

# Project Closure Report

<b>Project Title</b>	"Wilderness – Tracker"- Program designed from beginning to advanced levels to improve the wilderness skills handicap for tourists within the Traditional Environmental Knowledge Outreach Academy (TEKOA) in Bwabwata National Park												
<b>Location(s)</b>	Namibia												
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<b>Duration of the project:</b>	<table border="1"><tr><td><b>Start</b></td><td>March 2013</td></tr><tr><td><b>End</b></td><td>March 2015</td></tr></table>	<b>Start</b>	March 2013	<b>End</b>	March 2015								
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<b>Written by:</b>	Brit Reichelt Zolho with Input from Friedrich Alpers												
<b>Date:</b>	10th April 2015												



Tracker teacher explaining tracks with German guest.

## Project Background Overview

TEKOA (Traditional Environmental Knowledge Outreach Academy) is a holistic tracking training program and education center that incorporates the teachings of traditional knowledge from elders to the younger generation with self-development and information exchange as the main endeavor. The aim is to facilitate the reinvigoration of Khwe culture and Traditional Knowledge using Indigenous Knowledge systems (IKS) education and tourism in an interactive learning environment. This high value cultural knowledge exchange through self-developed curricula enables a new and innovative tourism program to enhance growth and benefits, which will enrich both - the Khwe community and the international community - through visiting tourists.

This short-term Futouris project formed part of a larger long-term vision, which can also be called “education that counts”, which strives to improve the prospects of the Bwabwata National Park (BNP)’s residents, especially the youth through the establishment and implementation of the TEKOA. The TEKOA Training Centre aims to become the premier ecological and tracker training center in the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA), and the first place where the government (i.e. Ministry of Environment staff) would go to receive top-quality tracker training from accredited Khwe trackers.

This project has already started in 2006 with the identification of some of the elders, who possess an exceptional high level of knowledge (TEK) and skills. After many years of extensive coaching and curricula alignment, these elders have become the trainers in the center and now use their exceptional rich ecological knowledge and leadership skills to coach, prepare and teach others, especially younger people. Therefore, the urgency to continue with this essential program is evident, which leads to the start of formalizing the training events, so that the diverse and rich knowledge of this community can be used by their youth to secure employment (in the tourism and trophy hunting sectors) and to equip them to maintain sound ecological management of ecological systems in the park, which benefits the resident communities and the international community.

The clearest link between traditional skills and employment is in the field of tracking. Efforts are currently underway

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in Namibia to develop qualification standards for trackers and a national survey of employment in that field indicates that qualified trackers are highly sought after and employable in various industries, including big game hunting and other tourism, wildlife management, and police work (IPACC 2009). Despite of the interest in hiring qualified trackers, transmission of the skill is reported to be declining (Liebenberg 2009). Many of the senior master trackers are passing away and skills transfer between generations is increasingly limited, as described above.

The San, also known as Bushmen or Basarwa (in Botswana), are former hunter-gatherers living today in Botswana and Namibia and to a lesser extent in South Africa, Angola, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Residing primarily in small, scattered settlements in remote areas, or as farm workers, the San participate only marginally in national politics and the cash economy. While other groups in Southern Africa have also experienced dispossession and violence and are today economically, politically and socially marginalized, the San are at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy in every field. In many places San students are doubly marginalized. African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are marginalized within the global context in general and the indigenous knowledge of hunters and gatherers are further marginalized within the national contexts of both Botswana and Namibia.



Many San see the formal education system as their only hope for accessing greater economic opportunity and gaining control over their lives. In practice, the experience of San children in government schools across southern Africa has largely been characterized by very high dropout rates. There are many interrelated reasons why this is so and an important one has to do with the enormous disjuncture between their own indigenous knowledge systems, transmission strategies and supporting social ethos (on the one hand) and the knowledge,

transmission strategies and social values associated with the formal education system.

## Goals and Objectives Performance

Objective	Satisfaction Level	Comments
Objective #1: To develop a multi-level wilderness experience/tracking program for tourists	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exceed <input type="checkbox"/> Met <input type="checkbox"/> Did not meet	The first priority was to identify, prepare, train and equip the Khwe trackers. Thereafter, to train and prepare them for hosting tourists. This was the process to develop the product and levels and to open a new way to host walking tours in the Bwabwata National Park. This has been achieved, the final almost completed stage is the formal concession to offer all these innovative activities inside the BNP.
Objective #2: Train Khwe as implementers and guides for this program	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met <input type="checkbox"/> Did not meet	The tracking skills firstly needed to be polished, then the Khwe trackers needed to be trained and coached to become guides, which was achieved comfortably. The formalization of the logistics, bookings and marketing is ongoing. The Khwe have been trained as guides and a core group of 6 guides are ready.

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		Implementation and organization is foreseen through TEKOA.
Objective #3: Pilot implementation of the wilderness tourism	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exceed <input type="checkbox"/> Met <input type="checkbox"/> Did not meet	The implementation to host tourists has been achieved beyond expectations, as the Khwe culture village (Khwe living museum) was also established and this initiative has grown within the Khwe community. A tourism walking and cultural activity product concession has been prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Environment of the Namibian Government.
Objective #4: Develop training manuals, program brochure with standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met <input type="checkbox"/> Did not meet	Partly met, as diverse training material, picture guide support books and tracking books were distributed to the Khwe trackers and tracking teachers. The tourism booklet is still in development, draft form.
Objective 5: To finalize the product and implement	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met <input type="checkbox"/> Did not meet	Implementation has started and the local and regional interest is growing. First tourist groups from Gebeco take part at the trackers program since March 2015. Tourist groups from Germany will continuously visit the project, the feedback from the guests is requested to improve the product. The challenge is to maintain tracker and guide training, which is costly and funds are needed to continue and expand.

Budget Performance		
Type of Resource	Budget	Actual Cost
See expenditure report	20.000 EUR	20.000 EUR
Performance Criteria		
<p><b>Project Cost:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Exceed</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Did not meet</p>		
<p><b>Comments:</b> Project costs were met satisfactory. Staff costs and training costs were the two major expenses.</p>		

## Best Practices: In the table below, briefly summarize the best practices observed and/or utilized for this project.

Bwabwata National Park provides a unique experience for the tourist with its pristine natural environment and abundant wildlife, but also offers an insight into the lives and challenges faced by the local indigenous people residing in the park. The survival of the Khwe is directly related to their ability to practice their rich and diverse cultural traditions and skills passed on from elders to the youth, and to control access and ensure sustainability of natural resources within the park. The success of this project rests with integrating the Khwe into the management aspects for the tourism route and ensuring that they receive optimal benefits from the tourism development. A key component for the future sustainability of the project is financial independence achieved through an intensive training program (TEKOA) for management personnel throughout the concession timeframe. It is expected that the project will generate a broad range of social benefits including cultural enrichment, dignity restoration, gender enhancement and youth development, as well as training and skills development for the Khwe community, with the revenue generated covering the operational costs.

During recent CyberTracker tracker evaluations conducted by Louis Liebenberg in the Bwabwata national park, Benson Kupinga and Alfred Tchadau got 100% (at the Lower Band) to earn their Track & Sign Professional certificates, compared to 97% and 91% respectively in December 2012. Gideon Katembo (who got 99%) and Mafuta Nartjie (who got 94%) were included in a four-man training team who received additional intensive training. Although not yet ready for the Senior Tracker certificate, Benson and Alfred now have a sufficient level of skill to conduct training and informal screening evaluations to select the top eight trackers for the next formal evaluation.

This means that even when there is no Senior or Master Tracker Evaluator present, the training team will be correct 93% of the time for difficult tracks where some of them initially gave incorrect answers. It can be assumed that for tracks where all four gave the same answer, it would most likely be correct. A highlight of the evaluation were the two days we spent tracking two male lions. This was the first time that they walked into lions on foot. This was clearly an invaluable experience for them, since they previously had an irrational fear of encountering lion on foot. The experience of walking into two male lions on foot helped to demonstrate that there is no need to be over-anxious as long as adequate caution and vigilance is maintained.

These experiences and encounters are very important for future guided walks in the BNP.

## Conclusion and recommendations:

Tracking is a practical skill that must be tested in the field by experienced, expert tracker evaluators. This involves a process of peer review amongst expert trackers with many years (at least 10 years or more) of practical experience in the field. Tracker standards therefore cannot be maintained by government regulations that are paper-based and enforced by government officials who are not expert trackers. For this reason we recommend that the official government Unit Standard for Tracking should only set the minimum standard for a "tracker" who is qualified to work as a tracker. The higher levels should be developed and maintained by trackers, such as with the CyberTracker Evaluation Standards or any other competing tracker standards. Peer review amongst trackers will determine which of these standards are the highest, not government regulations.

Another consideration is that tracker evaluations and guide training are very labour intensive and therefore expensive in terms of the time required to conduct evaluations. Most aspirant guides and trackers are poor and cannot afford to pay for guide or tracker certification – tracker evaluations are usually subsidized with donor funding. The CyberTracker Evaluation system is very efficient and simplifies the amount of paperwork involved. In comparison to a potential official government Unit Standards for all Tracker levels will add a significant administrative burden on Evaluators.

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In the cultural enterprise economy indigenous culture and knowledge does not conflict with modern economic principals but complements and enhances business development opportunities. This model, while empowering the Khwe people to manage BNP, is also proving to be a solution for reducing entrenched social economic disadvantages and welfare dependence, political marginalization and poverty. It is creating revitalized communities, indigenous leadership, cultural empowerment and social and meaningful remote cultural development.

It is important that indigenous concepts such as knowledge, cultural preservation and its priorities receive equal recognition in such projects and planning activities. Doing so ensures that uses accord with indigenous preservation regimes and that indigenous knowledge regarding the maintenance and protection of sites is reflected in the development plans. For traditional owners to pursue cultural and environmental goals in both conservation and economic development they need to collaborate with a vast range of stakeholders and interested parties. Engagement that exchanges information in ways that respect indigenous cultures is the key to identifying pathways that integrate traditional knowledge with western science and forms the basis for a successful partnership. Indigenous cultures are naturally respectful of others, especially for those showing a willingness to engage, exchange information and enter a dialogue. Developing these partnerships that have co-management governance arrangements that value traditional culture and indigenous knowledge that is also imputed into planning and management will support the sustainability of the project and is bound to increase economic activity for the Khwe in BNP.

- The Futouris impact and support has allowed the Khwe trackers to take lead (Namibia) in advancing and promoting tracker training and guide support to their villages and residents.
- This first effort and wider project support has allowed the Khwe to emphasize their TEK and IKS status and to encourage their youth to learn this knowledge and practice their skills.
- More needs to be done, this is yet the beginning of a slow, cumbersome and rich discovery of self-development and secured livelihood.