



Baby elephants on goat milk!

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Conservation Page 8

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Washing Machine For Victim of Croc Attack



Okavango Human Wildlife Conflict Foundation (OHWCF) recently put a smile on the faces of two women whose lives changed after they were attacked by wild animals.

The recipients of this noble gesture are two women: Nkoketsang Monnawatsheko and Buchilani Masole whose life changing encounters with a hungry crocodile and elephant respectively, left them with permanent injuries that have changed their lives.

One of the recipients, Nkoketsang Monnawatsheko (58) was attacked by a crocodile in Maun at Rileys Bridge while together with her daughter, Cecelia Monnawatsheko (42) they were gathering water lily (Tswii) and fish.

Tswii is an aquatic plant popular in the Okavango Delta and the outer rivers. It is a popular relish for local people who brave the crocodile infested rivers to dig the tuber like potato. The potato is mixed with meat and cooked and the end product is a yummy relish known as 'Tswii.'

On 29th November 2020 while the duo was harvesting 'Tswii,' Nkoketsang's elderly daughter, Cecelia was attacked by a crocodile in the Thamalakane River just a few metres from her mother. Fearing for the life of her daughter, Nkoketsang was forced to put up all the motherly courage: stabbing the reptile with the harvesting knife.

" from nowhere a crocodile appeared and grabbed by daughter. I knew I had to act decisively or else it was going to overpower, drown and take her away. I took two steps forward and unleashed the knife on the crocs neck. It felt the pain, let go of her and we quickly tried to run to the safety of the nearby river bank."

Explaining about her ordeal, Nkoketsang said they had almost reached the river bank when she tripped and fell. Her daughter tried to pull her out but the mother was too heavy. Quickly the hungry crocodile resurfaced and grabbed her on the right arm. The daughter had no choice but to face her nemesis again, this time picking up a stone, smashed in in to the crocs head. For a second time, the croc let go and vanished in to the river. But Nkoketsang had sustained injuries on her arm.

" I was injured on the shoulder and my arm was amputated by the croc. We spent prolonged time in the hospital. Now my life has changed. The crocodile has turned me in to a pauper. For two years I have been trying to recover at no avail. I live on food hand-

outs because I am too weak to fend for myself, I used to. My informal business of cooking and selling Tswii has stopped because I am too weak."

As if this is not enough, her daughter Cecilia is still suffering from post-traumatic attacks emanating from the attack. Now the family is deep in to poverty as their way of live has taken a dent while they can't return to the waters to dig Tswii.

Another woman, Buchilani Masole was on 12th April 2016 attacked by an elephant while on duty at Kwando Safari Camp in the Okavango Delta. The elephant charged on her and she sustained a dislocated collar bone on the right arm leading to her shoulder being dysfunctional.

Okavango Human Wildlife Conflict Foundation (OHWCF) is a registered entity that supports raising awareness on human wildlife conflict, stakeholder networking, and resource mobilisation for participatory wildlife conservation.

OHWCF noted that in both cases the victims were performing their day-to-day functions but their encounter with wildlife has affected their lives.

In October 2022, OHWCF in conjunction with Botswana Golf Union hosted a Charity Golf Tournament in Kasane at Cresta Mowana Golf course to raise funds to help support people living with permanent injuries due to Human-Wildlife Conflict.

At the tournament, Chobe native Luckson Likokoto donated the two washing machines which were handed by Okavango Research Institute's Prof. Joseph Mbaiwa at Maun Lodge to the two women recently.

Handing over the donation Prof Mbaiwa explained that helping victims of human and wildlife conflicts can go a long way in promoting the coexistence of human and wildlife. He said when people lose their livelihoods due to sustaining permanent injuries this could brew negative perceptions towards wildlife and lead to escalation of problems such as poaching.

Prof. Mbaiwa said: " even the phrase human and wildlife conflict have to be rethought. Some argue it could create negativity towards wildlife. A term like human and wildlife interaction could promote coexistence. But for coexistence to be successful we need support structures for people whose lives are affected by interaction. Donations like this one are welcome and should be more encouraged."



IWMC

World Conservation Trust

CITES must end its neo-colonialism

by Eugène Lapointe, president of the IWMC World Conservation Trust, and Secretary-General of CITES from 1982 to 1990

Panama City, 12 November 2022 — The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) faces a crisis of legitimacy.

Since 1975, it has imposed global trade prohibitions or restrictions intended to protect species threatened with extinction. It has largely failed. It has also lost the support of many range states, who view CITES and the international non-governmental organisations that egg it on to be neo-colonialists who disrespect their views and violate their sovereignty.

The 19th Conference of the Parties (CoP) in Panama City should very seriously reflect on Tanzania's closing statement at the 18th CoP, on behalf of the Southern African Development Community. In it, these 16 countries – home to many iconic species such as elephant, rhino, lion and giraffe – threatened to withdraw from the treaty altogether.

“Today CITES discards proven, working conservation models in favour of ideologically driven anti-use and anti-trade models,” they lamented. “Such models are dictated by largely Western non-State actors who have no experience with responsibility for, or ownership over wildlife resources.”

They argue that CITES operates in violation of its own charter, which recognises that “peoples and states are and should be the best protectors of their own wild fauna and flora”, as well as against the injunction of the Convention on Biological Diversity that states have “the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies”.

CITES's success ought to be measured by whether a listing has indeed protected the species, whether it has stamped out not only legal trade, but also poaching and illicit trade, and whether its management strategy has improved the welfare of the people living with wild species.

By this standard, CITES has a history of serious failure. Wildlife population numbers declined precipitously despite CITES protection, its prohibitions have fuelled illicit trade and made poaching more profitable, and the locals are outraged at high-handed dismissals of their legitimate interests.

It is little wonder, then, that range states, whose people have to live with the listed species, and often rely on them for a living, are rebelling.

Of the approximately 2210 proposals CITES has considered in its 37-year existence, 63% originate with just four countries: the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Switzerland, and Australia. The organisation is dominated by the Global North, yet most of its decisions affect countries in the Global South.

CITES cannot expect to dictate to countries how their people are to co-exist with species that can be a rich resource, an opportunity cost, and a risk to human welfare. If it does, it must expect local people with local knowledge, traditions and management strategies to be alienated by such rudeness.

Comprehensive reform should be at the top of the CITES CoP19 agenda. Instead, its main press release leading up to the event boasts: ‘World Wildlife Conference to rule on stricter trade regulations for 600 CITES species.’

It is steaming ahead, like the colonial empires of old, as if the resounding vote of no confidence issued by southern African countries at CoP18 was just a little awkwardness from uppity natives. This shows that developing countries have no voice and will always be over-ruled by activists and politicians who play to the sentiments of rich-world elites and believe they know what's best for poor countries.

The neo-colonialism of CITES has to end. Either it must take reform seriously, or range states will, with very good cause, walk away.

For further information

Mr. Lapointe can be reached at 41.78.346-4737

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE HON. MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE, TOURISM & HOSITALITY INDUSTRY - ZIMBABWE

Date: 15.11.2022

Place: Panama Convention Centre, Panama City

SALUTATIONS (As applicable)

I believe it is a good afternoon to you all

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now widely recognized that Community-based natural resource management promotes sustainable use of wildlife and reduces illegal use and trade in wildlife. It fosters the support of local people for conservation, by generating income and stimulating local economies. The Preamble of the CITES Convention recognises that ***“peoples and States are and should be the best protectors of their own wild fauna and flora”***

CITES is turning 50 and yet it does not have a mechanism that effectively addresses the social consequences of trade and listings. The strictly biological focus on the sustainability of wildlife harvesting and trade is never going to lead to holistically effective responses because sustainability in the use of any species is usually embedded in sustainability considerations at the scale of the whole ecosystem, and this, in turn, is embedded in larger social systems with cultural, economic and political dimensions.

We know that the CITES Resolution Conf. 8.3 (Rev CoP13) recognizes that implementation of CITES-listing decisions should consider potential impacts on the livelihoods of the poor. But then the key question becomes the ‘How’. There is nothing for communities without the communities living with endangered species in trade

We also know Articles 18 and 41 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples respectively affirms that Indigenous people *“have the right to participate in decision making in matters which would affect their rights”* and that *“ways and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them shall be established”*. What have we done about this under the CITES framework? The CITES Secretary General talked about the need to reflect and indeed we need to reflect on how we have fared.

One of the challenges facing endangered species is transnational organised crime and to address the matter, the United Nations General Assembly, on 30 July 2015 adopted Resolution A/RES/69/314 on *“Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife”*, which strongly encour-

ages the full engagement of the communities in and adjacent to wildlife habitats as active partners in conservation and sustainable use, enhancing the rights and capacity of the members of such communities to manage and benefit from wildlife and habitat;

Moreso, the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, adopted Resolution A/RES/70/1 on *“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”*, which includes a set of 17 goals and 169 associated targets and in particular target 15.c that requests UN Member States to enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Considering these efforts under the UN banner, CITES cannot continue to lag behind on community engagement in its decision-making processes. We need to respect, preserve, and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and rural communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of CITES-listed species. When decision-making mechanisms at the CITES level consider the needs of people sharing the land and obtaining their livelihoods from wildlife and acknowledging that rural communities are best placed to advocate their needs; then CITES become a progressive treaty.

In the absence of full and meaningful involvement of Indigenous peoples and local communities, CITES is less effective, if not counter-productive. Local communities determine how local action is pivotal in promoting sustainable development and addressing our planetary crises. The agenda of protecting individual species and reviving ecosystems must go hand-in-glove with the inclusion of local communities.

A global population of 7.8 billion people is demanding innovative conservation strategies — strategies that reflect ecological and political realities and community involvement in CITES decision making is a real game-changer.

The recent IPBES Sustainable Use Assessment (IPBES 2022) reaffirms that *“the long history of sustainable uses of wild species in these areas has played a role in maintaining and increasing local levels of biodiversity while supporting indigenous*

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE HON. MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE, TOURISM & HOSITALITY INDUSTRY - ZIMBABWE

peoples' well-being and livelihoods” and that “loss of opportunity to engage in sustainable use of wild species represents an existential threat to indigenous peoples and local communities.”

History chronicles the plight of local communities as the conservation paradigms unfolded and they cannot continue to be disenfranchised in decision making affecting their livelihoods. Therefore to promote reconciliation and redress for past injustices, firmly placing local communities on the conservation agenda across all levels — from international, regional and local. In other words, recognition of local and Indigenous land and resource rights must be prioritized. Social justice is crucial to the success of conservation efforts in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework currently being negotiated. This matter must get the attention it deserves under CITES.

Various international human rights agreements protect equity and promote equality for different groups, including vulnerable communities, in terms of access to and sustainable use of natural resources. However, structural barriers, including a lack of access to information or stigma remain in place and undermine efforts of communities to protect the biodiversity they depend upon.

While other Environmental agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have established proper Platforms, Forum of Caucuses to allow IPLCs to participate and contribute to their decision making, CITES is still far from forming a meaningful system to allow proper participation of IPLC apart from their possible participation in Countries delegations or as Observers.

More participation by local communities and their representation in CITES decision processes, will result in greater compliance and strong local leadership which are all linked to better ecological and biodiversity outcomes. Local communities are at the heart of global efforts to sustain a healthy world where nature and human well-being are linked. In the era climate change and the opportunity to reimagine our global economic model, a renewed focus on community may be what we really need.

We know the participation of indigenous peoples and rural communities in the CITES decision-making mechanisms, has been almost completely neglected and the power is in our hands to change the narrative. This is very important because the lack of community engagement is one of the main causes of increased illegal trade in wildlife and this neglect has far reaching ramifications. CITES has not established any mechanism to assess the social consequences of listing of species in the Appendices, and when CITES makes decisions that restrict trade, without consultation with the people that share their land and livelihoods with wildlife, unintended consequences, such as increased poaching, are to be expected.

So what are we seeking at the CITES 19th COP

We believe it is in the best interest of CITES to establish a cross-cutting Rural Communities Advisory sub-Committee (which advises both the Plants and Animals committee) composed of Parties Rural Communities Organizations or IPLCs Organisations in accordance with specific criteria and with the task to operationalize principles embodied in the Preamble to the Convention as well as Resolution Conf. 8.3 (Rev. CoP13) on recognition of the benefits of trade in wildlife, and Resolution Conf. 16.6 (Rev.CoP17) on CITES and livelihoods in full participation to the ongoing processes aimed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Operationalization of Resolution Conf. 10.4 (Rev. CoP14) on Cooperation and synergy with the Convention on Biological Diversity especially on the synergies on the work done by the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) in the implementation of the provisions of Article 8(j).

Specific tasks could include:

- i. practical implementation of the operative sections of Resolution Conf. 8.3 (Rev. CoP13) on Recognition of the benefits of trade in wildlife and Resolution Conf. 16.6 on CITES and livelihoods and Resolution Conf. 10.4 (Rev. CoP14) on Cooperation and synergy with the Convention on Biological Diversity especially on the synergies on the work done by the Convention of Biological

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE HON. MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE, TOURISM & HOSITALITY INDUSTRY - ZIMBABWE

Diversity in the implementation of the provisions of Article 8(j);

ii. providing advice to the Conference of the Parties and the Secretariat on issues related to wildlife trade, in order to assess also the potential social and economic impact of CITES overall decisions on rural communities, taking stock, inter alia, from the IPBES Assessment Report on the Sustainable Use of Wild Species (IPBES 2022);

iii. provide coordination and advice as required to other committees and provide direction and coordination of working groups established by the Committee itself or the Conference of the Parties;

iv. carry out activities related to the promotion of community-based programmes aimed at the management, conservation,

sustainable use of, and international trade in CITES-listed species, or species that could be listed on the CITES Appendices in the future;

We know this is not a far-fetched dream as Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP16), adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 11th meeting (Gigiri, 2000) and amended at its 16th meeting (Bangkok 2013), relating to the establishment of committees and in particular letter c) under the first RESOLVES states that the Conference of the Parties may appoint additional committees as the need arises.

In solidarity with all local communities living with wildlife and currently missing on the decision-making table

I THANK YOU

Biden Administration Announces Tighter Rules for African Elephant Imports

Proposed Measures Stop Short of Ban on Trophies, Live Trade

WASHINGTON— The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed new restrictions today on U.S. imports of sport-hunted African elephant trophies and live trade. The proposal halts trophy imports from countries who cannot certify annually that their elephant populations are “stable or increasing,” have up-to-date population data, or have adequate conservation legislation. But today’s proposal stops short of a total ban on trophy and live elephant imports.

“This is a good step forward for elephants, as it restricts imports of elephant trophies,” said Tanya Sanerib, international legal director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “But it’s not the transformative change needed to truly protect these amazing animals from extinction. Even President Trump called elephant trophy hunting a ‘horror show,’ and we’d hope the Biden administration would ban trade in imperiled species for trophies, not just regulate it more.”

Today’s proposal would revise the 4(d) rule for African elephants under the Endangered Species Act, which determines the protections the species receives. The United States is a major importer of hunting trophies globally, along with the European Union.

If adopted, the proposed rule would foreclose elephant imports from nations whose domestic wildlife laws fail to meet the requirements of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.



U.S. President Joe Biden

Image Source: hindustantimes.com

Of the countries that exports trophies, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia currently have national legislation that may not meet the requirements of CITES. These nations would likely not be allowed to export elephant trophies to the United States. Additionally, today’s proposal would require an annual certification to ensure that elephant populations are stable or increasing, adequate management and capacity exist, and habitat is secure, among other requirements.

In 2016 the Obama administration implemented a “near ban” on the domestic trade in ivory. Although that regulation provided some exceptions, it closed the U.S. market and was part of an agreement with China, which closed its own domestic ivory market at the end of 2019. The revisions announced today do not address the ivory trade.

“Elephants are globally cherished animals, and we need to stop treating them like commodities,” said Sanerib. “Elephants aren’t wall hangings or menagerie animals, but

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MACK AIR expands further into Zimbabwe!



Botswana's Mack Air (MKB, Maun) and Zimbabwean charter carrier South West Aviation (Zimbabwe) (Harare Int'l) have announced a commercial partnership that will see them joining their networks across the neighbouring Southern African countries.

"As the first private commercial operator in Botswana to hold both scheduled and non-scheduled licenses, our vision at Mack Air has always been to offer these services locally within Botswana and likewise expand responsibly, alongside our client base, throughout the region," Mack Air Managing Director Michael Weyl commented in a statement. "Through this relationship, we aim to jointly create new flight services linking Mack Air's established Botswana network with a new and expansive network service across Zimbabwe with diversified geographical base locations."

"The first Cessna (single turboprop) 208B Grand Caravan EX has been positioned in Zimbabwe and is currently operational. We expect to expand the fleet by March 2023 to an additional five aircraft, resulting in the partnership operating a fleet of six aircraft for the 2023 season in Zimbabwe.

This fleet of aircraft will be operating from two principal hubs in Harare Int'l and Victoria Falls."

He added: "The Harare hub will principally service all domestic destinations and safari camps in Zimbabwe as well as neighbouring regional business and tourist destinations in Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique.

"The Victoria Falls hub will principally service all domestic destinations and safari camps in Zimbabwe, as well as neighbouring tourist destinations in Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zambia. Seat rates will be offered exclusively out of the Victoria Falls hub for the Hwange National Park area; however, as we gain momentum and volumes increase, we hope to introduce these seat rates throughout the region," he explained.

As reported, Mack Air's fleet comprises 21 aircraft, including seventeen Cessna 208B Grand Caravans, two GA8 Airvans, a single Cessna 210, and a Cessna Citation M2 business jet based at Lanseria (South Africa) for VIP and business charters.

South West Aviation Managing Director Mathew Brooke-Mee was not immediately available for comment.

Biden Administration Announces Tighter Rules for African Elephant Imports

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critically endangered and savannah elephants are endangered.

Today's proposal was announced as nations attend the triennial CITES meeting being held in Panama. A proposal to re-open international

intelligent, empathetic creatures with a vital role in the health of forests and savannahs. If we save elephants from extinction, we'll save entire ecosystems, but it will take global support and willingness to change business as usual."

The proposed restrictions follow the International Union for Conservation of Nature's 2020 reassessment of elephants, which found that forest elephants are

ivory trade is on the table at the meeting, along with proposals to address burgeoning ivory stockpiles, live trade in elephants and the continued need to close domestic ivory markets.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.7 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

Baby Elephants Drink Goat's Milk in Botswana



Elephants Havens Wildlife Foundation (EHWF) has found a sustainable way to feed orphaned baby elephants using goat's milk to cut down the costly reliance on powdered human infant milk.

For a long time EHWF has been reliant on the expensive human infant formula to feed nine orphaned babies housed at the sanctuary. Now, the organisation has switched to goat's milk which a cheaper and healthier feed and a means of empowerment to the neighbouring local communities.

Founded in 2017, Elephant Havens is a non-profit organisation located in Gabamochoa near Maun, Botswana. The organisation aims to protect and preserve the African elephant and educate local communities on elephant behaviors, habitat protection and the benefits of conservation.

Majority of young elephants at the sanctuary were orphaned when their mothers of herd matriarchs were killed by poachers, drought or got abandoned by their herds. The sanctuary rehabilitates traumatised elephant calves until the age of five years. The calves then undergo the last phase of their rehabilitation in preparation for life in the wild, getting released to the sanctuary's safe space habitat where they have little contact with humans.

Founder Boago Poloko (34), a third generation elephant handler, told The Okavango express that they have copied the goat's milk idea from Kenyan orphanages: David Sheldrick and Reteti Elephants orphanages and Abu Camp in Botswana which feeds goat's milk to elephant babies.

Poloko explained: " since we started operating we fed four months and below calves a Swiss human formula called Liptomil. But, there are times Liptomil gets out of stock in Southern Africa forcing us to import from Cairo, Egypt or France. This is too cumbersome and costly. Liptomil is good for baby elephants because it is lactose free, elephants are lactose intolerant, at this age their digestive system is very sensitive."

Poloko further explained that once calves are four months old and their digestive system is stronger they switch to S26 Gold infant formula sourced in Botswana and sometimes

in South Africa. " at this age their digestive systems are stronger, they are able to tolerate lactose and start eating solids, grass and browse. But the S26 milk is also very expensive."

According to Poloko, the high expenses incurred forced them to switch to the cheaper and nutritious goat's milk. They recently donated 100 goats to farmers in Gabamochoa and surroundings to encourage them to start goats' milk production which they sell back to EHWF to feed the calves. This also bring the much needed income to communities' especially women and youth while ensuring conservation goals. " currently, we don't have any young calf needing the milk yet. But we have already started buying and stockpiling the milk. We are ready to start feeding goats milk anytime."

Part of EHWF mandate is to educate and empower communities rearing domestic livestock in the wildlife area they are based. " a lot of young elephants coming to our sanctuary are victims of human and wildlife conflicts, poaching and drought killing their mothers. We believe that when we empower the communities they will see the conserve the elephants."

Poloko told The Okavango Express that majority of elephants at the sanctuary come from Okavango Delta Panhandle villages, from Mohembo all the way up to Seronga. These are settlements located on the western side of Okavango River where there are elephant's corridors exacerbating human and wildlife conflicts. " for elephants to get to the water in that area they have to pass through human settlements and this breeds conflicts.

He reiterated that they have teams in the western panhandle to ensure orphaned elephants do not get killed or end up getting chased by dogs but are brought for rehabilitation.

Among well-known baby elephants at the sanctuary, now five year old is 'Mma Motse' (woman of the house.) Mmamotse the first to arrive at the sanctuary came from Sekondomboro in the Okavango Panhandle. Her mother is believed to have died from 2018/19 hydrological drought that affected River flow sustaining the habitat. She is now being readied for reintegration back to the wild.

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Okavango Delta's Economic Boost as New Mohebo Bridge Opens

Rejuvenated by the opening of the new iconic Mohebo Bridge Okavango Community Trust (OCT) has announced plans to build a new hotel in Seronga Village.

tourism concessions were leased to OCT under Botswana's Community based natural resources programme (CBNRM). CBNRM is a conservation and rural development initiative aimed at empowering local commu-



The Iconic Mohebo Bridge

Image source: MMEGI ONLINE

OCT is a community trust covering the villages of Seronga, Gunotsoga, Eretsha and Gudigwa located in the Okavango Delta's eastern panhandle.

The villages have a combined population of about 100,000 people boosting several animal and plant species, some of which is considered vulnerable and needing conservation.

Communities of the panhandle have since Botswana's independence in 1966 depended on a ferry to cross the Okavango River to the rest of the country something that is now history after the P1Billion Mohebo Bridge opened to traffic in June this year.

The 1.2-km- cable-stayed bridge construction project started in 2016 built over the Okavango River to connect the villages east of the river. Minister of Transport and Public Works, Eric Molale in June flew from Gaborone to Mohebo to witness the bridge opening to the public for the first time.

Speaking, Molale noted that the project will simplify the access to villages, unlock tourist opportunities in the area and facilitate the transfer of basic economic necessities for the impoverished communities.

Okavango Sub district chairman Lesedi Boy government for the decision to undertake the project citing decades old inconvenience that the communities had suffered.

Boy said: "As the council we experienced challenges that negatively affected service delivery as the ferry sometimes experienced breakdowns rendering movement impossible across the Okavango River."

The air of jubilation settled as more good news arrive with OCT revelations of big plans to construct the first ever 25 beds hotel in Seronga village, one of the villages in the eastern panhandle whose development has been curtailed by decades old poor accessibility challenges.

OCT holds two rights on two tourism concessions: NG 22 and 23. The lucrative

nities living with the natural resources so they see a need to conserve the resources. Botshelo Sesinyi is one of university educated rising community leaders, born and raised in Eretsha and is now tasked with developing OCT where he is employed as the trust manager.

Sesinyi stated: "As a trust we are tasked with developing livelihoods in all the villages of our coverage by utilising natural resources in our area for rural development. Our mandate is often curtailed by the undevelopment of this area due to lack of roads and bridge which for a long time posed a challenge for us as the trust and communities."

He further lamented: "Now with the new bridge our work is going to be easier. It means transportation of materials and other goods and services is easy. As a conservation organization this will make it easy to start developmental projects that could empower our communities and jobs creation and that way promote conservation of the resources and stop conservation problems such as poaching and unsustainable use of natural resources."

Sesinyi revealed that OCT has already floated a tender for the construction of a 22-bed hotel in Seronga whose design is inspired by the sustainable designs of the luxurious tourism bush camps in the Okavango Delta. construction anticipated to start end of this year.

Sesinyi revealed that they have a plan to diversify their income revenue from reliance on lease rentals through diversification in to other emerging sectors such as the property market in the eastern panhandle. "the under development of this area presents some opportunities which are ready to maximize. With the new bridge more tourists will come to our area and therefore we need to set-up requisite infrastructure like accommodation facilities. From this developments we could grow the revenue of the trust to empower it to participate effectively on conservation and rural development."



GABZ

TOOL MART

Okavango Express interview with Gabz Tools Mart Maun Branch Manager Tshidi Lekorwe on the company products and services and many more.

Can you briefly introduce Gabz Tools?

Lekorwe: Gabz Tool Mart – Pty Ltd is a company that supply tools, machinery and protective clothing from pneumatic, mechanic, engineering, construction and wood work tools.

The company was formed in 2014 as a partnership between two Batswana and two other foreign investors.”

Can you please share what’s your responsibility as Gabz Tool Mart Maun branch manager?

Lekorwe: I joined Gabz Tools in 2019, guiding the company’s expansion in northern Botswana when we opened Maun branch. The company has further tasked me with overseeing sales in the whole of northern Botswana.

What products and services are offered by Gabz Tool Mart?

Lekorwe: Gabz Tools market include supply of tools and machinery to the Mining companies, Government departments, tourism sector, individuals and other walk in customers.

Gov Debts: We service all the city, district and town councils, technical and brigades and mining companies nationwide who are getting tools and machinery from us.

Mining: We service all the mining projects in the northern Botswana from Phikwe, Francistown, Orapa-Letlhakane, Damtshaa, Khoemacau and Gantsi.

Tourism Sector: We also service the tourism sector. Before we opened there wasn’t any other company offering the same service in the northern Botswana. For the Safari industry in the Okavango Delta, Chobe and other parts of Botswana camps, we supply them with all the machines and tools they need for their wooden structures. Since we opened safari companies no longer have to import wood working tools from South Africa as

they used to because we have various tools they need on stock. We service tourism companies like: Great Plains Conservation, Okavango Wilderness Safaris, Xigera Camp and all others getting their tools for camp construction and their workshops in the bush and Maun.”

Walk In Customers: We also service walk in customers from auto mechanics who buy tool box to ordinary customers who walk in to buy tools and protective clothing they need for various uses at home or their businesses.”

What major projects has Gabz Tool Mart been involved in?

Lekorwe: Gabz Tools played a role in the successful construction of one of mega projects in northern Botswana in the last decade being: Kazungula Bridge in Chobe and Mohembo Bridge in the Okavango District. Most of the tools and some machines used in those projects like compressors they got them from us.”

Can you briefly summarise Gabz Tools customer service?

Lekorwe: Gabz Tools customer service is personalised. We make sure the customer get the best service. Gabz Tools also offer a one year guarantee for all the machines we sell. We also supply spares for the machinery. We ensure we answer our customers’ needs something our customers are happy about”

What’s Gabz Tools Contribution in terms community social responsibility?

Lekorwe: As Gabz Tool Mart community empowerment motto is built to improve communities in our area of operation. We have donated football kits to football teams in Maun. The company will continue helping throughout the country wherever possible. We recently donated a football kit to a ladies Football team in Moyabana

Thabiso Day- The Citizen Lodge Builder

Thabiso Day, the rising lodge builder in the Okavango Delta is an epitome that Brigades education can take one far with commitment and dedication.

Day is the man behind building the latest lodge edition to the Machaba Safaris collection, the new Kiri Camp in the Okavango Delta.

Machaba Safaris in their endeavour to empower communities where they operate showed faith in Day by offering him a project of this magnitude.

The Camp built through Machaba Safari's partnership with Okavango Kopano Mokoro Community Trust, has created 40 employment positions for communities in the area.

The state of art Kiri Camp is shaded by the outstretched branches of imposing Jackalberry trees while camouflaging itself within the natural environment.

The success for Day and his team was ensuring the camp is properly constructed to pose minimum environmental impact on the sensitive ecosystems.

The camp offers guests 10 eco-friendly spacious luxury tents, two of which are ideal for families.

The central guest lounge and dining areas, further enhanced by attractive wooden decks, are accessed from the rooms all located along Kiri River in NG32.

Kiri Camp is the first big project that Day has constructed through his company: Khulumasizwe Investments. Having worked at Wilderness Safaris for 13 years,

Day has swathes of experience in Lodge construction.



Day told media recently: "To build a lodge you have to execute the drawings from architects and other designers to put up the structures you see here. It requires attention to details and a bit of creativity. But I have reached this level armed with just a certificate from Tutume Brigade driven by my passion and dedication to this job."

He explained that unlike in the past Batswana are slowly showing interest in lodge building an area previously dominated by foreigners. "Replacing foreigners is not that easy because we lack the required skills and experience. First we have to learn from them because we lack experience which is what I did until such a time I was convinced I have learnt enough to make it on my own."

Kiri camp opened in June.



Kiri camp

Image source: machabasafaris.com

Wecho Sports Festival Returns in Kareng



Yesterday Wecho Trust with the support of the First Capital Bank Botswana hosted recreational games in Kareng council hostels in partnership with North West District Council.

Kareng hostel is situated 25km west of Sehithwa in the Ngamiland District.

Wecho trust was formed by two trustees being Tsoseletso Magang and Game Mothibe, both of whom have vast experience in sport as former players and having held various administration positions in the sports.

In 2021, Wecho Trust and NWDC signed a three-year memorandum of understanding to develop recreational sports at Kareng Hostels. That year, over 220 pupils received sports training equipment and sporting grounds to kickstart the annual Kareng sports festival in Kareng Village.

The 2022 festival returned bigger and better for its second installment.

On, Thursday, organisers, Wescho Sports, hosted a press conference to brief about the upcoming festival in Kareng.

Wecho Trustee, Tsoseletso Magang said: 'Sports is not just about competition but recreation and fitness as well. As Wecho we have decided to host the festival every year. Though this festival we teach them social and survival skills.'

Magang said recreational sports could play a role in naturing children and instilling the spirit hard work, focus and determination in life. She shared that since the festival started last year children at the hostels have become more focused and commitment to enroll in different sports activities on offer. The children at the hostels come from

disadvantaged communities who benefit from Government Remote Areas Dwellers Programme being implemented by NWDC.

Said Magang, "personally, I grew up in a disadvantaged environment and know the challenges of growing up in a rural area without basic social amenities."

Magang said First Capital Bank Botswana, Choppies Botswana, Desert Bush walk are some of entities that have contributed to make this year's event a success.

She explained " This year we are bringing athletes leungo Scotch and Karateka George sitabe to motivate the children. we are also introducing boxing and we are talking to Botswana Rugby Union as well to join in these festivities."

NWDC Community Development officer, Kebalepile Horatious explained that there has been lots of improvement at the hostels and amounts the community emanating from the games. "We had lots of abscondence but since sports festival in November last year our children are now looking forward for the games and showing lot of zeal. Horatious further reiterated that there is more unity between the hostel and community in kareng as games have become one of the highlight attractions in the village.

First Capital Bank Maun branch manager, Eva Mwila stated that they funded the project for P15'000.00 saying as the partnership grows the bank will continue supporting the idea.

Mwila said the bank is committed to community upliftment in Maun and greater Ngamiland as exemplified by their support to Kareng Sports idea.

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