Co-management Partnerships



SADC TFCA NETWORK

Investing in People, Nature and Partnerships

ANNUAL MEETING 2026

9 - 13 NOVEMBER 2026

SKUKUZA KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

GREAT LIMPOPO TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA





forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Global Gateway

Co-funded by the European Union

german cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Implemented by:
giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

IUCN ifaw

South African NATIONAL PARKS

Co-management Partnerships

Co- management partnerships and Philanthropy. What is the state of play?

Lead: **Dr Fidelcastor Francis Kimario** - Tanzania

Presenters:

Prof. Edson Gandiwa – ZIMParks

Dorette Smit - African Parks

Dr Bartolomeu Soto - Peace Parks Foundation

SADC TFCA NETWORK ANNUAL MEETING

CONSERVATION CO-MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Prof. Edson Gandiwa
DIRECTOR GENERAL, ZIMPARKS

Skukuza, Kruger NP
12 November 2026

Conservation is now a shared responsibility

A diverse wildlife estate

The Parks and Wildlife Estate, conservancies and communal areas.

Collaboration beyond Government since 2000

NGOs, PVOs, private operators, communities, universities, donors and regional bodies.

Partnerships support

Protection, habitat restoration, research, tourism, community engagement and governance.

Why partnerships matter?

Shared pressures

Financial, technical, infrastructure and staffing limits.

Poaching, illegal trade, habitat fragmentation and human–wildlife conflict.

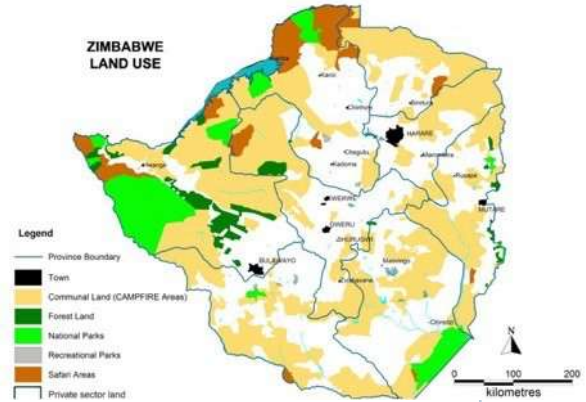
Climate change and land-use pressure.

Coordinated responses

Wildlife crosses park and administrative boundaries.

Partners bring finance, skills, technology, equipment and community participation.

The Parks and Wildlife Estate

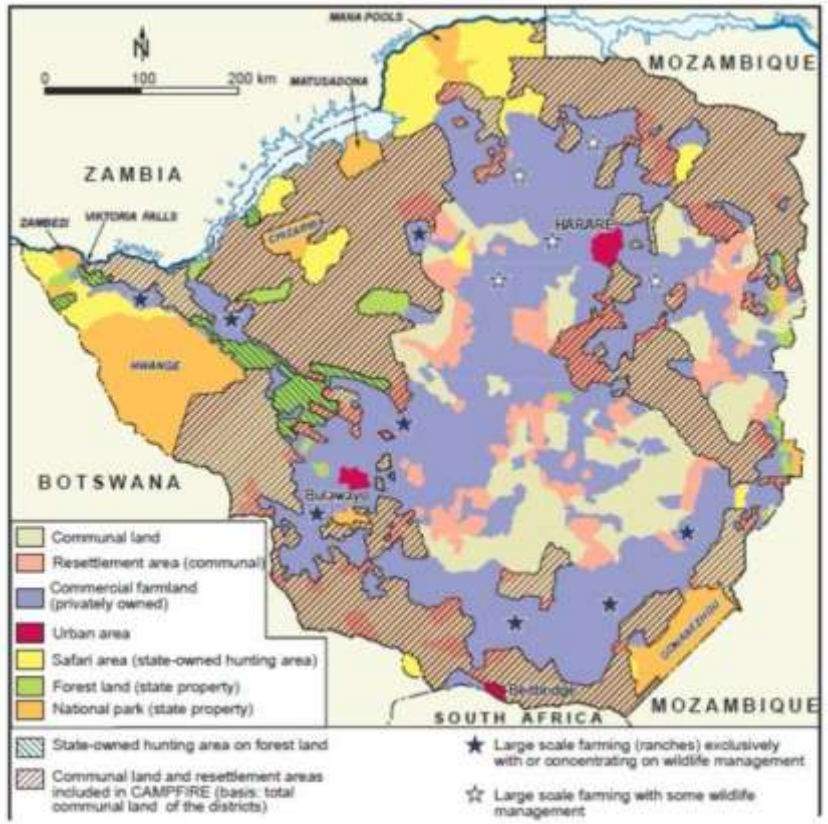


Category	Area	Primary Purpose
National Parks (11)	2,703,860 ha	Preserve natural landscape, wildlife, and ecological stability for public enjoyment and education.
Recreational Parks (17)	365,261 ha	Preserve natural features for public enjoyment, benefit, and recreation.
Sanctuaries (6)	134,720 ha	Afford special protection to all animals, including breeding species of conservation concern.
Safari Areas (16)	1,894,184 ha	Conserve natural habitat and wildlife for sustainable utilisation, hunting, fishing, and photographic tourism.
Botanical Reserves (12)	5,916 ha	Preserve rare or endangered indigenous plants and representative plant communities.
Botanic Gardens (3)	595 ha	Propagate and cultivate exotic and indigenous plants for public education and enjoyment.

The wildlife estate covers some **5,105,536 ha** (~13% of Zimbabwe). This expands to **28%** when CAMPFIRE areas and conservancies where wildlife is a recognized land use are included.

Conservation Beyond Protected Area Boundaries

CAMPFIRE Programme



The **Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE)** covers **55,000 km² (11% of Zimbabwe)**, expanding habitat — particularly for elephants — well beyond the formal protected area network. It supports **community-based conservation and development** in rural communal areas.

Source: Vorlaufer (2002)

Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs)



Zimbabwe participates in **six TFCAs**, securing space for wildlife to roam across international boundaries and enabling compatible land use options that benefit local communities:

- Lower Zambezi–Mana Pools
- ZIMOZA TFCA
- KAZA TFCA
- Chimanimani TFCA
- Greater Mapungubwe TFCA
- Great Limpopo TFCA

Zimbabwe's National Vision 2030

Developmental philosophy

- *Zimbabwe is open for business/investment*
- *Engagement and re-engagement agenda*
- *A friend to all and an enemy to none*
- *Leaving no one and no place behind*

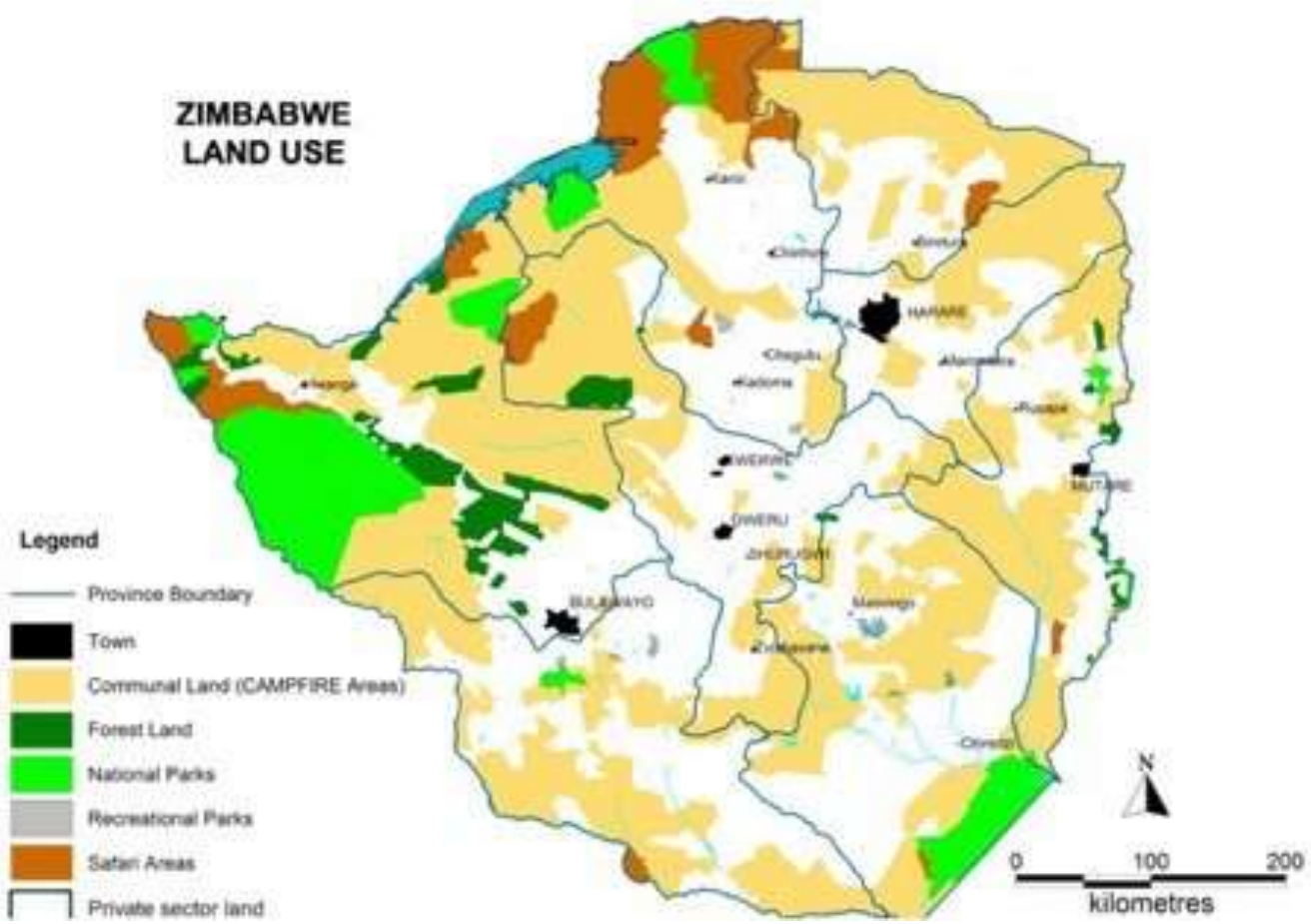
ZimParks contributes to **National Priority Area 4: Agriculture, Food, Climate and Environment**, targeting improved climate resilience and environmental sustainability under **National Development Strategy 2.**



ZimParks

PARKS AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY · ZIMBABWE · IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Collaborative Management/Partnership Arrangements, *selected examples*



Protected Area	Partner
Gonarezhou NP	Frankfurt Zoological Society
Matusadona NP	African Parks Network
Chipinge Safari Area	AWARE Germany/AWARE Trust
Greater Mana Pools Ecosystem	Peace Parks Foundation
Chizariza NP	DEFEND
Umfurudzi Safari Area	Pioneer Corporation Africa
Hwange NP	Ifaw, WWF
Tuli SA	Natures Valley

Gonarezhou Conservation Trust: a 20-year co-management model



Funding, technical help, protection, infrastructure, monitoring and tourism development; experience informed longer-term co-management. Started as a technical and financial support collaboration in 2007 and GCT launched in 2016

2019: Matusadona Conservation Trust

20 years

ZimParks and African Parks management partnership, through the Matusadona Conservation Trust.

Park restoration

Restore wildlife, strengthen law enforcement, improve infrastructure and develop sustainable tourism.

Landscape approach

Community engagement and sustainable fishing.



ZimParks and Ifaw: Hwange and beyond



Formal partnership began 2019

Hwange National Park

A major focus for wildlife protection and habitat management.

Tourism and community empowerment

Part of the partnership’s conservation focus.

Continuity builds capacity

Long-term partnerships build more capacity than short, isolated projects.

Lessons learnt

1

Build long-term partnerships grounded in trust and continuity.

2

Keep public accountability; strengthen, not displace, ZimParks' statutory role.

3

Clarify roles, decision rights, finances, standards and dispute resolution.

4

Make communities genuine partners with real influence and transparent benefits.

5

Invest in people and institutions.

6

Diversify conservation finance.

7

Monitor outcomes, not just activities.

8

Plan at landscape scale.

SADC TFCA NETWORK ANNUAL MEETING

THANK YOU!

Lessons from long-term partnerships

with governments and communities

November 2026

SADC TFCA Network Annual Meeting

africanparks.org



25 years of partnership
What have we learned?

Lessons from collaborative management across Africa, for emerging and expanding TFCAs.

1

Opportunities and risks

What partnerships unlock, and what can undermine them

2

Governance

Clear roles for government, the board and park management

3

What makes partnerships work over decades

Mandate, management and finance

4

Communities

Rights, voice and benefits built into the design

5

Supporting emerging and expanding TFCAs

What the lessons mean for new landscapes

6

Next steps for governments

Practical steps for those considering co-management

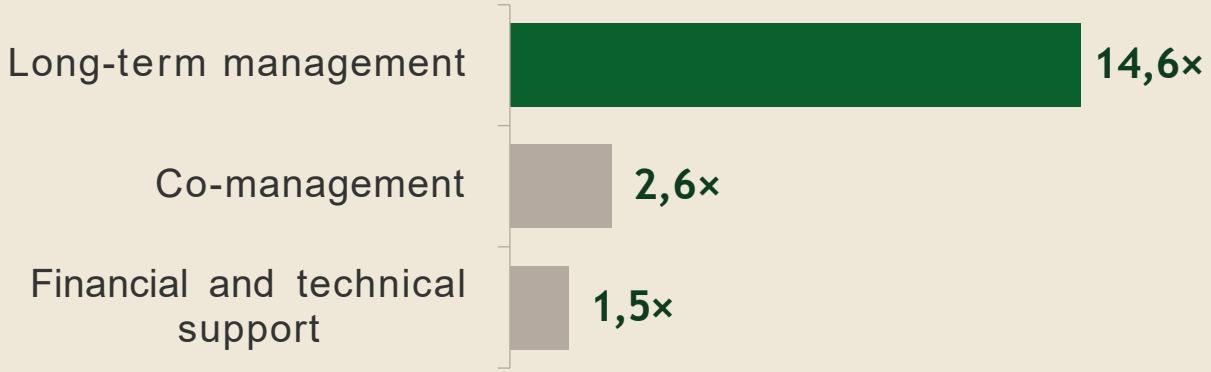


Benefits

Why partnerships work

Long-term management attracts far more funding than other partnership models.

Median funding, as a multiple of baseline state budgets



What partners bring

- Technical capacity, expertise and innovation
- Long-term commitment
- Management systems
- An enabling environment for private-sector investment
- Better conditions for personnel, and higher morale



Professional management is not primarily about organisational control. It is about converting funding into conservation outcomes, infrastructure delivery, tourism growth and community benefits.

Source: Lindsey, P. et al. (2021), "Attracting investment for Africa's protected areas by creating enabling environments for collaborative management partnerships," *Biological Conservation*, 255, 108979. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2021.108979.

Collaborative management

Three levels, clear roles

Direct, long-term rehabilitation and management of protected areas in partnership with governments.

Sovereign
Macro

- Ownership and legislation
- Designation of the park
- Policies and regulations

National sovereignty is ensured.

Local Board
Meso

- Governance oversight
- Approves the operating framework
- Planning and budgets

Separation of responsibilities ensures clear accountability by the private partner to the Government.

Management
Micro

- Day-to-day execution
- Annual work plans
- Staff decisions and daily schedule

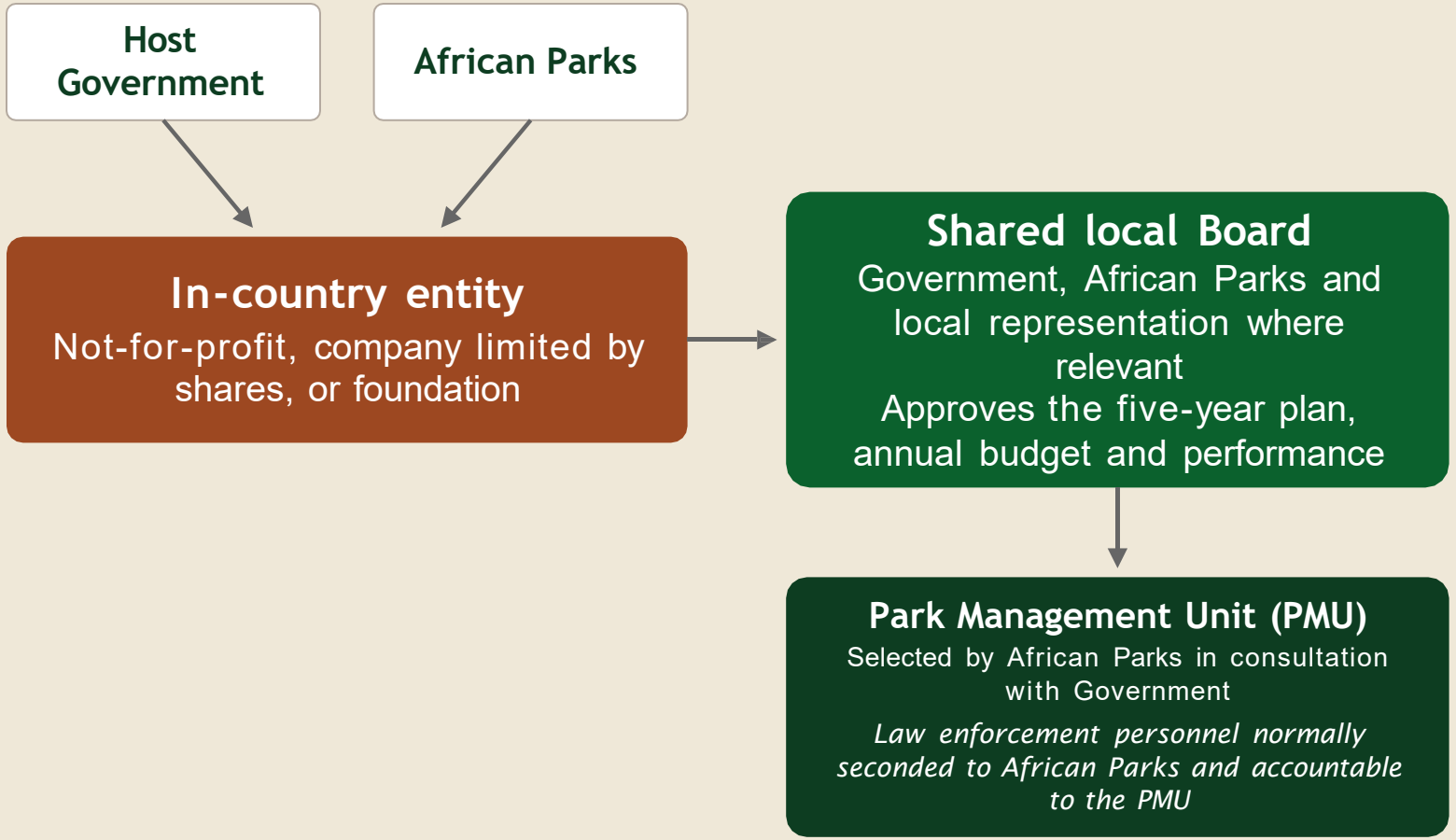
Effective and efficient management is enabled.

Good governance goes both ways

The collaborative management partner must be accountable to both Government and its donors for performance, donor funds, staff conduct and compliance. Government must provide the legal certainty, clarity on management authority and enabling support needed for the approved plans to be implemented.

Governance
An example structure

Government retains sovereignty, and governance and management roles are clearly separated.



Key principles

1. Government retains sovereignty.
2. Governance and management roles are clearly separated.
3. Long-term accountability matters more than short-term projects.

Mandate

The partnership framework

Successful partnerships begin with clarity on authority, accountability and long-term commitment.

1

Government ownership and sovereignty

- Government retains ownership and sovereignty
- Legislation, policy and regulatory authority preserved

2

Clear roles and accountability

- One management entity accountable for delivery
- Defined day-to-day operational responsibilities
- Regulator and strategic oversight separated from operator
- Reserved Government powers stated clearly

3

Long-term two-way commitment

- 20+ year two-way governance commitment
- CMP accountable to Government and donors
- Government provides legal certainty and enabling support

4

Contractual safeguards

- Renewal and dispute-resolution mechanisms
- Asset treatment and exit arrangements
- Performance and remedy provisions

5

Tourism alignment and enablers

- Enabling environment and infrastructure support
- Marketing, branding and product diversification
- Transfrontier, customs, taxation and immigration



Management
Authority with accountability

One operational chain of command, with authority aligned to responsibility.

1 *Local Board and accountability*

- Shared Board with Government representation
- Local representation where relevant
- Approves the five-year business plan and annual budget
- Monitors performance and Botswana-law compliance

2 *Planning and assurance*

- Annual work plans and quantified indicators
- Independent audits and donor-compliant grants management
- Procurement controls, reporting and periodic independent review

3 *Park Management Unit and people*

- One operational chain of command
- Authority aligned with responsibility
- Botswana labour law and Board-approved HR policies
- Fair process and zero tolerance for serious transgressions

4 *Community delivery*

- Structured engagement and access
- Grievance mechanisms
- Local employment and procurement
- Enterprise development and education
- Transparent benefit-sharing and human-wildlife conflict response

5 *Operating delivery*

- SOPs aligned with Botswana law and the Board framework
- Area integrity and intelligence-led law enforcement
- Legal and human-rights safeguards
- Tourism and concessions managed to unified park standards



Money
Revenue and investment

Carbon, biodiversity credits and payments for ecosystem services are now recognised as strategic future financing instruments.

1 *Revenue governance*

- Donor income and park revenue transparently defined
- Audited and applied to agreed purposes
- Revenue retained and reinvested at project level
- Sustainability thresholds agreed in advance

2 *Tourism development*

- Multi-tiered Tourism Development Plan
- Market position, experiences, access, infrastructure and pricing
- Park-wide standards and one accountable counterpart

3 *Concession accountability*

- Local entity oversees existing and future concessions
- Contractual, service, environmental and investment standards
- Government retains statutory approvals and policy authority

4 *Investment assurance*

- Long-term mandate supports donor confidence
- CMP accountable for donor funds and performance
- Public-sector and donor assurance standards
- One operating system, not parallel systems

5 *Community and local economy*

- Local employment and procurement
- Enterprise development and education
- Transparent benefit-sharing

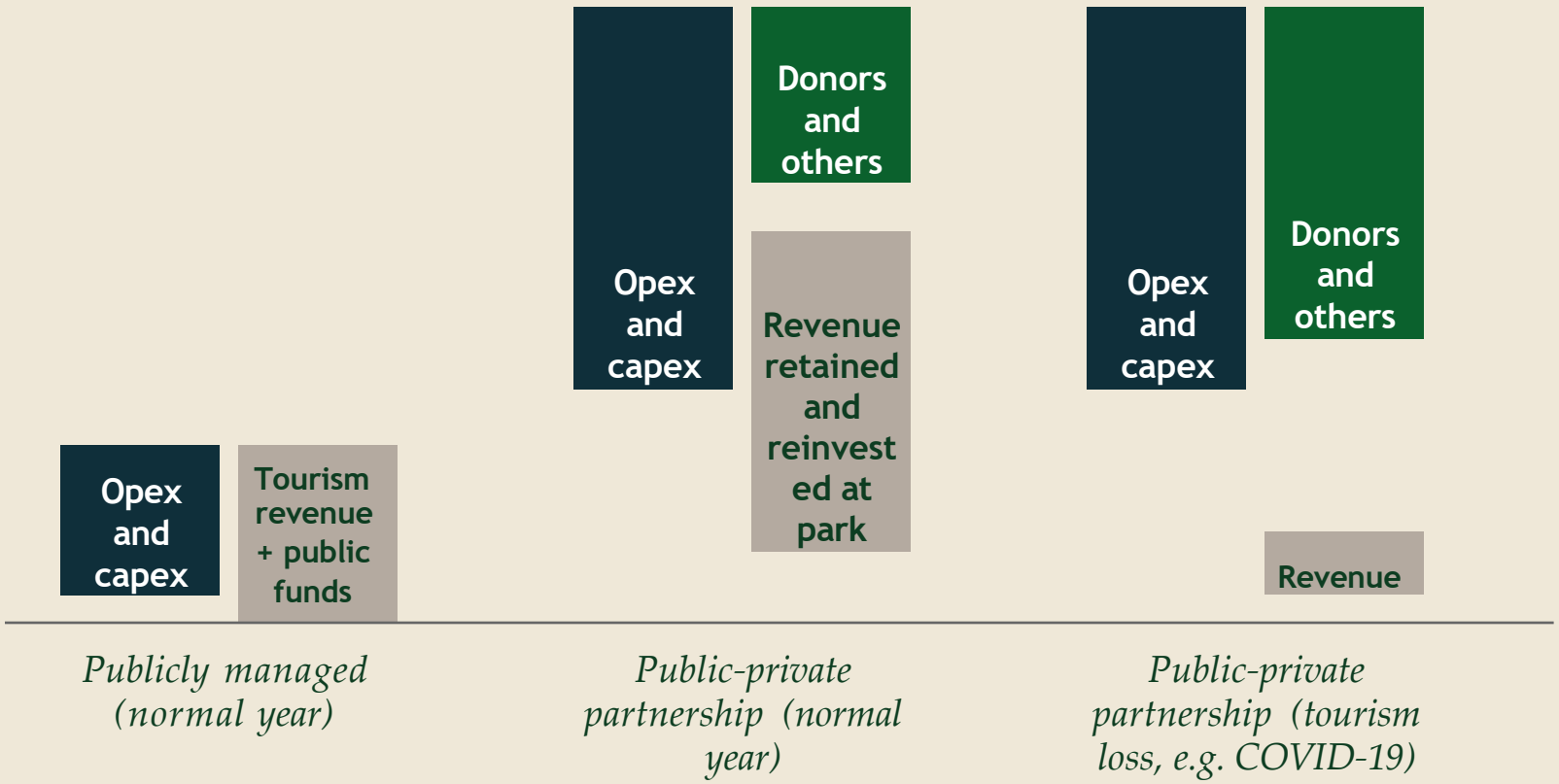
6 *Strategic revenue sources*

- Carbon credits
- Payments for ecosystem services
- Green bonds

Money

How the model absorbs risk

Partnerships absorb risk and bring investment that government budgets alone cannot sustain.



Illustrative example; bar heights are not to scale.

Higher investment

Increases the value of the natural asset, improves capacity and infrastructure, and grows tourism.

Covering the gap

The private partner is responsible for sourcing the funding gap to maintain operations, even when tourism revenue falls.

Zambia: Kafue

Beyond the original proposition

Delivery now turns the financing model into measurable government value.

Original proposition

$5m

per year

Minimum annual investment

500

anticipated jobs

>$2m

annual Government saving

Delivered by 2025

$10.43m

actual African Parks investment

2.1× the original annual proposition

715

people employed

Current staffing base

$2.27m

commercial revenue

Up from $0.65m pre-GKLL

17,746

visitors by Sep 2025

Up from 6,359 pre-GKLL

42

lodges in 2025

Up from 19 pre-GKLL

National leverage

75%

of Government's 2025 wildlife conservation and management budget for all parks and GMAs

One park. National-scale leverage.

The partnership brings additional capital while relieving pressure on public operating budgets.

Plus taxes, duties, revenue share and stronger international standing.

Zambia: national value

Value from day one

Zambia captures value from day one across 46 protected areas.

100%

from day one

All former operating spend is retained.

46

protected areas

20 national parks and 26 game management areas (GMAs)

⅓

of the country

1

Retains operating spend

Government keeps all funds previously spent on park operations.

2

Adds revenue

Government receives a share of applicable park revenue.

3

Attracts investment

Better-managed parks raise tour-operator potential; Kafue secured Protea and Anantara within five years.

4

Creates jobs and taxes

More employment expands the tax base.

5

Grows tourism and visibility

Stronger destinations draw more visitors and national attention.

2025 impact

24 parks, 13 countries

Impact by numbers from the 2025 Annual Report, across more than 20 million hectares under management.

Ecological sustainability

83%
of key species have increased or stabilised since partnership inception

17%
average decrease in poaching rate per park

2,217
animals from 13 species translocated

25,000
snare traps removed, and 235 illegal firearms confiscated

Socio-political sustainability

151,000
people given healthcare supported by African Parks

395
schools assisted, 176 teachers supported and 22 school blocks built

15,000+
people benefited from human-wildlife conflict mitigation

61% → 69%
positive sentiment in the Constituency for Conservation Index

Economic sustainability

US$139M
spent across parks and Rhino Rewild, 64% of it locally

US$17.8M
earned from commercial projects, up 8% on 2024

US$7.3M
generated for parks from nature-based solutions, up 35%

188,000
paying visitors, 59% of them local

Source: African Parks 2025 Annual Report, Impact by Numbers. Poaching: average decrease per park against the previous 3–5 years (median 20%).



Community development

Partners in conservation

Communities are partners in conservation, not simply beneficiaries of conservation.

2,200+

scholarships and vocational opportunities

22

school blocks built

And more than 20,000 children funded to visit national parks.

33,000+

people in sustainable livelihoods

Communities earned US$2.1 million from enterprise projects.

151,000

people provided with healthcare

Reducing maternal and neonatal mortality in several landscapes.

Community partnerships
Lessons across the portfolio

Communities surrounding a park are its greatest allies when they benefit.

1 *Cooperatives*

Akagera and Nyungwe, Rwanda

- Akagera supports 42 cooperatives in fishing, honey, building and guiding, with 4,164 members (beneficiaries)
- More than $750,000 a year in income to community enterprises
- Nyungwe supports 34 cooperatives across five districts

Neighbours become stakeholders when they share in the park economy.

2 *Traditional authority*

Liuwa Plain, Zambia

- A partnership with the Barotse Royal Establishment since 2003, renewed in 2026
- Two BRE representatives sit on the Liuwa Board; traditional rights, particularly fishing, are protected

Customary authority and park management work as partners.

3 *TANGO teams*

Chinko, Central African Republic

- Since 2016, unarmed transhumance engagement officers recruited from herding communities
- They negotiate grazing corridors with herders, spending up to six months in the field each season
- Firearm use in community conflict around Chinko is almost eradicated; the approach is being considered for Boma-Badingilo

Dialogue led by community members reduces conflict.

4 *Nature finance*

Chinko, Central African Republic

- First verified carbon credits sold at the end of 2023
- 10% of carbon funding flows directly to communities through the Chinko Community Fund, benefiting more than 170,000 people
- Community members manage the fund; revenue has paid teachers and improved access to health care

Communities decide how nature revenue is spent.

Traditional authority
Liuwa Plain, Zambia

African Parks' first partnership: customary authority, government and park management working together since 2003.

Rooted in Lozi history

- **Late 1800s** — King Lewanika, the Litunga, proclaims the plains a wildlife sanctuary.
- **2003** — With the Limulunga Kuta, the Litunga Lubosi Imwiko II helps the Government agree the partnership.
- **2004** — Formal long-term agreement between the BRE, the Government of Zambia and African Parks.
- **2024** — Twenty years of partnership celebrated.
- **2026** — Partnership renewed, with the mandate extended into part of the Upper West Zambezi GMA.

How the partnership works

- **Shared governance.** Two BRE representatives sit on the Liuwa Board, giving the Litunga an active role in guiding the park.
- **People in the park.** Around 12,000 Lozi people live inside Liuwa; traditional rights and practices, particularly fishing, are protected.
- **Agreed rules.** Fishing permits for traditional fishing pools were clarified with fishermen, traditional parliaments, chiefs and the Community Resource Board.
- **Shared benefits.** Monthly Community Development Fund payments are linked to poaching levels, rewarding effective protection.

"This partnership recognises the role of the Lozi people as custodians of this landscape."

His Majesty the Litunga Lubosi Imwiko II, July 2026

47,000+

wildebeest

Africa's second-largest migration

97%

local workforce

Liuwa is the largest employer in the region

Sources: African Parks press release (15 July 2026); Liuwa Plain park and partner pages; 2025 Annual Report.

Issuing carbon credit projects

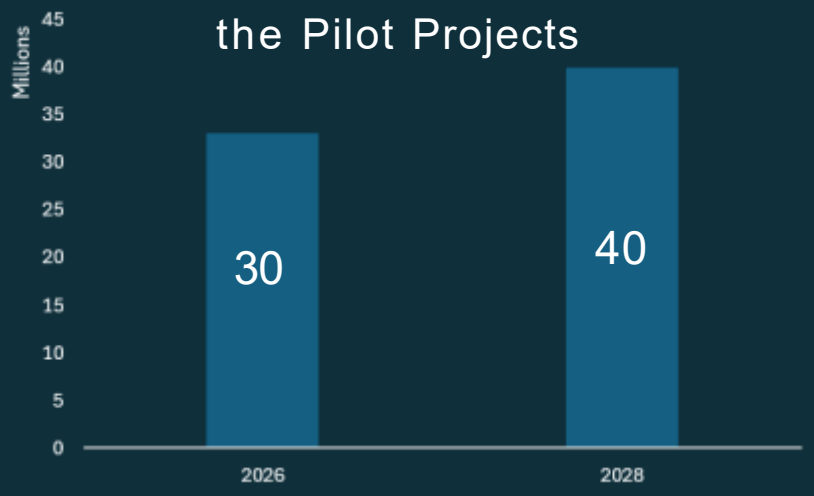
Pendjari National Park Benin

W Nations Park

Carbon REDD+

CHINKO Central African Republic

Carbon REDD+



Pipeline development



GARAMBA

Carbon REDD+/ARR

Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve Malawi

Carbon REDD+

Liwonde National Park

Carbon REDD+

BANGWEULU WETLANDS ZAMBIA

Carbon ARR/Fire

Kafue National Park Zambia

Carbon ARR / Fire: in development

NF initiatives now span eight countries, contributing to AP's budget, and positions AP as a leader in nature finance.

Carbon revenue
Chinko Conservation Area, CAR

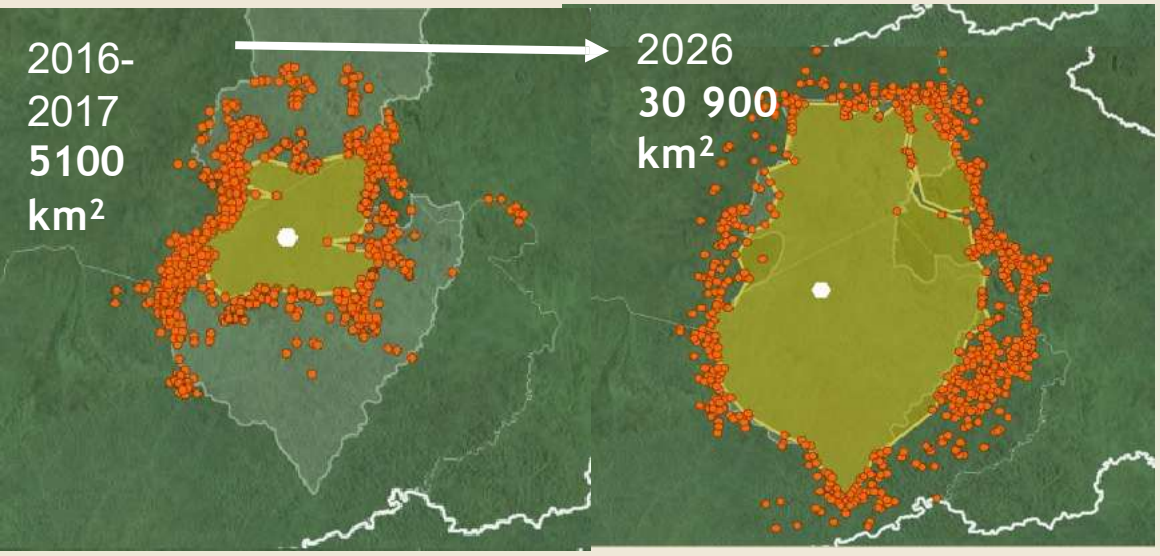
Carbon revenue goes beyond funding core conservation, into community development.

Project development

2016 African Parks took over the management of Chinko Conservation Area

2023 Nature Finance team registered the Chinko Carbon Credit project and issued **1.3 million credits for the period 2016-2020. All 1.3 million credits were sold** securing nature finance income to the Protected Area & communities

2026 Pending issuance of the second period of credits.



How the partnership works

- **9 Committees.** There are 9 committees across the CCA landscape, representing the surrounding communities.
- **Selection.** The committees are selected by the communities and are accountable to the communities .
- **Community led.** How the community fund is spent, is led and determined by each

"Communities receive "conservation dividends", proportionate to reduction in deforestation, area community contributes to conserving and demography & proximity to the conservation area

90%

reinvestment in country

90% of net revenue is reinvested in country, with 10% allocation to a community fund

USD 1 mil

More than USD 1mil secured for community fund to date

48

Community Projects funded to date, that includes school infrastructure and medical infrastructure

Community-driven & implemented projects in 2025



School (Ndenguiro)



Maternity (Selim)



School desks Yalinga



Teacher fees (Sayo Niakari & Zandandou-Madabazouma)

Human-wildlife conflict

Practical mitigation

1 *Boma, South Sudan*

Community-led waterhole projects helped redirect elephants away from villages.

2 *Liwonde, Malawi*

Improved fence maintenance reduced wire theft by 39% and snaring by 36%.

From 330 breakouts to zero: elephant breakouts recorded July–November 2025, and none in December once the reinforced fence was complete.

3 *Odzala-Kokoua, Republic of Congo*

HWC insurance schemes provided financial relief to affected households.

4 *Matusadona, Zimbabwe*

Electrified community nutrition gardens improved food security while reducing crop raids.



Lessons

25 years and 24 parks

What we have learned

1. Long-term agreements create confidence for investment
2. Governance matters more than funding
3. Authority must match accountability
4. Communities must have rights, voice and benefits
5. Conservation succeeds when governments remain active partners

What this means for emerging TFCAs

1. Define governance early
2. Establish clear management
3. Build community participation into the design
4. Create sustainable financing pathways
5. Commit for the long term



Looking ahead

Opportunities, risks, next steps

What governments considering co-management should weigh, and how to act on it.

Opportunities

- Mobilise capital beyond government budgets
- Accelerate restoration of under-performing landscapes
- Improve tourism competitiveness
- Strengthen transboundary conservation outcomes

Risks

- Unclear governance mandates
- Political change
- Misaligned expectations
- Weak community buy-in
- Short-term funding horizons

Next steps

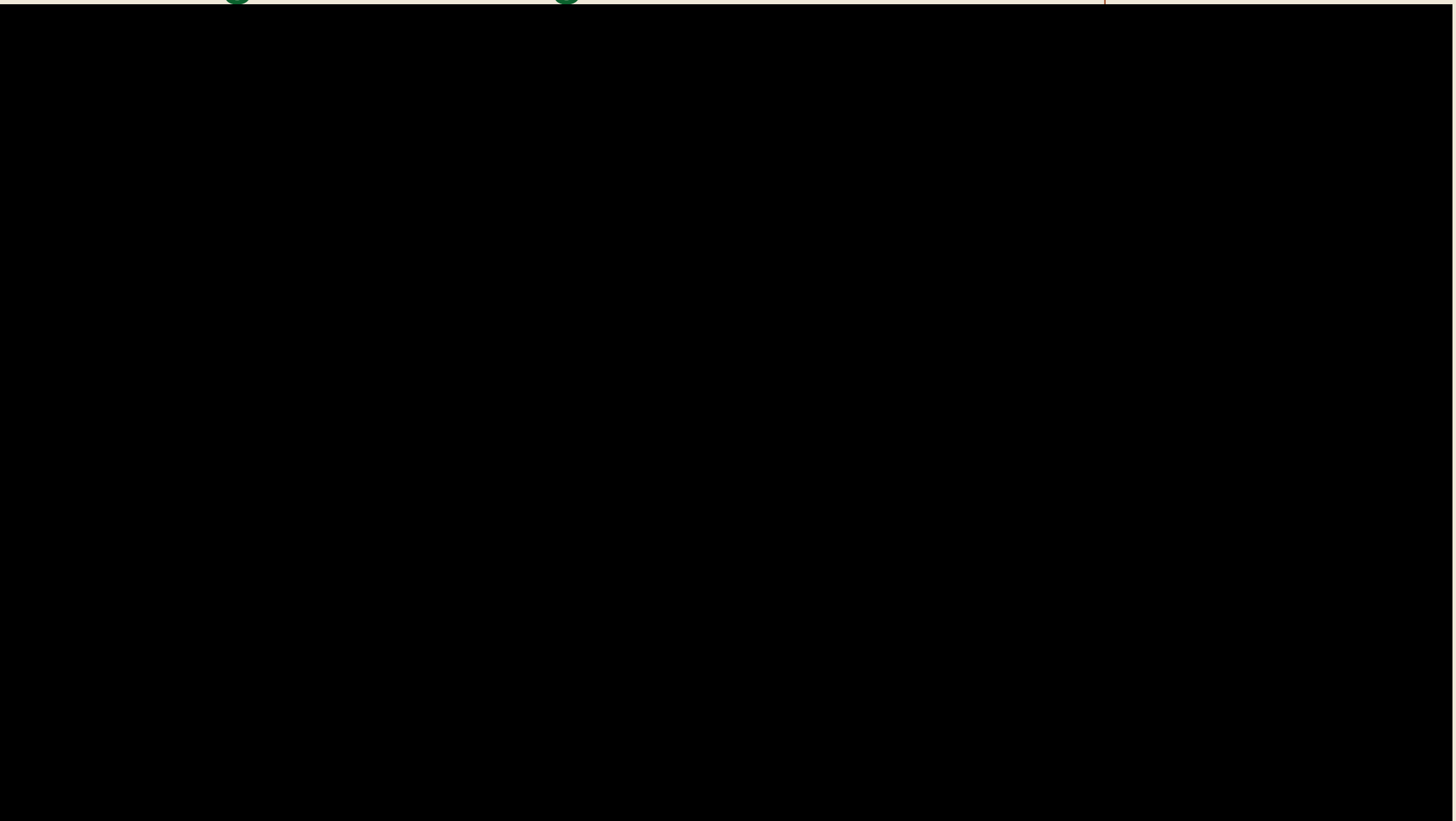
- Build partnerships around long-term agreements (20+ years)
- Establish strong joint governance structures
- Ensure communities receive visible benefits
- Define accountability from the outset
- Focus on shared outcomes, not organisational control



Community partnerships

Seeing it on the ground

Liuwa Plain National Park – Celebrating 20 Years of Partnership



Twenty years of partnership between the Barotse Royal Establishment, the Government of Zambia and African Parks, with Lozi communities living in the park as partners.

Open link



Thank you

SADC TFCA Network Annual Meeting, November 2026

African Parks
africanparks.org

PEACE PARKS FOUNDATION

Bartolomeu Soto | Peace Parks Foundation

Reflection on Public Private Partnership in Mozambique's Conservation Areas

Experience, lessons and priorities for effective partnerships



Lunch

Boundless Southern Africa

- Tourism that Includes Communities.
- SADC Tourism Programme 2020–2030.
- TFCA Tourism Market Development Strategy.
- Panel on local community inclusion in the tourism value chain.

Lead: **Vinehswar Gopal** – Mauritius

Presenters:
Marygoreth Mushi - SADC Secretariat
Nick Tucker - Joint Action NaturAfrica/C-NRM (Gopa Pro)



GOAL 3:
DEVELOPING TOURISM IN TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREAS

Southern African Development Community Transfrontier Conservation Areas

Tourism Working Group Meeting

September 2026

Global Gateway

Co-funded by the European Union

german cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

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GOAL 3: DEVELOPING TOURISM IN TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREAS



Strategy 3.1: TFCA Market Development Programme

- Formulating a well-researched market development strategy for TFCAs
- Expanding the TFCA marketing drive
- Developing and promoting cross-border routes and itineraries
- Supporting the development and growth of events in TFCAs

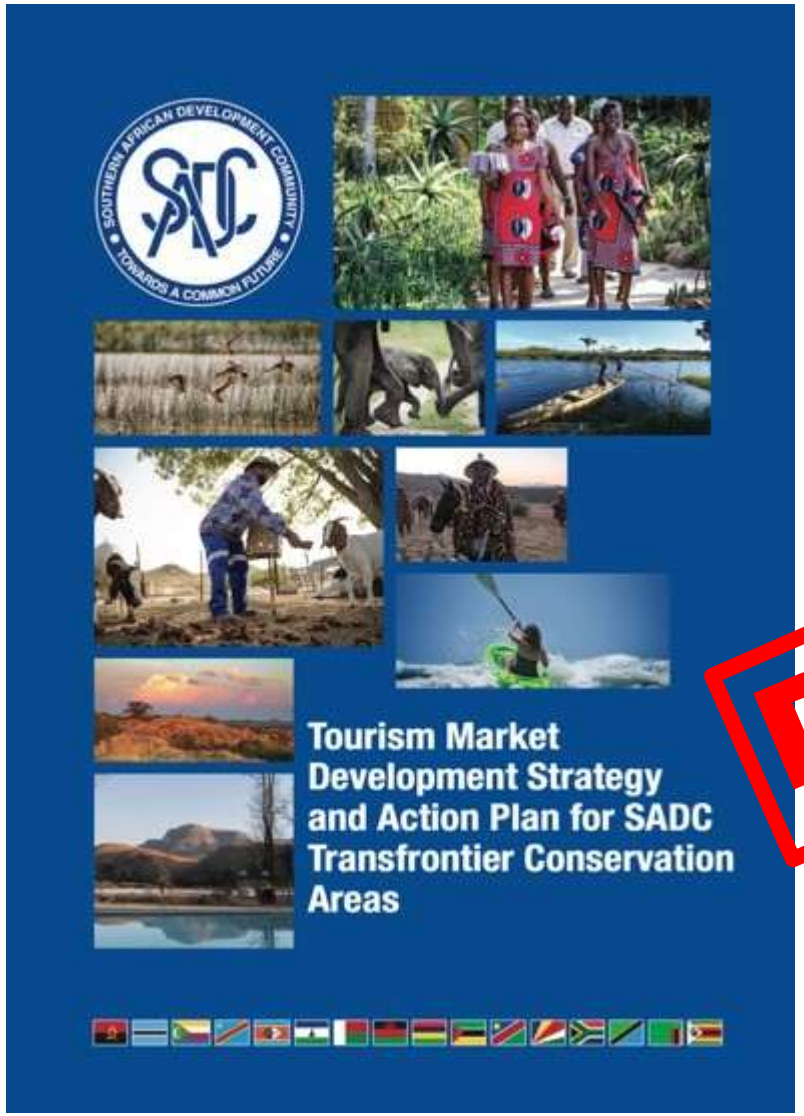
Strategy 3.2: Investment Promotion Programme

- Profiling TFCA investment opportunities
- Promoting and implementing the SADC guideline on cross-border tourism products in TFCAs

Strategy 3.3: Rural Economic Inclusion Programme

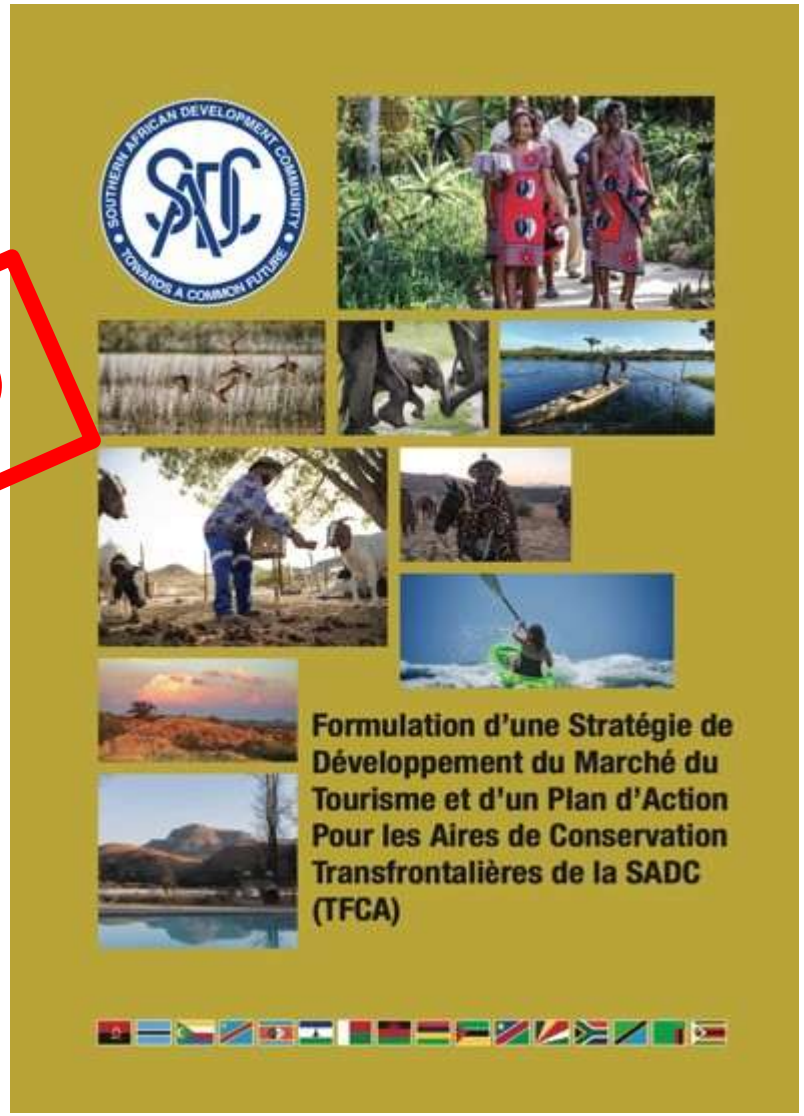
- Launching a community-based tourism initiative for TFCAs
- Promoting operational and standards guidelines for community product development

FORMULATING A WELL-RESEARCHED MARKET DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR TFCAS





DEVELOPED



EXPANDING THE TFCA MARKETING DRIVE





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578 views · 2 years ago



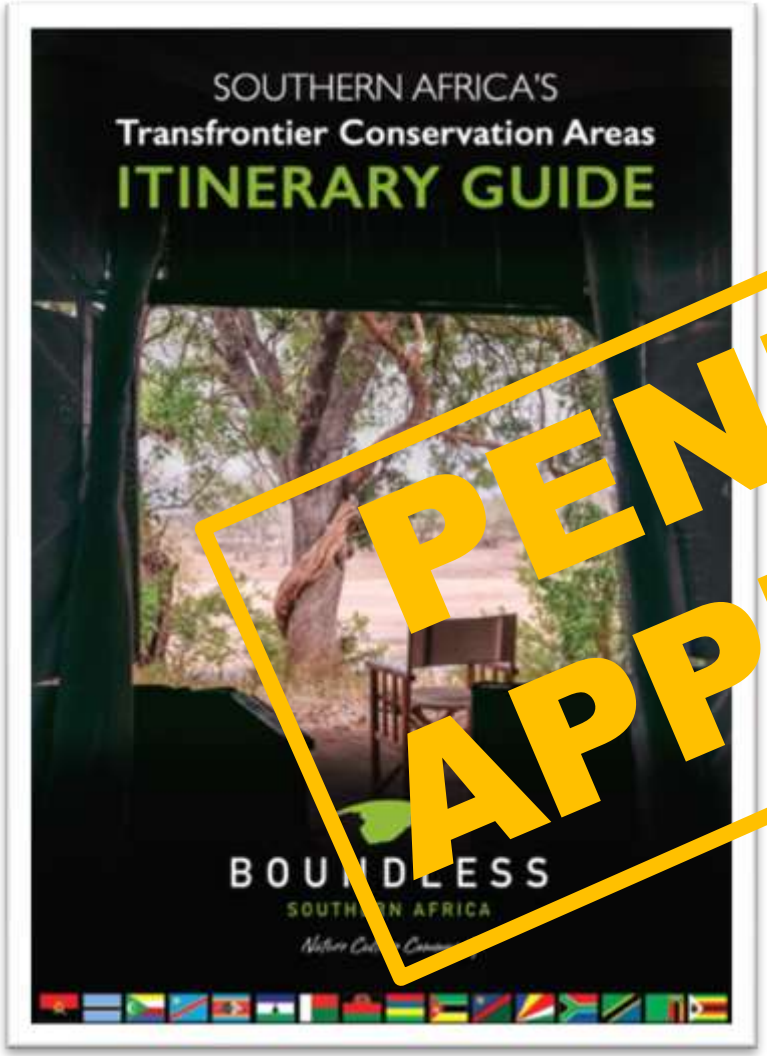
Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area

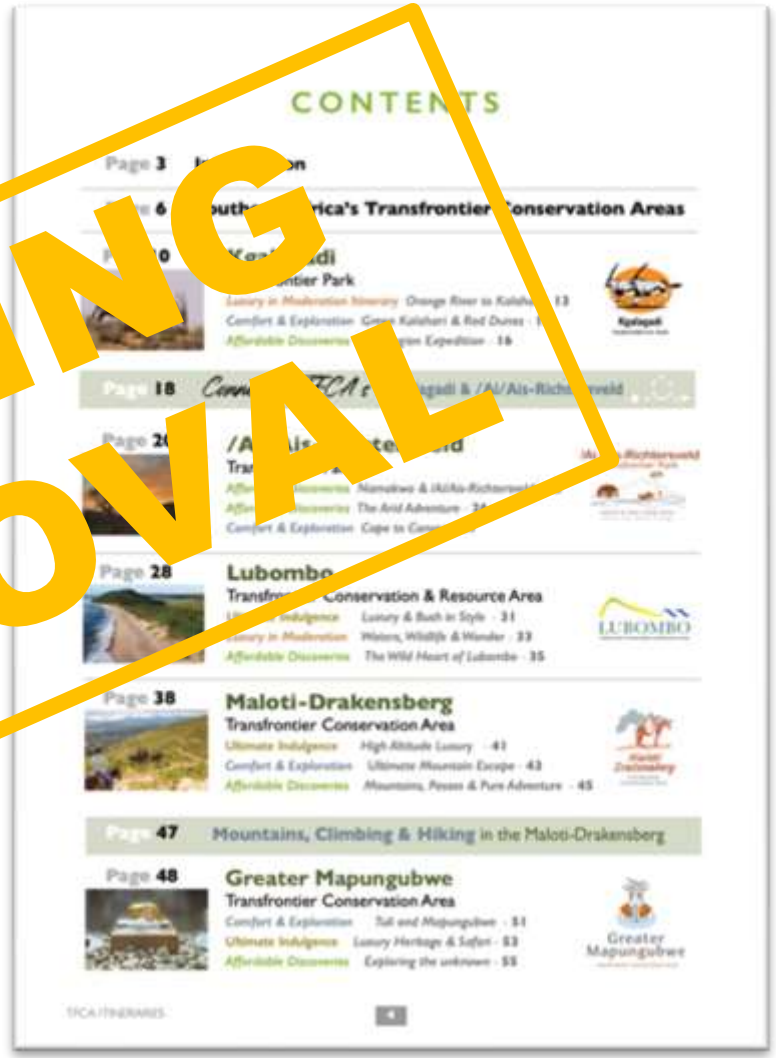
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EXPANDING THE TFCA MARKETING DRIVE



DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING CROSS-BORDER ROUTES AND ITINERARIES





PENDING APPROVAL



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Southern Africa's
Transfrontier Conservation Areas

Transfrontier Conservation Areas offer a unique and exciting opportunity for tourists to explore vast, pristine wilderness areas that span multiple Southern African countries. These cross-border protected zones allow visitors to experience diverse ecosystems and view wildlife in their natural habitats, including iconic species such as elephants, lions, and rhinos, as they roam freely across man made borders. TFCAs provide an unparalleled experience for those seeking adventure and a connection with nature. Travelers can enjoy eco-tourism activities such as safaris, bird watching, and cultural interactions with local communities, all while contributing to conservation and sustainable development in the region.

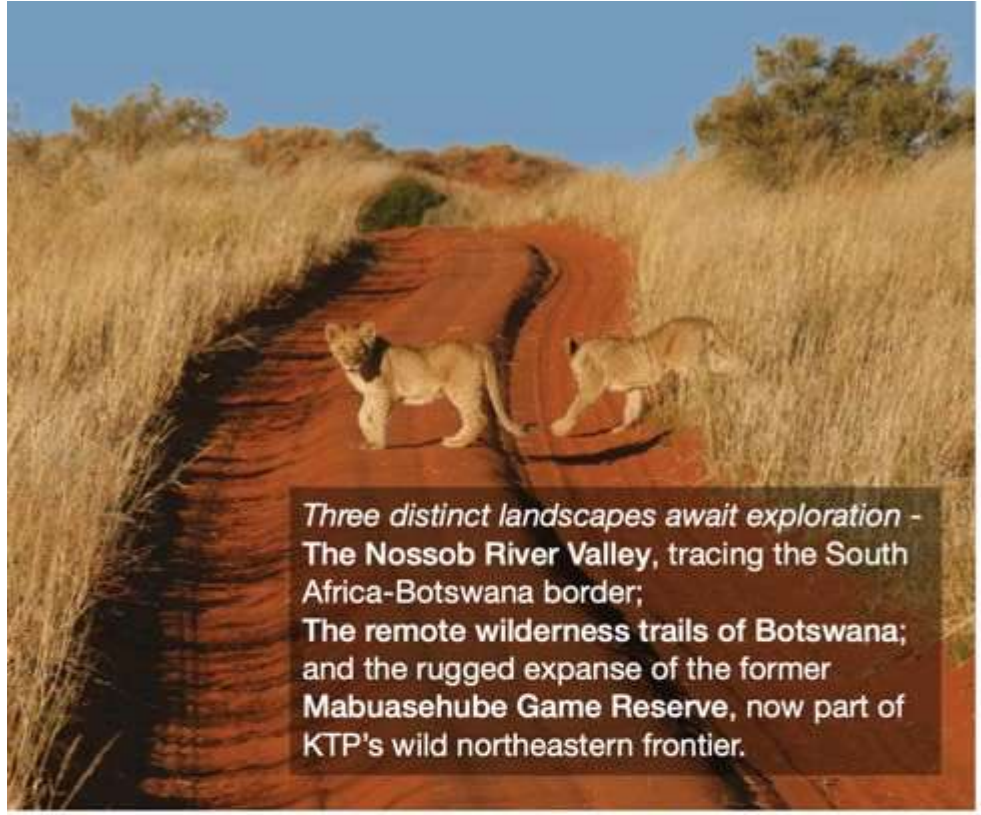
Eco-tourism in Southern Africa's TFCAs is immense, making them an essential destination for nature lovers and responsible travelers looking to make a positive impact on the environment.

A Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) is a component of a large ecological region that straddles the boundaries of two or more countries encompassing one or more protected areas as well as multiple resource use areas.

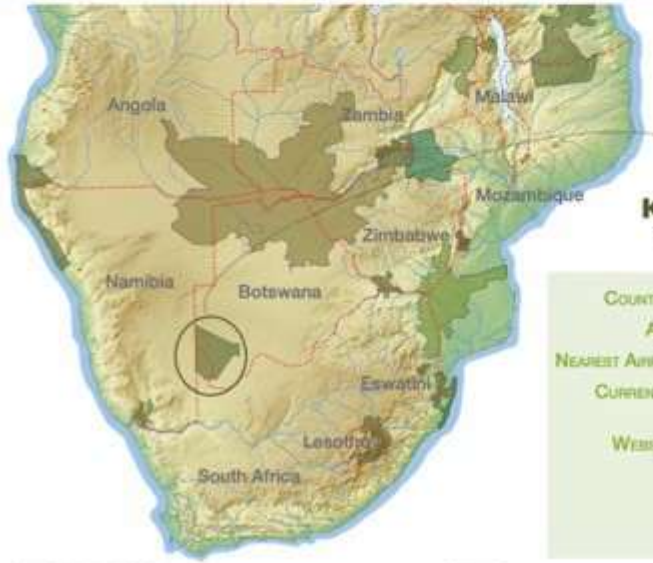
Transfrontier Conservation Areas are a relatively new concept in the conservation arena. They are founded on the realisation that natural resources straddling international boundaries are a shared asset with the potential to meaningfully contribute to the conservation of biodiversity as well the welfare and socio-economic development of rural communities.

TFCAs are practical means of demonstrating regional integration. Currently, there are 12 TFCAs in SADC in both terrestrial and marine environments covering more than one million square kilometres which includes more than half of the protected area estate in southern Africa. Southern Africa also hosts many of global endangered species, including over 60% of the African elephant population.





Three distinct landscapes await exploration -
The Nossob River Valley, tracing the South Africa-Botswana border;
The remote wilderness trails of Botswana;
and the rugged expanse of the former **Mabuasehube Game Reserve**, now part of KTP's wild northeastern frontier.



KGALAGADI
Transfrontier Park

Countries	Botswana; South Africa
Area	38 000km²
Nearest Airport	Upington International
Currencies	South Africa: Rands Botswana: Pula
Websites	sanparks.org/parks/kgalagadi botswanatourism.co.bw/explore/kgalagadi-transfrontier-park

Kgalagadi TRANSFRONTIER PARK

Tucked between the borders of **South Africa** and **Botswana** lies the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Africa's first Transfrontier Park, a sprawling wilderness of desert landscape, rolling red sand dunes, and dry riverbeds. The Park covers nearly 38,000 square kilometers and is home to a unique ecosystem shaped by the harsh conditions of the Kalahari Desert.

While the Kgalagadi is known for its wildlife and striking landscapes, it also carries a rich cultural history. Long before the Park became a cross-border conservation area, the region was home to the ǂKhomani San people, indigenous hunters and gatherers who lived in close connection with the land. Today, they still hold a cultural connection to the region, though their way of life has changed significantly. In May 2002 the ǂKhomani San and Mier communities reached an historic land settlement agreement with the Government of South Africa and South African National Parks (SANParks) which restored a large tract of land to the communities that had once roamed or farmed this area. Named the !Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement, its outcome resulted in the transfer of ownership of 50,000 hectares of land within the boundaries of Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

The Park is home to iconic desert species, including black-maned lions, cheetahs, leopards, and a variety of antelope such as springbok and gemsbok. Wildlife is particularly concentrated along the Nossob and Auob valleys, as well as around the calcrete pans of Mabuasehube. Despite the harsh conditions, the Park supports a rich diversity of life, with over 60 mammal species and more than 300 bird species. Other carnivores found here include brown and spotted hyenas, caracals, black-backed jackals, bat-eared foxes, and cape foxes. Desert-adapted antelope, like gemsbok, springbok, and wildebeest, are commonly seen, alongside kudu, steenbok, and even giraffe.

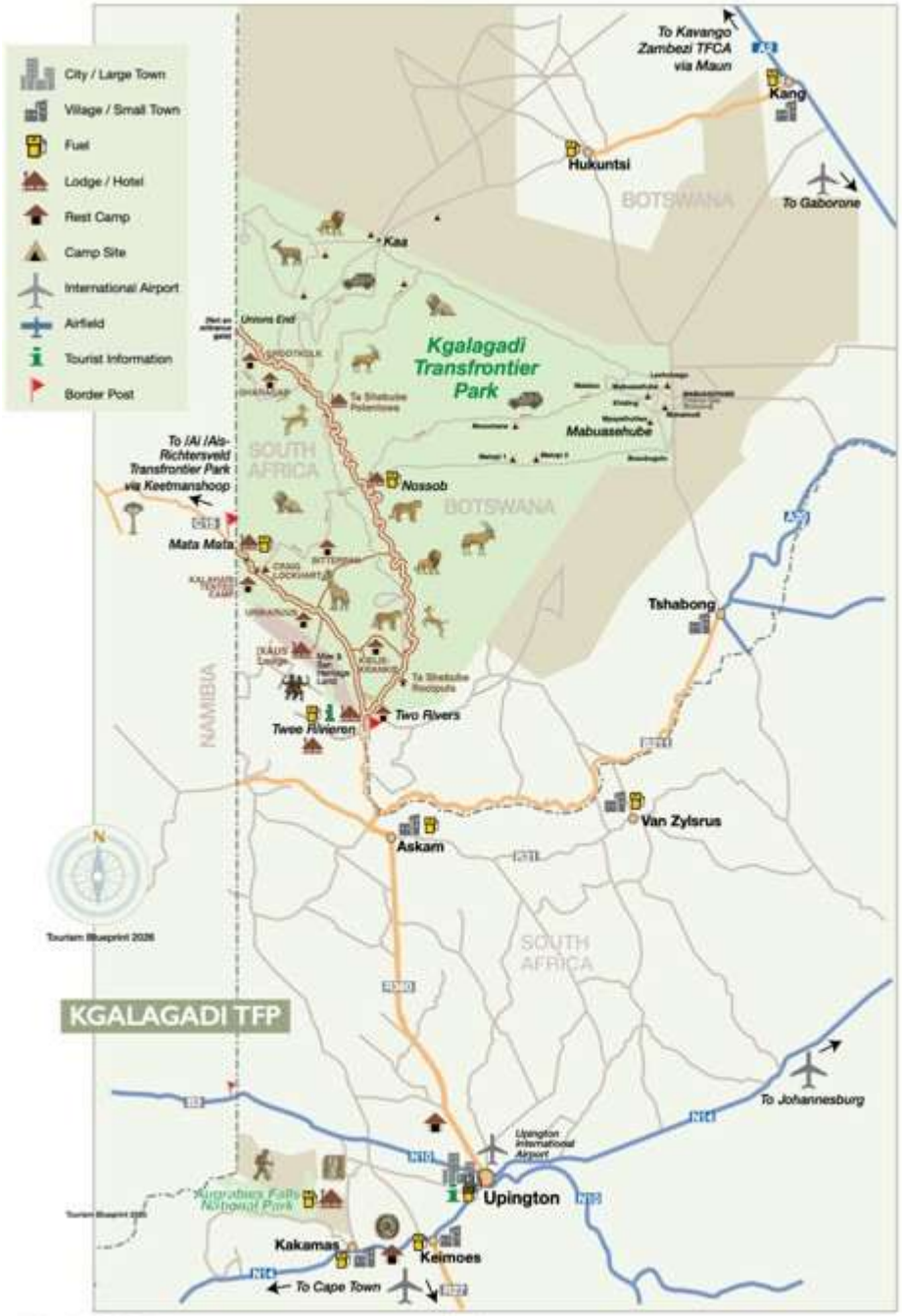
The desert's harshness is a central part of the Park's identity. The vastness and open space can give visitors a sense of solitude, where the sun-drenched dunes stretch endlessly, and the sounds of the wind are often the only thing to break the silence. Yet, beneath this apparent emptiness lies an intricate web of life, where every creature, plant, and person has found a way to adapt.

The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, with its blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage, offers a chance to experience the unique intersection of wildlife conservation and the ancient traditions of the ǂKhomani San. It is a place where the desert's natural rhythms and the cultural stories of the San people are woven together, offering visitors a deeper understanding of the land's history and the resilience of both its wildlife and its people.

A Kgalagadi Travel MUST

To explore the Kgalagadi in its entirety will require a high clearance 4x4 to navigate the red sands of the Kalahari. However a rugged 2 wheel drive is sufficient for some of the South African side of the Park and its surrounds.





KGALAGADI ITINERARY

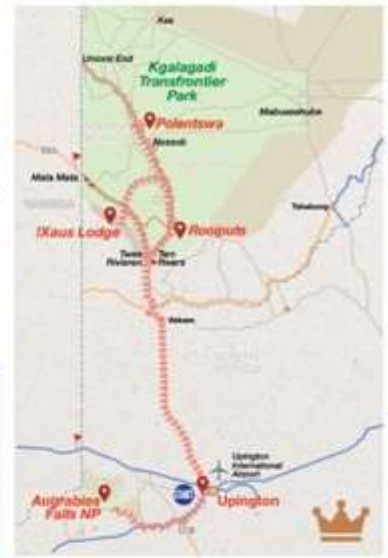
Option One

Orange River to Kalahari

10-12 DAY LUXURY SELF-DRIVE TOUR

$$$ Luxury in Moderation

An itinerary packed with luxury, adventure, and unparalleled wildlife experiences, with the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park being the highlight. You'll stay in exclusive accommodations, enjoy self-driving safaris, and explore the beautiful remote desert landscapes.



Day 1 Upington and the Orange River

Arrive in **Upington**[1 & 2] and check into a luxury river-side lodge. Suggested stay is the River Place Manor (*riverplacemanor.co.za*). Unwind while taking in stunning views of the Orange River. Optional activities include a sunset river cruise or wine tasting at Orange River Cellars.

Days 2-3 !Xaus Lodge, Kgalagadi TP

Depart early for **Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park**[3] and **!Xaus Lodge**[4] entering through the Twee Rivieren Gate. The distance of 260km on tar takes 2.5-3 hours. From Twee Rivieren, its a 1-2 hour game drive along the Auob riverbed to the Kamqua picnic site. From here you'll leave your car and be driven over 91 red dunes in an open 4x4 Landcruiser to **!Xaus Lodge**[4] owned by the ‡Khomani San.

Days 4-5 Polentswa Lodge, KTP Botswana

After breakfast, embark on another thrilling drive across the dunes back to Kamqua, then head north-east towards the road that runs along the Nossob Riverbed. Continue onto **Polentswa Lodge**[3], located just inside Botswana. (Note: there is no need to show your passport within the Park.) Allow the majority of the day for the journey, making stops at picnic sites for breaks and to stretch your legs. Along the way, you'll be in prime game-viewing territory, with plenty of waterholes to explore and enjoy the abundant wildlife.

Continues on following page

Travel Information

[1] INTERNATIONAL FLY-IN

International flights to South Africa's OR Tambo in Johannesburg or Cape Town and connect to **Upington Airport** (Flight durations: less than 2 hours) Collect a rugged four wheel drive or 4x4 vehicle.

[2] LOCAL SELF-DRIVE

Road distance to Upington (the start and end of this itinerary) from Johannesburg or Cape Town is approximately 800km.

[3] KGALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK, CHECKING IN

sanparks.org/parks/kgalagadi

Sign in at the Twee Rivieren reception (Botswana immigration) to enter Rooiputs and Polentswa, and sign out there before leaving. Don't forget your passports. NOTE: *The Kgalagadi TP is extremely popular, especially with wildlife photographers, and many visitors come back year after year, so get your bookings in early.*



[4] !XAUS LODGE *xauslodge.co.za*

A 4-star wilderness camp owned by the ‡Khomani San and Mier communities. !Xaus Lodge is tucked away within the red Kalahari dunes and is accessible via a thrilling transfer across 91 red dunes

Continues on following page





Days 12-14 Thundering Falls

Set off early for a 270km drive (5–6 hours) via Victoria Falls, crossing the border into Zambia.
By mid-afternoon you arrive at **The Waterfront Campsite** in **Livingstone**, shaded beneath riverside trees. Optional excursions include revisiting Victoria Falls from the Zambian side, sunset cruises on the Zambezi, or simply enjoying the relaxed rhythm of this river town.

Day 15 Brenda's Best Baobab

Continue west for about 220km following the Zambezi River. The road winds through rural Zambia, ending at **Brenda's Best Baobab**, a lodge and campsite nestled under towering trees near **Sesheke**. With community warmth and storytelling, it's a memorable halfway stop before entering Namibia's Caprivi Strip.

Days 16-18 Nambwa Campsite

It's a short hop of 2.5 to 3 hours to **Katima Mulilo** Border Post and into Namibia. Once across, you drive southwest into **Bwabwata National Park** to reach **Nambwa Campsite**, hidden in riverine forest along the **Kwando**. Wildlife wanders freely through camp, and river safaris reveal hippo, buffalo, and abundant birdlife.

Days 19-21 Shametu River Lodge

Travel west for about 200km along the Trans-Caprivi Highway until you reach **Divundu**, where **Shametu River Camp** awaits overlooking **Popa Falls**. Days are spent exploring **Mahango Game Reserve** by self-drive, or paddling the **Okavango** by canoe or mokoro before campfire evenings on the riverbank.

Day 22 Wildacker Guest Farm

Covering 370km (about 6 hours), the road south passes through **Rundu** to **Grootfontein**, where you overnight at **Wildacker Guest Farm**. A working farm with a peaceful bush camp atmosphere, it's a welcome rest stop before plunging into Namibia's wild **Khaudum National Park**.

Days 23-24 Sikereti Camp, Khaudum NP

Brace for a tough 250km journey taking 6–8 hours on deep sand tracks; this is 4x4 country only. **Sikereti Camp** sits inside **Khaudum**, one of Africa's least developed national parks, where there are no fences, no fuel, and no crowds. Instead, expect elephants, kudu, roan, and perhaps lions, plus the pure silence of a wilderness night under the stars.

Day 25 Mahopa Community Camp

The 170km route takes 5–6 hours, with a cultural stop in **Tsumkwe** to visit San craft stalls and community guides. By late afternoon, you arrive at **Mahopa Community Camp**, where traditional storytelling and guided bush walks with San hosts reveal ancient tracking skills and herbal knowledge.

Days 26-29 Sitatunga Camp

Head southeast to cross at Dobe Border Post into Botswana. The 350km drive (6–7 hours) returns you to **Maun**, where you can celebrate your journey with four nights at **Sitatunga Camp** — enjoying a day trip to Moremi, a mokoro excursion, scenic flight or helicopter flip over the Okavango, or horseback ride among plains game.

Day 30 Departure from Maun

Your adventure through five countries comes full circle in Maun. After a relaxed breakfast, return your 4x4 and prepare for your onward flight. The Kavango Zambezi TFCA has left its mark! Salt pans, roaring rivers, giant baobabs, incredible landscapes, and cultural encounters make this much more than just a safari.

Connecting Transfrontier Parks

KAVANGO ZAMBEZI ⟷ LOWER ZAMBEZI-MANA POOLS

Going with the Flow - Following the Zambezi

EIGHTEEN-DAY, SELF-DRIVE ADVENTURE ACROSS TWO TFCAS

$ Affordable Discoveries



This 18-day self-drive expedition connects two of Southern Africa's most significant conservation landscapes — the Kavango-Zambezi and Lower Zambezi–Mana Pools Transfrontier Conservation Areas. Beginning in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, the route follows a continuous wilderness corridor through the remote escarpments of Chizarira National Park, the lakeshore tranquility of Matusadona, and the legendary floodplains of Mana Pools, before crossing into Zambia's Lower Zambezi National Park and ending in Lusaka.

Day 1 Arrival in Victoria Falls

Arrive at **Victoria Falls International Airport** and collect your 4x4 vehicle. Settle in at **N1 Hotel & Campsite Victoria Falls**, a well-run, centrally located base with shaded camping, clean facilities, and easy access to the Falls and town centre. Stretch your legs, explore local craft markets, or enjoy sundowners at the Lookout Café overlooking the Batoka Gorge.

Days 2-3 Chizarira National Park

Leave early for the scenic 420km (7–8 hour) drive south to **Chizarira National Park**, known as the "hidden wilderness" of Zimbabwe. The route passes Hwange and the Binga turnoff before climbing onto the Zambezi escarpment. Set up camp at **Mucheni View Campsite**, perched high above the Zambezi Valley with unforgettable views. Spend two nights exploring the remote wilderness, hiking to viewpoints, and enjoying pristine solitude amid rugged escarpments and soaring raptors.

4X4 EXPLORE

Created for seasoned 4x4 explorers, this route captures the essence of transboundary travel — vast landscapes, shared ecosystems, and the enduring rhythm of Africa's great river valleys.



SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF EVENTS IN TFCAS






PROFILING TFCA INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES



Open spaces, unlimited beauty, infinite possibilities.

Investment Opportunities

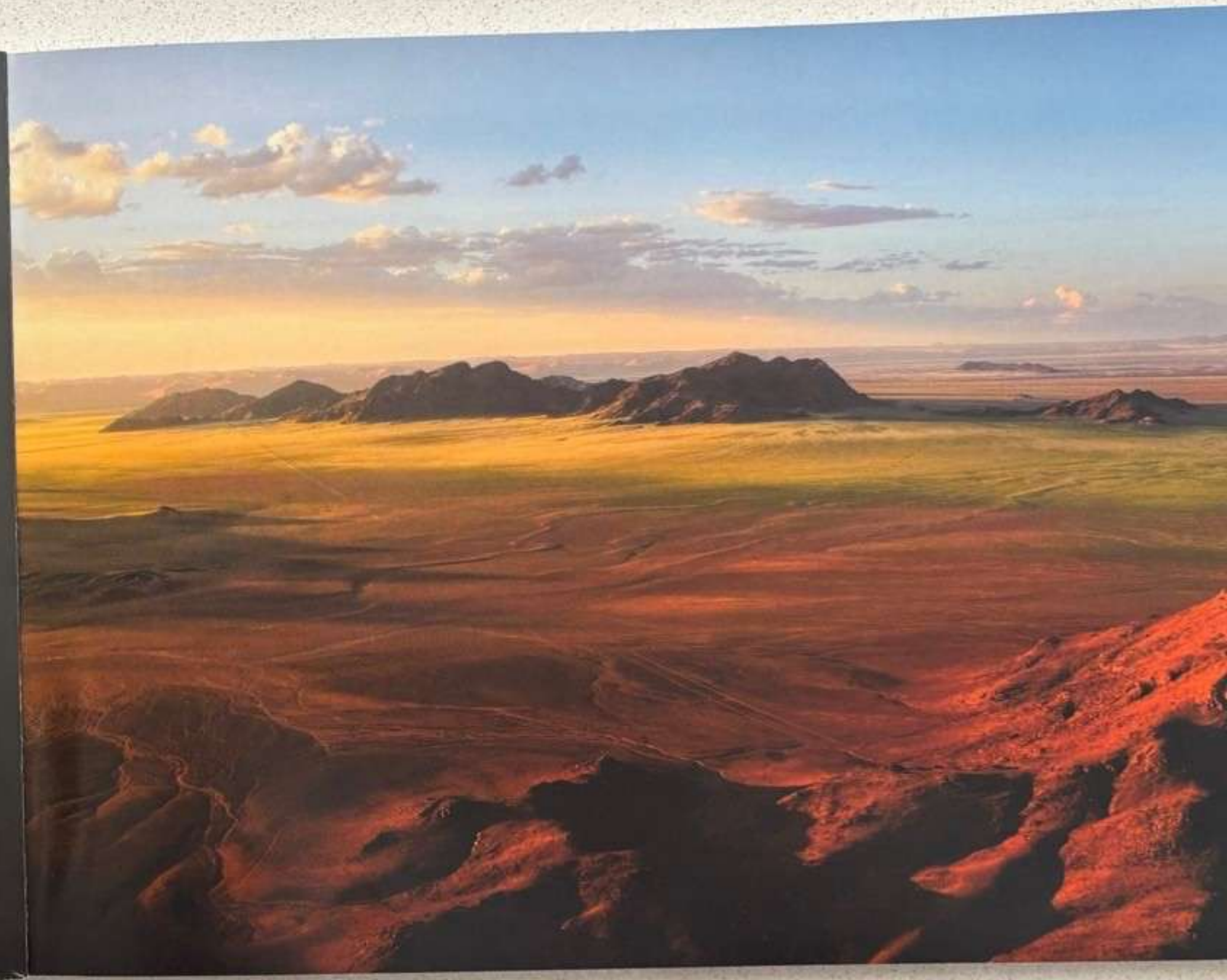
BOUNDLESS

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Nature Culture Community

ect. Beyond barriers, we are free to collaborate
is so much more to explore...

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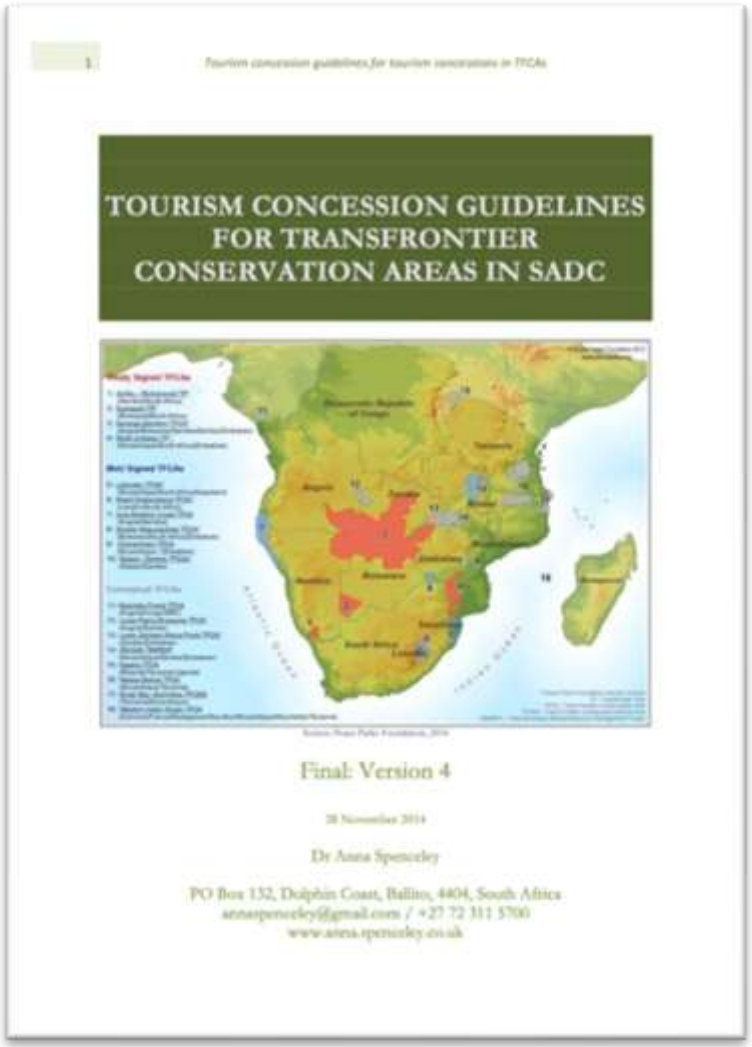
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PROMOTING & IMPLEMENTING THE SADC TFCA GUIDELINE ON CROSS-BORDER TOURISM

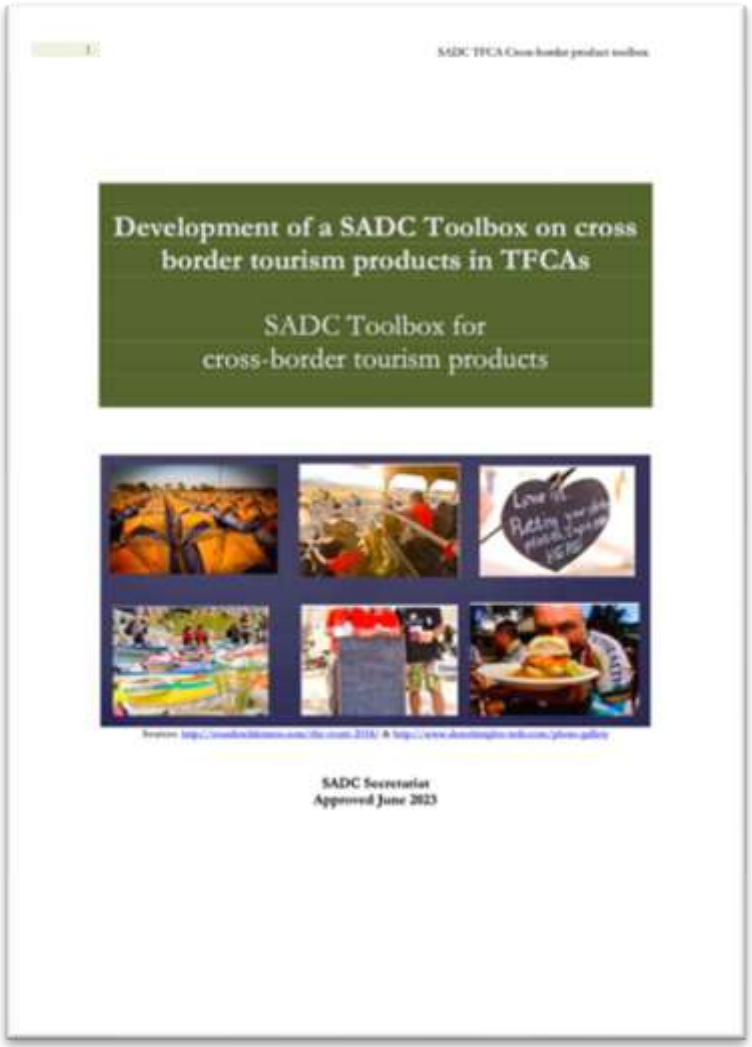


TOURISM CONCESSION GUIDELINES FOR TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREAS IN SADC

Final: Version 4

Dr Anna Spenceley

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Development of a SADC Toolbox on cross border tourism products in TFCAs

SADC Toolbox for cross-border tourism products

SADC Secretariat
Approved June 2023



LAUNCHING A COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM INITIATIVE FOR TFCAS

PROMOTING OPERATIONAL STANDARDS & GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT



Guidelines
for Community Engagement in
Southern African Development Community
Transfrontier Conservation Areas

FINAL DRAFT

Prepared for the SADC Transboundary Use and Protection of Natural Resources Project

by Brian T. B. Jones[1]

Windhoek, June 2018

[1] Independent Environment & Development Consultant, bjones@iway.na

1



GOAL 3: DEVELOPING TOURISM IN TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREAS



Strategy 3.1: TFCA Market Development Programme

- Formulating a well-researched market development strategy for TFCAs
- Expanding the TFCA marketing drive
- Developing and promoting cross-border routes and itineraries
- Supporting the development and growth of events in TFCAs

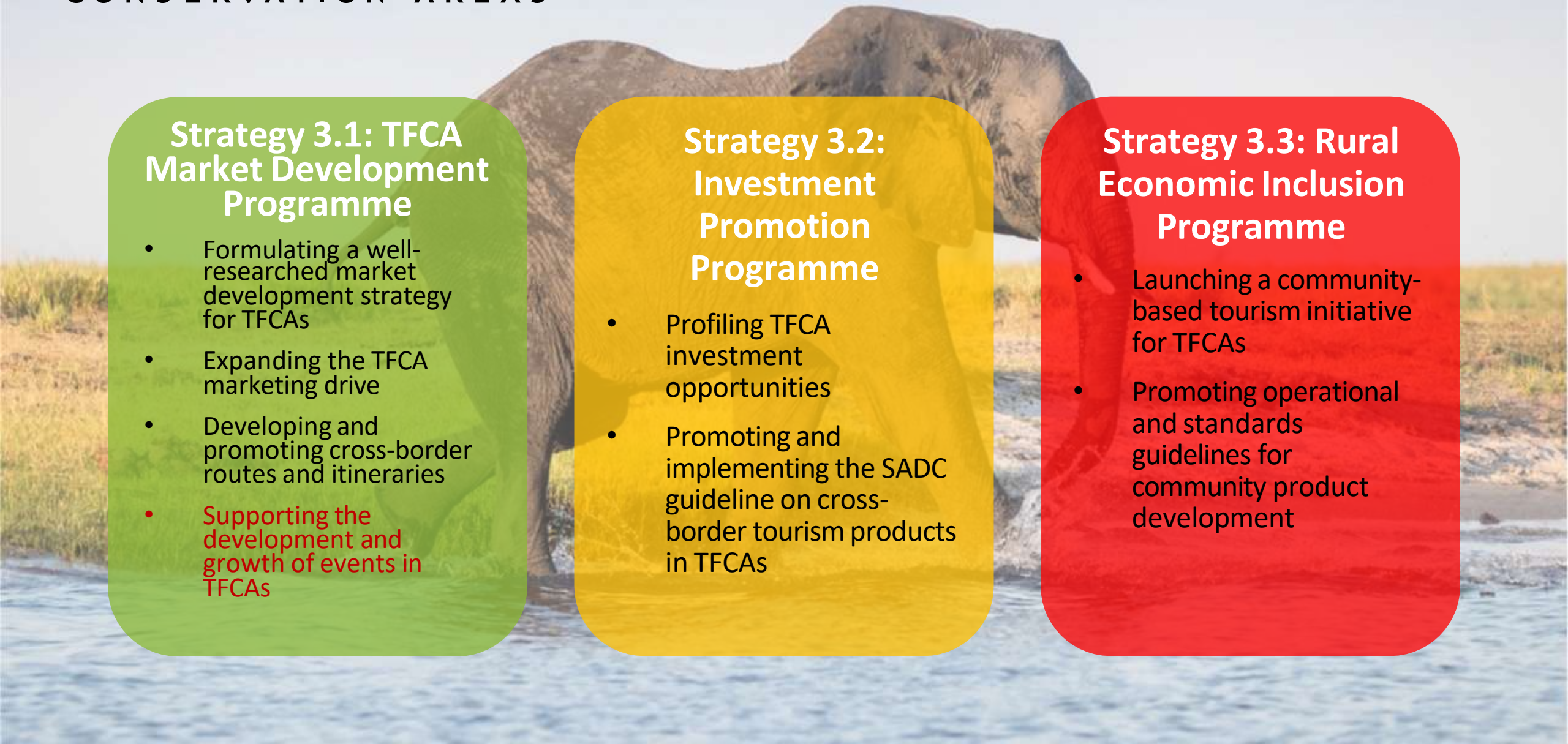
Strategy 3.2: Investment Promotion Programme

- Profiling TFCA investment opportunities
- Promoting and implementing the SADC guideline on cross-border tourism products in TFCAs

Strategy 3.3: Rural Economic Inclusion Programme

- Launching a community-based tourism initiative for TFCAs
- Promoting operational and standards guidelines for community product development

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FROM STRATEGY TO IMPLEMENTATION

BOUNDLESS
SOUTHERN AFRICA
Nature Culture Community

Turning the TFCA Tourism Market Development Strategy into a coordinated, partner-led delivery programme

2027 - 2030



We have the strategy. The next challenge is delivery.

The programme has moved beyond a blank page — but the pieces are not yet operating as one market-development system.

FOUNDATIONS IN PLACE

- Itineraries developed — awaiting final approval
- Media library established
- Marketing tools developed for selected TFCAs
- Some social-media support underway

GAPS TO CLOSE

- Distinct USP and positioning per TFCA
- TFCA-specific Tourism Working Groups
- Public–private–community partner networks
- Stronger Member State amplification
- Consistent data and performance tracking – SADC Tourism Barometer

THE SHIFT REQUIRED

Move from centrally supported activity to a coordinated regional–TFCA partnership model.

BSA provides the regional platform, coordination and amplification.

TFCA structures and partners provide products, stories, market access, local legitimacy and delivery capacity.

The opportunity is to connect existing assets, partners and market activity into a disciplined implementation programme.

SADC TFCA TOURISM MARKET DEVELOPMENT

The implementation journey

A simple pathway: strategy →priorities →ownership →activation →evidence →scale.



Implementation principle: differentiate the intensity and sequence of activity by TFCA market readiness — do not apply the same programme everywhere at the same time.

Four workstreams turn the strategy into action

These retain the four goals of the 2023 strategy but organise them around deliverable outcomes.

1 BUILD THE DELIVERY SYSTEM

Functioning TFCA Tourism Working Groups • clear roles • practical workplans • partner mapping • implementation capacity • funding partnerships

2 POSITION & CREATE DEMAND

Define each TFCA USP • market-specific narratives • coordinated content • partner amplification • domestic/regional first • selective international trade

3 ACTIVATE PRODUCTS & ITINERARIES

Approve and commercialise itineraries • resolve route barriers • fill product gaps • integrate communities/SMMEs • events and investment where viable

4 MEASURE, LEARN & SCALE

Common baseline • supply and partner database • campaign and trade KPIs • itinerary adoption • annual progress report • lessons for wider rollout

SADC TFCA TOURISM MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Three-year roadmap

Sequence the programme so that market activation follows ownership, positioning and product readiness.

YEAR 1

ORGANISE • POSITION • PREPARE

- Establish / strengthen 7 TFCA Tourism Working Groups
- Approve itinerary activation pathway
- Define and validate TFCA USPs and target markets
- Map anchor partners and agree annual workplans
- Establish baseline, KPIs and content calendar

YEAR 2

ACTIVATE • PACKAGE • AMPLIFY

- Commercialise itineraries with trade partners
- Launch TFCA-specific campaigns
- Deepen Member State and partner co-marketing
- Trade/media programme and familiarisation trips
- Develop community/SMME products and address barriers

YEAR 3

SCALE • OPTIMISE • EXPAND

- Scale proven campaigns and commercial partnerships
- Strengthen community and investment pipelines
- Optimise based on performance data
- Document implementation model and lessons
- Prepare phased rollout to additional SADC TFCAs

SADC TFCA TOURISM MARKET DEVELOPMENT

A partnership operating model — not a BSA-only programme

Regional leadership must be matched by accountable delivery at TFCA and Member State level.

SADC SECRETARIAT

Strategic authority • Member State mobilisation • policy / cross-border escalation

BOUNDLESS SOUTHERN AFRICA

Programme management • regional marketing • trade/media • capacity • M&E

SADC TFCA TOURISM WG

Oversight • endorsement • progress review • unblock cross-cutting issues

TFCA COORDINATOR + TWG

Local implementation • products • content • data • stakeholder mobilisation

MEMBER STATE + MARKET PARTNERS

Tourism authorities • conservation • private sector • communities • ICPs/NGOs • access authorities

BSA = catalyst, coordinator and regional amplifier — not the sole implementer.

SADC TFCA TOURISM MARKET DEVELOPMENT

What support is required to make implementation work?

The plan succeeds only if the Working Group helps mobilise authority, partners, market reach and resources.

POLITICAL & INSTITUTIONAL

- ✓ Endorse the implementation framework
- ✓ Nominate/reconfirm focal points
- ✓ Enable TWGs and cross-border issue escalation

MARKET & COMMUNICATIONS

- ✓ Member State tourism authorities amplify TFCA campaigns
- ✓ Operators and media co-create credible content
- ✓ Trade partners package and sell itineraries

PRODUCT & COMMUNITY

- ✓ Protected areas validate visitor experiences and access
- ✓ Communities/SMMEs are linked to real routes and supply chains
- ✓ Private sector helps identify viable product gaps

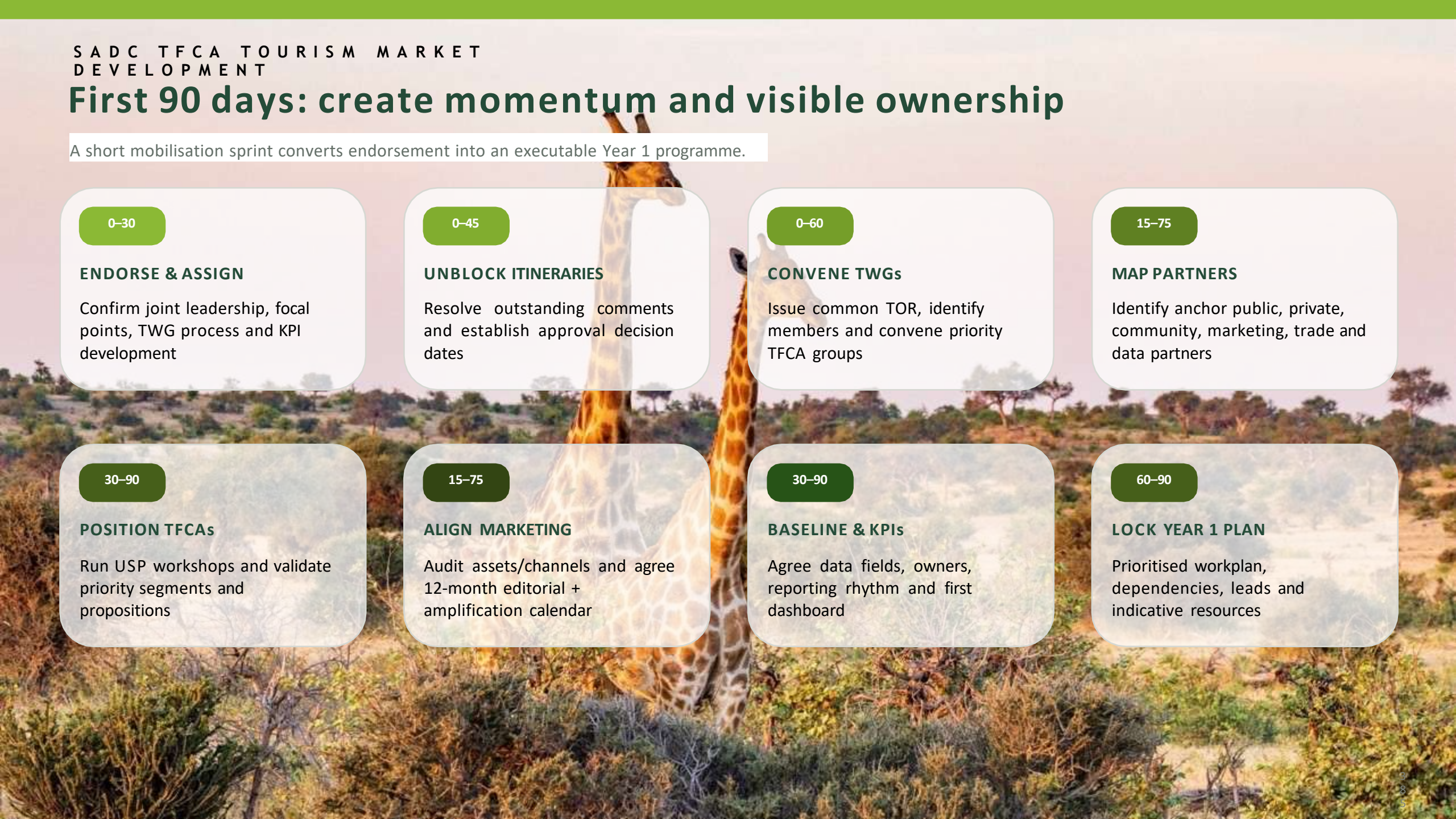
TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL

- ✓ ICPs/NGOs provide technical and capacity support
- ✓ Co-fund priority campaigns and product activation
- ✓ Partners provide data for common performance reporting

SADC TFCA TOURISM MARKET DEVELOPMENT

First 90 days: create momentum and visible ownership

A short mobilisation sprint converts endorsement into an executable Year 1 programme.



0–30

ENDORSE & ASSIGN

Confirm joint leadership, focal points, TWG process and KPI development

0–45

UNBLOCK ITINERARIES

Resolve outstanding comments and establish approval decision dates

0–60

CONVENE TWGs

Issue common TOR, identify members and convene priority TFCA groups

15–75

MAP PARTNERS

Identify anchor public, private, community, marketing, trade and data partners

30–90

POSITION TFCAs

Run USP workshops and validate priority segments and propositions

15–75

ALIGN MARKETING

Audit assets/channels and agree 12-month editorial + amplification calendar

30–90

BASELINE & KPIs

Agree data fields, owners, reporting rhythm and first dashboard

60–90

LOCK YEAR 1 PLAN

Prioritised workplan, dependencies, leads and indicative resources

How we will know implementation is working

Track a small number of indicators across the full pathway from institutional readiness to market conversion.

DELIVERY

- TWGs functioning
- Actions completed
- Partner participation

POSITIONING & REACH

- 7 positioning toolkits
- Campaign reach & engagement
- Partner amplification

TRADE & CONVERSION

- Operators featuring TFCAs
- Enquiries / referrals
- Trade and media outcomes

PRODUCT ACTIVATION

- Itineraries approved & sold
- Products/routes activated
- Barriers resolved

LOCAL BENEFIT

- Community/SMME participation
- Commercial linkages
- Capacity support

RESOURCES & SCALE

- Co-funded projects
- Investment pipeline
- Additional TFCAs ready to adopt model

Reporting rhythm: quarterly implementation dashboard • six-monthly product/trade review • annual consolidated TFCA Tourism Market Development Progress Report

SADC TFCA TOURISM MARKET DEVELOPMENT

What we need from the Tourism Working Group now

Endorse the direction, enable the delivery structures, and help mobilise the partners needed to implement.

1. Endorse the three-year implementation framework
2. Support establishment or strengthening of a Tourism Working Group for each initial TFCA
3. Nominate or reconfirm tourism implementation focal points
4. Support final approval and commercial activation of existing itineraries
5. Support the TFCA USP / positioning process and common baseline / KPI framework
6. Mobilise Member State, private-sector, community, ICP/NGO and conservation partners
7. Use the seven-TFCA phase as a practical model for subsequent rollout across the SADC TFCA network

FROM STRATEGY →SHARED OWNERSHIP →MARKET ACTIVATION →MEASURABLE RESULTS

THE IMPLEMENTATION PROPOSITION

One regional platform.
Seven TFCA delivery partnerships.
Many partners amplifying one shared ambition.

Start with the seven TFCAs. Build the system. Demonstrate results. Then scale across the SADC TFCA network.

SADC Secretariat • Boundless Southern Africa • TFCA Tourism Working Group