

SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas at the *IUCN World Parks Congress*

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Dr. Sue Snyman talks about tourism products with the Transfrontier Conservation Areas in the SADC region.
Credit: Mabvuto Banda/IPS

SADC Showcases the Success of Tourism in TFCAs

By Mabvuto Banda

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) on Friday demonstrated how the Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) are becoming a new tourism product benefiting communities in individual countries within the regional bloc.

A panel of experts from the SADC delegation demonstrated through presentations at the IUCN Parks Congress how transboundary mountain biking, running and canoe events are helping communities and raising awareness on conservation for TFCAs.

Dr Sue Snyman, from Wilderness Safaris, made a presentation on the Tour de Tuli, an exclusive mountain biking excursion in the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area where bikers cycle for 300 km and enjoy the scenic views of the Mapungubwe National Park — a World Heritage

Site rich in biodiversity and archaeological treasures. (*See page 4 for the Greater Mapungubwe factsheet*)

She explained how since 2005 - under the banner of Children in the Wilderness -- they have organised regional bike tours through some of Southern Africa's remotest parts. The idea of the bike tours was to raise funds for marginalised communities and to raise awareness on tourist attractions in the TFCAs.

Roland Vorwerk and Piet Theron also shared success stories from the Ais- Richtersveld Transfrontier Park and Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, respectively.

Dr Bartolomeu Soto, the former TFCA Technical Advisor at the SADC Secretariat, applauded the tourism initiative and encouraged the involvement of communities as the only way

to make conservation work in TFCAs.

"This demonstrates how Southern Africa, despite its geo-political and economic challenges, is succeeding through multi country and multi-stakeholders partnerships and collaboration to establish a variety of transboundary protected areas," she said.

He talked about the two guidelines that the regional bloc has developed to manage the TFCAs ranging from tourism concessions for the private sector investments to the establishment and implementation of TFCAs.

The aim of the guidelines is to provide guidance for tourism concessioning in TFCAs within the SADC, whilst ensuring that both the conservation and development objectives of regional TFCAs are met, including rural development and community participation.

The SADC TFCAs Exhibition Stand is located at stand no.s 71-73 in the Exhibition Hall.

Contact details:

clara.bocchino@gmail.com
+61 (0)4 50478903

janina.marie.laurent@gmail.com

rvorwerk@environment.gov.za

Madagascar Doubles Protected Areas, Communities Reap Rewards



Rakotoarijaona: Madagascar has lived by its commitment to double its protected areas.
Credit: Marshall Patsanza/IPS

By Mabvuto Banda

Madagascar is one of the few African countries that has fulfilled its commitment made at the last IUCN World Park Congress held 10 years ago in Durban, South Africa.

The Indian Ocean Island nation pledged to double its protected areas within 10 years. And at the ongoing IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney, Mamy Rakotoarijaona, Director of Operations at Madagascar National Parks made the announcement that his country had done it.

"When we went to Durban in 2003, we only had 3,1 million hectares of protected areas and so we committed to double that within 10 years. Today I can announce that we now have 6.1 million hectares," said Rakotoarijanaona.

He was, however, quick to point out that the success did not come easy. But after continuous engagement with different stakeholders, there was a lot of political will from the country's leadership which helped to unlock a lot of finances to make it possible.

Rakotoarijanaona said that communities in protected areas have found

jobs and are making ends meet as a result of their achievements.

"Government gives 50 % of entrance fees in the parks to the communities, the communities also benefit from hotels being built in the parks by way of getting employment," he said.

Last year, he said, the communities within the protected areas made in excess of \$2 million in revenues.

"We believe these incomes are making a difference in their lives and are helping government achieve the conservation of wildlife," Rakotoarijanaona said.

Madagascar, the world's fifth largest island, is home to Lemur, Tortoise and Gecko. It also has one of the largest coral reefs in the Indian Ocean.

Like Namibia, the Island nation is one of the few countries within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) that has successfully used communities well in conservation.

“When we went to Durban in 2003, we only had 3,1 million hectares of protected areas and so we committed to double that within 10 years. Today I can announce that we now have 6.1 million hectares.”

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Managing Editor:
Kudzai Makombe

Regional Editor:
Nalisha Adams

Associate Editor:
Mabvuto Banda

Reporters:
Vusumuzi Sifile
Mabvuto Banda
Marshall Patsanza

Translation:
Roland Kocouvi
Theresa D'Almeida

Administration:
Tafadzwa Rafemoyo
Kervine Phiri

Social Media:
Marshall Patsanza

Design and Layout:
Marshall Patsanza

Young Mandela Talks About Youth and Conservation

Vusumuzi Sifile interviews Luvuyo Mandela who is one of the IUCN youth champions and the great grandson to Nelson Mandela.

South African social entrepreneur Luvuyo Mandela, the great grandson to anti-apartheid icon and former South African President Nelson Mandela, is one of the youth champions attending the IUCN World Parks Congress. In this interview Luvuyo speaks about the challenge of getting young people involved in conservation, Mandela's legacy and other issues.

Q: What is your role as a World Parks Congress champion?

A: I am here as a legacy handover to Sydney as the great grandson and now champion of the WPC in the IUCN. My interest is particularly in how to get young people involved in the space of conservation, as is my work in the social entrepreneurship environment, whereby I am focusing on youth empowerment and development.

Q: What are your areas of focus in this role?

A: My interest is to share ideas on how we can get young people involved in this conservation conversation in a way that is in tune with their passion. For example if someone is a lawyer, how do you build their understanding of sustainability and how they consider their profession – accounting, engineering, you name it... I think the issue of conservation can be fused into the mainstream by way of academic curricula and people building their careers around conservation.

Q: What difference would you like to see as a young person championing conservation and sustainable natural resources management?

A: I look forward to the day when most of the thought leaders and professionals come from the spaces that are being protected. We have to start thinking about the environments where the areas are protected, where primarily as it stands right now the people that are engaged with the communities are generally the park rangers. Nothing wrong with the profession, but I would love to see a situation where the ecologists, zoologists, botanists, horticulturalists are coming from those environments and informing their own people as one of their own, on how best to bring in some of the components of the academic spheres and some of the progression that has been made in informing a lot of the indigenous people.

Q: In your view, to what extent are indigenous knowledge systems relevant to the conservation discourse?

A: We have had a lot of people coming as thought leaders from the outside, coming to educate, and what generally happens in that space is that some of the indigenous learnings and indigenous insights are eroded away because there is foreign thinking that doesn't necessarily appreciate what is available. Something that has come out in engagement with Australians here is that there is a lot of learning from indigenous people. Two park rangers were telling me about a practice of them studying the fire cycle, because they have learnt that because of the past and the vegetation and biodiversity in a lot of the parks, the indigenous people used to do a series of burnings. This is similar to something that is done in South Africa.

Q: What are some of the challenges to get more young people to participate in conservation? And how do we address the challenges?

A: The biggest challenge is getting involved, interested and being confident enough to say this is what I care about. What generally happens in a lot of our spaces as young people is that we are taught to chase the profession, success, career building, the cars, the houses, and everything. But the fact of the matter is that you need to build that house and drive that car in an environment that is sustainable, an environment that we all share. A lot of thinking like that starts with people getting involved in this environment, starting to change their thinking, and also learning how we can bring solar energy to the rural areas, getting knowledge about renewable energy and communicating to the communities.

Q: How can young people tap into the indigenous knowledge, especially the wisdom of the elderly?

A: We need to be humble. We usually think we know better but when you sit down with the elders you will see that there is a lot we do not know as young people. We need to be confident without being arrogant. We need to be energetic and focused without being forceful. There is a lot of grace that comes from our elders. Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu, that speaks to the idea that you cannot get anywhere without the help others. Never forget where you come from. Do not forget the teachings from where you come from, because that is what helps us appreciate how we need to conserve this earth which sustains us.

One thing we can do is to use our folklore and our proverbs. There are a lot of profound proverbs. We should start sharing



Luvuyo Mandela
Credit: Vusumuzi Sifile

more of our own sayings, being proud of our heritage. If we are too scared about being ourselves, then it I will die with us.

Q: You mentioned that you are a legacy handover of Mandela. What are you doing to build on his legacy, to fill his shoes?

A: I think building on his legacy is by reminding people what his legacy is his. I cannot fill his shoes, they are not mine. I am a size 10, he might have been a size 11, I cannot fill his shoes both physically and metaphorically. Mandela remained the person who reminded us where we come from as the Mandela family, by encouraging us to focus on our own assignments.

If you don't have that foundation that says this is who you are, be proud of who you are, and rise up to the very many challenges that you are going to have in life. Filling shoes means I now want to be better than them. Quite frankly, Madiba himself never wanted to be better than Gadla, his father. But in being himself he was able to rise and be celebrated in a different light. Not in a better light, never did he say he was better than anyone, but he was different in how he expressed himself. I think that is something that is important in who we are. When you get to a place, humble yourself, identify yourself where you come from, and that you are there because of the support you got from the people where you come from.

Greater Mapungubwe TFCA

Brief Profile

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PARK

Situated at the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers, the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area measures 5,909 km² and encompasses areas in Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Because of the rich history of the area, the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape was proclaimed a World Heritage Site in 2003. An MOU towards the establishment of the TFCA was signed in 2006, and an interim coordinator appointed. The reserve adopted its official name in 2009, changing from Limpopo/Shashe to the Greater Mapungubwe TFCA.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area has a long history of conservation, dating back to an initiative by General J. C. Smuts who, in 1922, decreed that selected farms along the banks of the Limpopo River be set-aside for the Dongola Botanical Reserve. A first attempt at creating a transfrontier park linking to similar conservation areas in what was then the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Southern Rhodesia was mooted at the time, only to be revisited again in 2000.

Containing some of the oldest examples of the start of the Iron Age, and evidence of complex societies dating back 1,000 years, as well as rock paintings of more than 10,000 years, the TFCA makes a significant cultural historical contribution to Southern Africa.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Climate change adaptation work is underway in all three countries. Strategic plans to better integrate adaptation work are currently being developed, and include plans for the introduction of a Children in the Wilderness programme into the park.

A Disaster Management Plan is being drafted, providing a framework for managing climate-related disasters. Stakeholder feedback is underway to take this forward.

Integration of the Masego Community in Botswana and Vele Coal Mine in South Africa are also underway; this inclusion will result in an increase in park area of over 53,000 ha.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Countries	Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe
Area	5,909 km ²
Status	Memorandum of Understanding signed

NEWS IN BRIEF AT IUCN CONGRESS

Where Western Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge Meet

Combining Indigenous knowledge with western-style management can boost the effectiveness of protected areas, international delegates at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney heard on Saturday. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Indigenous partnerships director Liz Wren said the expertise of Traditional Owners had strengthened day-to-day, on-ground management of the Marine Park. "Traditional Owners know their sea country better than anyone, and that's why their involvement in managing this vast expanse is so important," Ms Wren said.

"More than 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owner clan groups have customary estates that include land and sea country within the Great Barrier Reef. These connections go back tens of thousands of years." Ms Wren said the Marine Park Authority had placed a strong emphasis on partnership arrangements with Traditional Owners.

IUCN Identifies Threatened Freshwater Biodiversity Sites in the Mediterranean

Out of the 167 freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas identified, mapped and validated throughout the Mediterranean region, 75 percent were found outside the boundaries of any pre-existing protected areas or other KBAs, according to the main results of an IUCN assessment revealed on Friday at the IUCN World Parks Congress taking place in Sydney, Australia.

An estimated 70-75% of the world's inland wetlands, along with many of the freshwater species that live in them, have been lost in the last 100 years. Freshwater biodiversity is poorly represented within protected areas, which are a critical tool for conservation of these habitats. It is urgently needed to identify critical sites of freshwater biodiversity as the basis for a more representative protected areas network for freshwater species. A new assessment coordinated by IUCN sets the foundation for such a network in the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot, a region rich in highly threatened freshwater species.

African Delegates Share Protected Area Management Success Stories

By Uusumuzi Sifile

African participants at the ongoing World Parks Congress on Friday gathered for an African Night to share stories and experiences on successful protected area management on the continent.

The event was organised by BIOPAMA (Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management), an IUCN programme to improve capacity for effective protected areas management. The event touched on various conservation initiatives across the continent, and highlighted the efforts to partner with different stakeholders, such as regional economic commissions.

The event was also an opportunity for delegates from across Africa to meet and interact closely with participants from other parts of the continent.



What does this congress mean for tourism in protected areas?

By Uusumuzi Sifile



Jose Bizi, Mayombe National Park, Angola

I came here to learn, and to get ideas on how we can improve the situation in our protected areas. I work for a National park and we have some communities staying within the park, so I hope to know how we can work with them to improve them.



Jose Maria, Angola

I want to learn more about tourism in the protected areas, especially from other SADC members who have more experience in this area. We are planning to launch tourist activities at our national parks, and the experiences from other countries will be useful in that regard.



Jose Dias, Mozambique, Gile National Reserve, Zambezia

Tourism within protected areas is a good idea because communities can also get some benefit. When the local communities don't get benefits, you have problems, there would be pressure in the natural resources.