



**Regional Workshop Summary:
Toward a Regional Sustainable Tourism Initiative for
Southern Africa
Workshop Held on 29, 30 Nov & 1 Dec 2007**

6 December 2007



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Towards a Regional Sustainable Tourism Initiative for Southern Africa

Dates: 29, 30 November and 1 December 2007.

Venue: Mercure Bedfordview Hotel & Conference Centre
Johannesburg, South Africa

1. In Attendance and Apologies

In Attendance:

African Safari Lodges Programme & Foundation
Botswana Community-Based Organisation Network (BOCOBONET)
Botswana Tourism Board
South African Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)
European Centre for Eco and AgriTourism (ECEAT)
EU-SADC Investment Promotion Programme (ESIPP)
Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA)
FANAMBY Madagascar
Federation of Namibian Tourism Associations (FENATA)
GOTO Madagascar
Lesotho Council for Tourism
Namibia Community Based Tourism Assistance Trust (NACOBTA)
Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism
Mozambique's National Directorate of Tourism
Madagascar's National Tourism Office
Open Africa
Peace Parks Foundation
Swaziland Tourism Authority
Technoserve Mozambique

Apologies:

Conservation International
Hotel Industry Association of Mozambique
International Finance Corporation (IFC)
Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC)
Madagascar's Ministry of Tourism
Namibia Tourism Board

Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV)
Quthing Wildlife Development Trust of Lesotho
Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (RETOSA)
Royal Netherlands Embassy
South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT)
South African National Parks
Southern Africa Trust
W.K.Kellogg Foundation
WWF-LIFE, Namibia

2. Workshop Organisation and Objectives

The workshop process was led by Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA), in partnership with NACOBTA and ECEAT. Funding was provided by the EU-SADC Investment Promotion Programme (ESIPP) with additional support by the Southern Africa Trust (SAT). The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- To create a platform for intermediary organisations from 7 SADC countries to share tourism development experiences, goals, success stories, challenges, etc.
- To reach consensus on the direction of the development of a new regional network for sustainable tourism.
 - a. To identify objectives and priority areas of this proposed network.
 - b. To identify stakeholders for inclusion in this network.
- To reach consensus on the need for an integrated approach to tourism certification in SADC with a view to the future creation of a regional quality brand.

3. Workshop Summary

FTTSA, NACOBTA and ECEAT representatives made specific inputs to the workshop process, while overall facilitation was provided by FTTSA.

Presentations/Inputs

3.1 Tourism definitions (group brainstorming session)

At the start of the workshop, delegates were asked to define (in their own words) certain terms that are used in SADC to refer to tourism development, viz: community-based tourism, ecotourism, fair trade in tourism, pro poor tourism, responsible tourism and sustainable tourism. The FTTSA facilitation team

summarised the comments of delegates, which showed a high degree of overlap between the terminologies in relation to the language/concepts used by delegates; this same degree of overlap is manifest in formal definitions provided in literature, which were also discussed in the workshop. It became clear that the terms are more similar than they are different, and also that whereas specific organisations, regions and countries tend to use and prefer one term over another, the concepts we are talking about and advocating are alike in many ways.

Following discussion, the group expressed a preference for the term “sustainable tourism” given its association with the over riding concept of sustainable development and related concepts like the triple bottom line and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); in addition, sustainable tourism was seen as a management strategy i.e. for the private sector. It was agreed that it would be useful to develop a common understanding/definition of sustainable tourism within SADC. It was also agreed that other terms should and will be used by stakeholders e.g. ecotourism is often used as a marketing tool by the private sector – here again, it will be useful to develop a common definition to prevent misuse of the term and, in turn, its dilution in the market.

3.2 Market Study (Marlon van Hee, ECEAT)

Mr. van Hee presented an overview of European, North American, Australian and New Zealand markets to illustrate that there is growing consumer awareness and preference for Sustainable Tourism (ST) products. One major challenge globally is that despite shifting consumer preference, information about ST products is not always provided to the market.

It was noted that while there is research suggesting that certain groups of consumers are in favour of sustainable travel, there is not yet a sound empirical basis for demonstrating this i.e. consumers may be saying one thing and doing another or alternatively we don't yet have ways of measuring their behaviour, due in part to the fact that it is difficult to access sustainable products.

3.3 The “Great Labelling Debate” and Lessons for Africa (Naut Kusters, ECEAT)

Mr. Kusters presented a summary of lessons learned in “Green”, “Eco” and “Sustainable” tourism certification programmes in Europe, Latin America and Asia-Pacific, illustrating that numerous independent labelling schemes result in market confusion. There are more than 100 labels in existence globally, about 40 of which are in Europe – all using various logos and different standards/definitions/concepts. It has proved to be very difficult if not impossible to harmonise existing schemes, e.g. the VISIT initiative in Europe was not very

successful as the participating schemes could not agree on common definitions and refused to use a common logo.

The experience from the rest of the world provides important lessons for Africa, the most of important of which is to avoid the creation of many independent labelling schemes.

Following a group discussion, the workshop delegates agreed there is a need for an integrated approach to tourism certification in SADC, which could entail the development of a regional initiative that would encompass various schemes or even the creation of an umbrella scheme that would be based on a common logo. Delegates expressed strong preference for an integrated approach that would help SADC to avoid pitfalls experienced elsewhere.

3.4 Overview of Sustainable Tourism Programmes in the Region (Lisa Scriven, FTTSA)

Ms. Scriven's presentation examined the four sustainable tourism recognition programmes that have been developed in the seven countries represented at the workshop (Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland). This included three certification programmes (Eco-Awards Namibia, Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa and Heritage Environmental Rating Programme) as well as one award programme (Imvelo Awards). These types of schemes are not widely developed within SADC, which means that the vast majority of tourism establishments in southern Africa have limited or no access to external endorsement / recognition for their Sustainable Tourism initiatives. At the same time, the presence of just a few schemes (i.e. in comparison to other regions like Latin America and Europe) presents a major opportunity to SADC to develop tourism certification in an integrated manner.

3.5 Inventory of Best Practices (Jen Smith, FTTSA)

Ms. Smith provided an overview of ST products in seven countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland). This overview was based on desktop research, hence the findings were limited (i.e. this was not a definitive overview but merely an exercise to determine how accessible ST products are to the public). The research showed that while there seems to be a growing pool of ST products in southern Africa, it requires some effort to locate these on the Internet; many businesses do not provide details of ST practices on their websites and there is a lack of common definitions regarding what "Sustainable", "Responsible" and/or "Eco" Tourism mean and entail. Many products promote themselves as being "sustainable", but without providing any supporting information and without any endorsement to substantiate these claims to the market.

This study suggests that if ST products were identified according to uniform ST principles and marketed collectively, they would be much more easily accessed by consumers and tour operators. Certification and other voluntary initiatives would strengthen such a process by providing customers with reliable information about ST products in the region – market pressure would in turn incentivise sustainable development by operators.

3.6 Namibia Country Report (Olga Katjiuongua, NACOBTA)

Ms. Katjiuongua's case study presentation focused on community-based tourism in Namibia and the work of the Namibia Community Based Tourism Association (NACOBTA). NACOBTA currently has 37 members, including accommodations, restaurants, guides, tour operators, campsites and more.

Conclusions drawn from this presentation were as follows: there is a significant supply of community-based tourism products, and demand for such products has grown in recent years and is continuing to do so in the present. In addition, community-based tourism is but one possible form of sustainable tourism, and community-based products are not necessarily "sustainable".

3.7 FTTSA Case Study (Jennifer Seif, FTTSA)

Ms. Seif provided a second case-study on Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA) – a South African sustainable tourism certification programme. FTTSA's evolution, principles and activities were reviewed, including the strategic decision to use the principles and language of "Fair Trade" labelling due to existing international awareness of the concept in South Africa's main source markets. FTTSA's primary focus is on labour and socio-economic standards – environmental standards are also included but are not the major emphasis of the scheme.

Input during the discussion by a representative of Eco Awards Namibia suggested that its processes (e.g. costs, durations of assessments) are quite similar to FTTSA, and it was agreed that the two schemes should compare notes to evaluate the extent to which they are already compatible.

3.8 The Potential Benefits of Regional Collaboration (group brainstorming session)

To conclude the first day of the workshop, delegates were asked to articulate (in their own words) some of the potential benefits of a regional network. The FTTSA facilitation team summarised the comments provided by delegates, which

showed a high degree of enthusiasm for participating in and moving forward with a new networking initiative.

The following is a summary of delegates' views:

- Easier to share (and learn from) lessons, experiences, best practice through an established network
- Presenting region with a positive, unified voice – marketing benefits
- Stronger lobbying power / influence than on our own
- Opportunities of presenting one brand (less confusing for consumer and greater impact on market)
- Efficiency – prevents duplication of efforts and maximises efficient use of resources (financial)
- Provide more ST products for the market to choose from (promoting longer stays) and more possibilities for cross-border tourism routes
- Harmonisation of ST development strategies and regional planning (resource use, conservation & tourism)
- Transparency and understanding of ST needs and expectations (within the region and towards the visitor / market)
- Common training mechanism
- Common standards and scheme (with consideration for unique aspects of each country's industry)
- Increase discipline in ST practice (operations)

4. Outcomes of Workshop

At the end of the workshop, there was strong, positive consensus regarding the need for a networking initiative to promote sustainable tourism in SADC. This network should include all member countries of SADC, and should have four main focus areas (see below), each of which was discussed in small groups towards the close of the workshop, with participants agreeing on the following broadly defined activities and priorities.

Policy and Advocacy

1. Focus Areas

- a) Influencing policy development
- b) Monitoring the implementing policies
- c) Identifying key stakeholders and obtaining buy in

2. Priority Action/s

- a) Developing an analysis of tourism policies in SADC (research report) – this could be completed by Indaba.
- b) Sharing tourism and environmental policies from all countries involved.

Standards and Branding

1. Focus areas

- a) Develop consensus within SADC regarding the need for the same categories of standards, with differentiation according to local contexts
- b) Develop consensus that standards should cover and equally weight the triple bottom line (social, economic and environmental). This will involve the harmonisation of existing schemes.
- c) Develop consensus on the relative strengths/weaknesses of second vs. third party verification.
- d) Consider the strengths/weaknesses of a graded scheme (different levels) versus a pass/fail system.

2. Priority Action/s

- a) Define Sustainable Tourism and explain why this term was selected.
- b) The group expressed strong positive consensus on the benefit and preference for a common brand; possible inclusion of text to reflect relevant country but logo remains consistent. Motivation for this should be put to the more comprehensive networking group for consideration.

Training and Learning

1. Focus areas

- a) Stakeholders: governments, NGOs, private sector, communities
- b) Common terminology
- c) A booklet/written source of information in numerous languages
- d) Case studies

2. Priority Action/s

- a) Establish a regional communication platform.
- b) Share information regarding best practices as well as failed projects
- c) Develop case studies and circulate these within the network
- d) At next meeting present information on what is already happening in each country

Marketing and Awareness-Raising

1. Focus Areas

- a) Target Groups: governments, the industry (tour operators and the private sector), consumers

2. Priorities Action/s

- a) Design and develop a common website

- b) Design and develop a sustainable tourism brochure, which can be used as an entry point to market the network.
- c) Press/Launch function at Indaba
- d) All ministers or key people that make public speeches at Indaba should mention the initiative

It was agreed that FTTSA would function as the Secretariat for the network during the start-up phase. FTTSA will collaborate with other members of the network and will also mobilise support through local institutions (local focal points). FTTSA will handle logistics around the next meeting and develop a six month plan for the network, to be circulated for comment in January 2008. This plan will enable all members to identify the areas in which they would like to work and also to promote the network within their respective countries.

Also in January 2008, FTTSA will develop draft criteria for network membership and circulate for comment. It was tentatively agreed that the network would target intermediary organisations (e.g. tourism boards/parastatals, NGOs, associations) and that government departments/ministries would play a supportive role.

5. Tentative arrangements for next meeting

Date: 8 May 2008 (the Thursday before Indaba)

Venue: Chief Albert Luthuli Convention Centre in Durban – venue room to be advised

What time: 10h00 – 17h00 (to be confirmed)