it was sustainable. It was a victory for the CPA who decided to increase the quota the next year. The hunting took place in the presence of SANParks conservation officials who ensure that it is done in the most ethical and professional way possible.

The following year when the CPA wanted to add Nyala and Eland to the quota there was another outcry this time from the SANParks representatives on the JMB. They argued that there were not enough of these animals in the park to include them in the hunt. The original agreement allows for a conflict management process when there is disagreement in the JMB, this includes an appeal to the head office and the investigation by an expert. The expert, who in this case was an ex employee of SANParks, ruled in favor of the CPA and the hunt went ahead. That year the CPA included zebra, kudu and impala in the quota.

By 2002 the CPA realized that the most money was to be made by hunting elephant and buffalo and they allowed 3 elephants and 6 buffalo to be hunted. In 2003 they increased it to 5 elephants and 7 buffalo knowing that the hunting was about to end with the tourism concessions beginning to operate.

By 2003 time they were generating about R1.5 million a year for the CPA to spend on community projects. Some of the projects supported include

improving the schools, bursaries for top students, boreholes, and food for the poorest families in the villages.

The meat from the hunted animals is given to the community once the hunter has taken his trophy.

### Tourism Experiences

The CPA realized early on that they did not have the experience or capital to embark on a large-scale tourism use of the land without outside assistance. Therefore they decided to enter into partnerships with tourism operators and have so far entered 2 agreements. The process of finding their partners was also done using an open tender method.

The agreements are both known as Build – Operate – Transfer ones which describes how the private operator will build the lodge, operate it for a period of time and then transfer ownership of the lodge to the CPA. After this the CPA can then decide if they want to operate the lodge or ask a company to operate it for them.

The benefits, which come from the tourism ventures, are seen as follows;

- Long term employment for community members
- Skills training for community members
- Short-term construction jobs for community members
- Long-term lease money that goes to the CPA for community projects
- Capital investment on their land

Income expected to be earned using the 10% and 8% of turnover lease fees negotiated during the tender process are set out below.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Concession Fees	744 640	2 781 532	3 460 113	6 603 205
Permanent Jobs	1 901 340	2 308 488	2 577 301	9 345 564
Anti-poaching	430 000	430 000	430 000	430 000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>R3 075 981</b>	<b>R5 520 022</b>	<b>R6 467 417</b>	<b>R16 378 773</b>

*(Note: The South African Rand is about R7 to 1 US Dollar or R8.5 to the 1 Euro)*

An important aspect of the negotiation with the tourism operators is that the CPA would phase out the hunting once the tourism revenue began. The operators feel that hunting in the area is not compatible with photographic tourism especially given the small size of the Makuleke contractual park and the fact that while it is high in biodiversity it is difficult to see the kind of game tourists want to see.

## **Issues that arose in the discussion**

### Short term vs long term

There was always an understanding that the long-term benefits that can come from tourism operations would outweigh hunting. It was felt that the hunting debate could become so publicly heated that the CPA might have to stop and then they would have no income. The investment being made by the tourism operator's means that they will be in the area for the long term and will need to ensure marketing of the area pays off. Most importantly the long-term income, skills and permanent jobs from tourism surpasses hunting.

### The size of area means conflict with photographic tourism

If the area of the Makuleke contractual park was larger than it is (22 000 hectares) the CPA would like to have done both hunting and tourism at the same time. This would have meant getting income from both. However given the size as well as the current road network it is impossible to do both without the tourists bumping into hunters.

If their area was not a part of the KNP and did not have the tourism potential that it does, it is possible that they would have used hunting as their main source of income.

### Hunting is seen as a right

One of the biggest driving forces in the debate at a community level is the feeling that the community won the right to hunt sustainably and they do not want to give up this right. Therefore even with their negotiations with the tourism operators they have reserved the right to resume the hunting program if the tourists do not come in the numbers promised.

## **Conclusion**

For the Makuleke community trophy hunting has proven to be an effective quick source of income for the CPA to spend on community projects in villages, where there is a big demand from the residents to see delivery in an instance where they feel that they compromised by not moving back onto the land. A hurdle that has been overcome is ensuring that benefits are spread in a fair and transparent way through an organized benefit sharing system they have developed.

Figure 1

