



Evaluating Cross-Border Natural Resource Management Projects

Desert Kayak Trails

/Ai/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (ARTP)

SLE



Alfons Üllenberg, Christoph Buchberger, Kathrin Meindl, Laura Rupp,
Maxi Springsguth, Benjamin Straube

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Teamleader: Alfons Üllenberg

E-mail: alfons@uellenberg.eu

Focal point for this section: Maxi Springsguth

E-mail: maxi.springsguth@posteo.de

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Tourism Development Project in the /Ai/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park

The evaluation team visited the /Ai/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park in August 2014 in order to evaluate the GIZ funded pilot project Desert Kayak Trails. During data collection, interviews were conducted with the project implementers (project coordinator, Namibian Wildlife Resorts, acting park manager of the /Ai/Ais Hot Springs Game Park, park manager of the Richtersveld National Park), community guides, park management staff, community representatives, the marketing manager of Boundless Southern Africa, canoe tour operators, tourist agencies and other tourism experts. The following report presents the research results. These are analysed based on the evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, shortly DAC criteria, and criteria derived from the GIZ management model, Capacity WORKS.

1 Context: /Ai/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park

In 2003, an international treaty for the establishment of the /Ai/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (ARTP) was signed. The ARTP includes the /Ai/Ais Hot Springs Game Park in Namibia and the Richtersveld National Park in South Africa, encompassing an area of 5,917.6km². The Orange River flowing through the arid mountainous landscape represents the common boundary of the countries and the protected areas (Figure 1). The ARTP lies in one of the world's most species-rich areas with high plant endemism: the Succulent Karoo Biome. The vegetation along the Orange River providing habitats for a large number of bird and mammal species is of special conservation value. The riparian vegetation is threatened by cultivation upstream and outside the ARTP as well as by mining activities along the river banks of each country. Currently, according to park managers, the riparian forest declines rapidly due to the invasive tree species, *Prosopis* sp.

In order to collaboratively conserve the rich and unique biodiversity, a Joint Management Plan for ARTP was developed in 2006 (ARTP, 2006). This was enhanced and revised by the draft Integrated Development Plan providing strategic guidance and the draft Joint Operational Strategy providing practical guidance for the implementation of joint activities. Both documents make up the plan for collaborative management of the ARTP.

The management of the transfrontier park resides with the Bilateral Ministerial Committee, the Joint Management Board and the Park Management Committee. The Bilateral Ministerial Committee and the Joint Management Board work at the strategic policy level of cross-border management, and meet once and twice a year, respectively. They mainly deal with subjects of joint planning, institutional arrangements, policy harmonisation, financing and benefit flow management.

The Park Management Committee comprises the park warden of the /Ai/Ais Hot Springs Game Park (Ministry of Environment and Tourism Namibia), the park manager of the Richtersveld National Park (South African National Parks, SANParks) and the responsible area manager of Namibian Wildlife Resorts (NWR). During bi-monthly meetings, the members of the Park Management Committee discuss operational issues concerning TFCA development and management, such as joint conservation, training, capacity building and tourism development. Despite joint management structures and international documents, the harmonisation of legal matters relevant for park management is insufficient. For example, immigration procedures of park staff within ARTP are still lengthy and bureaucratic and practical immigration regulations are missing so far.

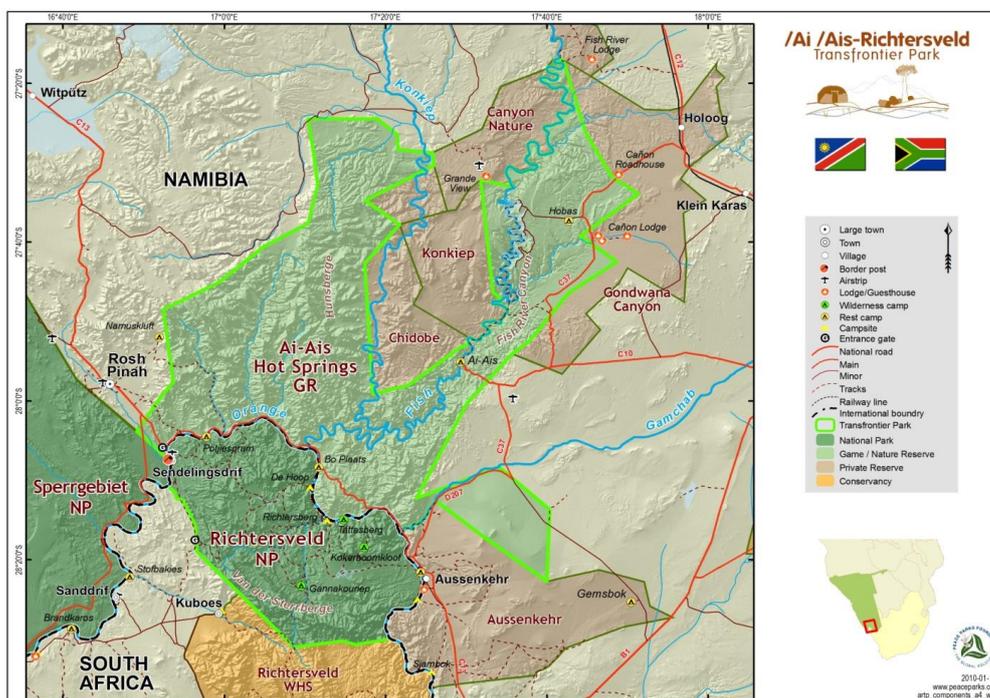


Figure 1: /Ai/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park. Source: ARTP JMB, 2011a, p.5

1.1 /Ai/Ais Hot Springs Game Park

The /Ai/Ais Hot Springs Game Park (IUCN category II), hereinafter referred to as /Ai/Ais Game Park, was proclaimed in three portions between 1968 and 1988.

With an area of 4,307.1km² the Namibian protected area adds the biggest part to the ARTP. The /Ai/Ais Game Park is a government owned protected area, supervised by the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism. As in other state owned Namibian protected areas, the tourism facilities are run by Namibian Wildlife Resorts, a parastatal enterprise which is supervised and subsidised by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

According to the park manager, the game park currently faces a shortage of staff. Furthermore, the out-dated nature conservation legislation of 1975 obstructs an appropriate park management, e.g. due to the fact that the penalties for offences are very low. The bill for a new parks and wildlife management law is still in preparation and supposed to replace the legislation of 1975.

Community involvement in the /Ai/Ais Game Park has just recently become a focus of attention. The park is remote and, apart from few job opportunities in a resort and a campsite run by Namibian Wildlife Resorts, communities hardly obtain economic benefits. Lately, the Nama community of the constituency Karasburg (see 1.3) was granted a concession to operate in tourism along the Orange River in the south-west of the park in future.

1.2 Richtersveld National Park

The Richtersveld National Park (IUCN category II) is owned by the Richtersveld Community¹ and managed jointly with SANParks, a conservation authority responsible for the administration of national parks including the parks' tourism facilities. The Richtersveld National Park was the first contractual park in South Africa. As per contract, the government pays an annual lease for the park to the Richtersveld Community trust fund used for education and social projects, and administered by three trustees from Cape Town. Annually in October students can apply for a bursary that is paid out of the trust fund. The decision on who obtains that bursary resides with the trustees. Community members neither have a stake in decision-making on the spending of the capital nor do they know the level of funding. That is why the Richtersveld Community plans to manage the fund themselves.

As per treaty between SANParks and the Richtersveld Community (South African National Parks, 2008), a joint institutional decision-making structure, i.e. the

¹ Richtersveld Community hereinafter refers to the towns Eksteenfontein, Lekkersing, Kuboes and Sanddrift within the Richtersveld Municipality. The listed towns own the Richtersveld National Park and entered into a contractual agreement with SANParks concerning park management (South African National Parks, 2008, p. 13).

Richtersveld Joint Management Committee (Richtersveld Gesamentlike Bestuurskomitee, RGBK), allows for collaborative management of the Richtersveld National Park and its resources. The RGBK consists of park managers and other officials of SANParks as well as five representatives of the Richtersveld Community: one representative for each of the four towns in the Richtersveld Community and one representative for the livestock farmers of Kuboes and Sanddrift. The RGBK meets quarterly to discuss operational matters concerning the Richtersveld National Park as well as the TFCA. However, day-to-day management solely resides with SANParks. Community representatives are responsible to report decisions taken in the RGBK back to their towns.

1.3 Karasburg Community, Namibia

For the last 2,000 years, people of the Nama ethnic have inhabited the lower reaches of the Orange River. The Nama community north of the Orange (Bondelzwarts) lives at least 100km away from the /Ai/Ais Game Park. The closest larger town is Karasburg, the district capital of the Karasburg constituency in the //Karas Region. As of 2011, the total population of the constituency was around 16,500 inhabitants. Population density is generally low with 0.5 people/km² (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2014, pp. ii–iii). The Bondelzwarts community is guided by a Kaptein (traditional community leader) who has an office in Karasburg.

In the //Karas region, slightly more than half of the population aged 15 years and above left school after achieving the primary education level, about 23% attained secondary education. Early school leaving is common in the Karasburg constituency, where about 70% of young people older than six years dropped out. According to interview respondents, this was a consequence of missing financial means to pay for secondary education. Electricity for lightning and cooking is still not widely distributed in the Karasburg constituency, and many households use candles and cook with wood or charcoal from wood. Most of the households have access to safe piped water.

Levels of unemployment among the Nama people are said to be generally high. Information on unemployment rates in the //Karas Region vary between 32.2% in 2011 and 23.9% in 2012 but are generally higher for women and youth. In the Karasburg constituency, the scarce employment opportunities are provided by commercial farms, such as grape farms in Aussenkehr, and several mining companies in the western //Karas Region. Labour migration from Namibia's north causes discontent among Nama people due to the increased competition on the labour market. Besides, the Nama of south Namibia often feel to be marginalised given their under-representation at the national political level.

Traditionally, the livelihoods of the Nama were based on nomadic pastoralism. Though most of the Nama people in Namibia have abandoned traditional nomadism, livestock farming is still an important livelihood activity.

1.4 Richtersveld Community, South Africa

South of the Orange River, the Nama community is dispersedly settled. The Richtersveld Municipality (Northern Cape Province) comprises the larger towns Port Nolloth, Alexander Bay and Sanddrift as well as the smaller ones Kuboes, Lekkersing and Eksteenfontein. The latter four towns are usually referred to as the Richtersveld Community with a population of around 3,700 people in 2011. Sanddrift and Kuboes are the towns closest to the Richtersveld National Park. In general, distances between the localities are long and infrastructure is poor. The head office of the municipality is located in Port Nolloth in which most people settle. Satellite offices exist in the other towns. Around 15,000 inhabitants live within the sparsely populated municipality (about 1.4 persons/km²). They are Nama, Bosluis Basters and people of other ethnicities.

In the Richtersveld Community, access to education is insufficient as high schools only exist in the two larger towns and limited public transport is available. Healthcare is problematic since provincial facilities are generally under-staffed. Most households are supplied with water and electricity, however, water management within this arid region remains a challenge.

In 2011, 18.6% of the municipal population was unemployed. The unemployment rate of youth aged 15 to 34 years was slightly higher (22.4%). The mining companies inside and outside the ARTP provide most of the labour opportunities. Residents also obtain low income through the community work programmes of the South African government. Moreover, 36 community members are employed as park staff in the Richtersveld National Park.² Regulations stipulate SANParks' obligation to employ staff of the Richtersveld Community to create economic benefits out of conservation. Only if personal qualifications for a vacant position are not fulfilled by local people, external applications can be received.

In the Richtersveld, most Nama people abandoned pastoralism, and only a few of them live as semi-nomadic herders today. Livestock is kept on the Richtersveld communal land. In addition, 26 herders from Kuboes and Sanddrift are entitled to

² As a comparison, in 2001, more than 60% of the Richtersveld population was economically active (4,390 people) (Conservation International South Africa, 2005, p.12). Though the number is out-dated and no current figures are unavailable, one can imagine that the relevance of the proportion of people employed by SANParks is negligible.

use pastures within the Richtersveld National Park. As per agreement between SANParks and the Richtersveld Community, a total of 6,600 livestock is allowed of which currently around 4,700 livestock permanently and 1,900 seasonally graze in the park.

Relations among the Richtersveld Community seem to be complicated. People are in conflict over land and resources, e.g. over pastures in the Richtersveld. Grazing land in this arid region with its low agricultural potential is an important resource. Herders of the southern towns Lekkersing and Eksteenfontein are very discontented with the current agreement excluding them from using the park's resources. Cases of corruption, personal resentments against others, envy of the benefits others receive and historical struggles limit cooperation between community members.

Social interactions between the Nama people on each side of the border are rare. **Cross-border communication** only takes place occasionally, e.g. during family celebrations or festivals. The costs involved in cross-border meetings (transport, payment of road fees, procurement of official documents) as well as mistrust, e.g. due to corruption, and jealousies between Nama communities hamper exchange. While the Nama in Namibia have formed an association around their ethnic identity, the Nama in South Africa are still unorganised.

1.5 Tourism

ARTP owes its touristic attractiveness mainly to the impressive geology and floral richness. Tourism activities comprise, among others, hiking, botanical excursions, game driving and recreation. Apart from basic campsites, more sophisticated accommodation facilities for visitors are the /Ai/Ais Hotsprings resort and Hobas camp (/Ai/Ais Game Park) as well as the chalets in Sendelingsdrift. The establishment of the pontoon in Sendelingsdrift in 2007 and the associated possibility of cross-border movements have attracted more visitors to the ARTP. Due to the remoteness of the TFCA, tourists usually visit the park for multiple days. Most of them are of South African nationality. The main tourism season is between April and October.

According to the Integrated Development Plan, the ARTP still has a lot of potential for eco-tourism development. Especially the adventure tourism market is under-developed and should be exploited more exhaustively in order to attract clients of different profile to the transfrontier park, including international visitors. Kayaking along the Orange River was identified a tourism attraction that could serve joint marketing of the TFCA and diversify product mix. Along the Orange

River, canoeing, as another water sports activity, has already been a tourism attraction for the last 30 years. Six main tourism operators located outside the ARTP provide canoe tours.

The widespread neighbouring communities of the TFCA already offer or plan to offer cultural and historical tourism. Yet, tourism development of the areas adjacent to the ARTP proves difficult. Park staff and community representatives mentioned several obstacles for a successful tourism establishment, among others lack of knowledge on tourism management, poor service quality, insufficient marketing and institutional arrangements to manage tourism projects, missing funds, lack of ownership as well as mistrust between communities. Mismanagement of the World Heritage Site has caused a lot of resentments among the Richtersveld Community, and visitor numbers remain low.

2 Project Description

The idea of establishing a kayak trail along the Orange River in the ARTP has been considered for years. Already in the beginning of the 2000s, the Richtersveld Community came up with a proposal to run a canoe business which had never been realised. Eventually, the Park Management Committee revived the idea of a kayak trail but, so far, lacked the financial resources for its initiation. The SADC/GIZ call for proposals was then the opportunity to get the idea off the ground and develop the Desert Kayak Trails.

2.1 Implementing Partners

The Desert Kayak Trails is a project under the Park Management Committee (see 1) and is jointly managed by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, represented by the park manager of the /Ai/Ais Game Park, SANParks, represented by the park manager of the Richtersveld National Park, and Namibian Wildlife Resorts, represented by the area manager. The area manager is also the coordinator of the Desert Kayak Trails. The formerly involved park manager of the /Ai/Ais Game Park was transferred and has recently been replaced by an acting park manager who joined the committee. In Namibia and South Africa, park managers are recurrently transferred to different protected areas. The implementers have already gained experiences in cross-border tourism development through the joint operation of the annual Desert Knights mountain bike tour which took place for the first time in 2009 and reached commercial scale in 2014.

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the project as per project proposal (ARTP PMC, 2013, pp. 2–3) are to:

1. *"Establish a profitable niche [kayak] activity to the benefit of the [ARTP]"*
2. *"Enhance the general occupancies within the [ARTP] and add value in relation to revenue generation, awareness and product mix"*
3. *"Empower the Richtersveld Community": "once the project operates well, it could be handed over to the community to run and operate"*
4. Employ staff from local communities, including women.

2.3 Tourism Product

One central output of the project is the eco-tourism product, Desert Kayak Trails. Implementing partners and the involved marketing manager of Boundless Southern Africa³ emphasise that the kayak trail, once established, would offer a scenic and adventurous tourism experience. Environmental interpretation by qualified guides was furthermore highlighted. The product is different from existing commercial ones since local people guide the river tours who know the Nama culture, history and the area.

The focus of the product offer is a fully catered and equipped four-day kayak tour starting at the confluence of Gamkab and Orange River (/Ai/Ais Game Park) and ending in Sendelingsdrift. The proposed product further includes day excursions and multiple departures. In future, Desert Kayak Trails could also provide flexible offers tailored to the interests of the clients. The actual price of the four-day kayak tour is estimated at 4,300 NAD (around 305 EUR) per person. Overnight stays during multiple day trips are planned at campsites on the river bank. The camps at Richtersberg and De Hoop (both Richtersveld National Park) already exist and provide basic ablution facilities. The campsites at Gamkab and Grootpen-seiland (both /Ai/Ais Game Park) still have to be built (Figure 1). However, this is not part of the activities funded by GIZ.

Once kayak tours are operated, ten tourists will be accompanied by one guide who guarantees safety on the river. A lead guide being specially trained in safety matters will supervise all activities on water. One group will comprise a maximum of 30 clients. For a multiple day river trip, the guide team will be separated into a

³ Boundless Southern Africa is a marketing brand promoting and representing cross-border tourism activities in TFCA of southern Africa.

kayak and a logistic team responsible for the transport of luggage, preparation of camps and catering. The main kayaking season will be from March to October during the chillier winter months and the peak tourism season.

The Desert Kayak Trail targets adventure tourists who are presumably more interested in multiple day tours as well as families demanding for day excursions. Interest of nature lovers in the kayak trail, for example to view the riparian forest, is anticipated by the implementers and the marketing manager. Tours could also be tailored to companies and school groups, though the market for the latter target group may already be exploited by other canoe operators.

2.4 Activities

After the approval of the ARTP proposal by GIZ in June 2013, the implementing partners sought for about 32 candidates who were willing to work as kayak guides. Information on the job vacancy was provided via public notice through the project partners and orally through community representatives in the Bondelzwarts and Richtersveld Community. Application requirements as laid down by the project implementers comprised: being local to the area, unemployed and passionate. In the end, much less candidates applied which is due to the fact that many local people are supposedly scared of water and do not know how to swim.

After accomplishing the application process, the following activities were planned as per work plan, and conducted as per interview statements and progress reports that serve the documentation of project activities and plans:

1. First training (sifting): 25 February–1 March 2014

- Planned activities: *16 potential community guides get first training aimed at introducing principles of kayaking through the African Paddling Association (APA). ARTP Park Management Committee members select the best potential community guides to continue with the second training phase.*
- Conducted: 15 potential community guides (five South Africans, ten Namibians) and nine selected permanent ARTP staff were tested for their initial skill level and potentials in kayaking. The Park Management Committee selected ten community guides and seven permanent staff for further training.

2. Second training: 14–19 March 2014

- Planned activities: *12 selected potential guides (ten community participants and two female permanent staff) receive river guide training, including kayak handling, safety, crisis management, and first aid training*

through APA. APA approves the river guides who will proceed with further training.

- Conducted: 12 selected potential guides underwent training on the Orange River in kayaking and customer service. APA approved potential guides.
- Not conducted: first aid training. According to the implementing partners, training will be conducted in September/October 2014.

3. Internship with commercial canoe tour operators, March/April 2013

- Planned activity: *The approved guides accomplish a 17-day internship with commercial tour operators to improve their skills in customer service and gain further river experience.*
- Conducted: The approved guides accomplished an internship.

After completion of the trainings and internship, six community candidates (four of the Nama community of the Karasburg district and two of the Richtersveld Community) and one permanent NWR employee were approved river guides based on their skills in swimming, kayaking and basic customer service.

4. Team leader training: March 2014

- Planned activities: *Four ARTP permanent staff (two from SANParks, one from MET and one from NWR) receive team leader (trip leader) training including advanced white-water and advanced first aid training as prescribed by law.*
- Not conducted: According to the implementing partners, training will be conducted in September/October 2014. As of August 2014, only three permanent staff (project coordinator, park manager Richtersveld National Park, SANParks employee) will undergo team leader training.

5. Procurement of equipment: March 2014

- Planned activity: *Kayaks, trailers to transport the kayaks, safety equipment as well as camping and hosting equipment is purchased.*
- Conducted: GIZ tendered the above equipment. Closing date for the bidders' proposals was 10 April 2014. However, the kayaks and trailers were delivered only on 2 September 2014 (see 3.6).

6. Marketing: March 2014

- Planned activity: *The project coordinator participates in the Argus Lifecycle Expo held in Cape Town from 6 to 8 March 2014 with the plan to launch the Desert Kayak Trails to clients, operators and the media.*
- Conducted: Project coordinator launched the eco-tourism product at the exposition.

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- Additional marketing activity conducted: Product marketing is done in collaboration with Boundless Southern Africa. The Desert Kayak Trails is promoted through the Desert Knights event in September 2014 attracting many tourists, as well as through an identical web and print design of both products.
- Additional marketing activity planned: Marketing of the product through the project coordinator at the Internationale Tourismusbörse Berlin in 2015 and the INDABA in Durban in May 2015 and relationship building with national and international tourism operators.

Other additional activities undertaken that are not included in the work plan are:

1. Preparation of a rough business plan for the four-day kayak tour. GIZ and the Peace Parks Foundation currently support a Sustainable Financing Strategy process. A first draft of this strategy should be prepared by 23 October 2014, the final document will be available by end of December 2014 (information by GIZ).
2. Cross-border visits of the river guides to the Bondelzwarts and Richtersveld communities.

Activities that are planned by the implementing partners in the near future include:

1. Operation of the first kayak tour in April 2015 with invited guests and media. After this occasion, the Desert Kayak Trails will commence offering day tours.
2. Construction of the campsites at Gamkab and Grootpenseiland (Namibia) with additionally raised funds by October 2014 and completion by March 2015.

3 Findings and Analysis

In the first part of this section, we evaluate if the above outlined activities contribute to the desired objectives of the eco-tourism project. The advanced implementation status of the project allows elaborating on results and their sustainability considering risks the project may encounter. Factors that influence overall success of the Desert Kayak Trails are underlined.

3.1 Project Logic

The proposal for the Desert Kayak Trails, outlining project objectives (see 2.2), in combination with the work plan is largely conclusive. The undertaken and planned activities (see 2.4) are generally suitable to achieve the desired objectives 1, 2 and 4. Yet, the project proposal focuses on offering four-day kayak tours which require greater logistics than day excursions, as well as initial investments, e.g. in the purchase of cars and for the construction of campsites. The completion of campsites as planned by March 2015 is rather unlikely and only basic facilities such as ablution blocks may have been built by then. Therefore focusing on four-day tours as base activity seems ambitious to start running the project (objective 1). Despite implementers' attempts to employ female guides, entry barriers for women seem to be higher to participate in kayak activities. Reasons for this remain unclear, but it might be explained among others by the arduous work and health risk kayaking entails or other socio-cultural circumstances. Thus, the project does consider gender aspects but is currently not able to fulfil this criterion stipulated by SADC/GIZ.

According to implementers' understanding, empowerment of community members means to run and operate kayak activities (objective 3). We consider empowerment rather as a result of interactive participation or self-mobilisation of which both require greater responsibility and autonomy. Since the Desert Kayak Trails and the ultimate management responsibility for the project will always remain with the ARTP, we refer to objective 3 as handing over project operation to community members. Though this objective is planned to be realised in the long-term, activities and strategies to enhance capacities and political participation to achieve desired outcomes remain vague. For the time being, the implementers do not see the possibility to devolve any considerable operational responsibilities to the guides. In order to hand project operation over to local guides in future, project implementers deem necessary further investments into capacity development (e.g. training of community guides as trip leaders).

3.2 Effectiveness

Due to various reasons resulting in the delay of product development, the project has not yet been able to run kayak activities (objective 1) as of end of August 2014. Product offering is however the prerequisite to enhance occupancies and generate revenues (objective 2). As no activities have been undertaken so far to achieve objective 3, the process of handing over project operation to capable community members has not been initiated by project implementers.

The eco-tourism project already created desired outcomes concerning the employment of local river guides (objective 4). Seven guides who were approved during the first training phases have been employed by Namibia Wildlife Resorts since July 2014, five of which had been unemployed and one of which is female. Though female employment is explicitly envisaged by the implementing partners, female guides are currently under-represented in the kayak team. Apart from the permanent NWR employee, the guides earn a total income of 22,968 NAD (around 1,630 EUR) during the eight month probation phase ending in February 2015. From then on, the contract is planned to become permanent with an increased annual income of approximately 60,000 NAD⁴ (around 4,260 EUR). Once kayak operations run, tips paid by clients may add to the income. For the guides, this means, first, generation of income or an increase in income and, secondly, stable employment with set contract terms as defined by the implementing partners (e.g. regular working hours, holidays, sick and compassionate leave). By creating direct economic opportunities for local people, the project can be seen to fulfil the requirements related to community benefit as expressed in the call for proposals by SADC/GIZ. The project has nonetheless enhanced employment to a limited extent only. Project implementers envisage the recruitment of further staff. At the minimum, 16 guides would be necessary to allow for full operation of the Desert Kayak Trails.

The project is partly effective so far and has created tangible effects in terms of community guide employment (objective 4). If trainings of employed community and lead guides are accomplished (see 2.4), the product can be offered (objective 1) and objective 2 can be reached in the longer run. The long-term objective 3 has been ineffective so far and its achievement is bound to further steps.

3.3 Impact

Since kayak operations have not started yet, potential impacts generated by the Desert Kayak Trails are only anticipated by respondents. Impacts could be created at TFCA, individual and community level as well as between communities.

At **TFCA level**, Namibian and South African park staff has occasionally collaborated in joint management and tourism activities so far. The Desert Kayak Trails has created the first permanent bi-national team in the tourism sector consistent of park management staff and local community members. This extension of cross-

⁴ As a comparison, in 2001, more than 50% of the households in the Richtersveld Municipality (South Africa) earned less than 19,200 ZAR (around 1380 EUR) (Conservation International South Africa, 2005, p. 13).

border collaboration can be considered a further step in the joint management of the TFCA. Besides, generated revenues are planned to be invested into further tourism development (e.g. construction of campsites) and conservation measures. Hence, the project contributes to enhanced TFCA implementation.

Environmental impacts of kayak activities within the TFCA cannot be assessed at present, as operations have not started yet. To prevent potential adverse environmental impacts caused by the activities of the Desert Kayak Trails, the Richtersveld National Park plans to develop an Environmental Management Plan. In the /Ai/Ais Game Park, an Environmental Impact Assessment might be required for the construction of campsites. However, regulations for an assessment of environmental impacts have not yet been examined by the project implementers.

At **individual level**, the Desert Kayak Trails might create substantial positive impacts. According to the river guides, the annual income of approximately 60,000 NAD (around 4,260 EUR) would be used to improve their livelihoods (daily consumption, children's education, health care and insurances, savings for future expenses, support of families and relatives, purchase of assets such as livestock, farmland and electricity).

The project intends to employ only local people which mainly belong to the Nama ethnicity. At individual level, an unintended negative impact by the project was the creation of conflicts between non-local permanent staff of different ethnicities and local staff employed in the parastatal company, Namibian Wildlife Resorts, during the application and training phase. The debate about excluding non-local and including only local people fostered subtle racist attitudes. Tempers were calmed down by project implementers through discussions and an explanation of project objectives.

Though the project is not designed to benefit the whole of **local communities**, project implementers consider the purchase of goods from communities in the park's vicinity. However, feasibility is questioned by community representatives and park staff as communities lack the adequate infrastructure and capacity to deliver requested goods, and are partly located far off the river. The only goods that presumably could be provided to a meaningful extent are meat and wood. The implementing partners further imagine the delivery of services to kayak tourists at the river campsites by local people, including cultural dances and dishes. If additional funding, e.g. by national governments, was granted for the construction of the two missing campsites important for kayak operation, local people could be employed as casual workers. Yet, all in all, future impacts of the project on local communities remain vague.

An additional impact of establishing the kayak trail is the enhanced **cross-border communication between the Bondelzwarts and the Richtersveld Community** through visits of the river guides. The guides pointed out that they gained first impressions and insights into the way of life, the culture and history of the respective community across the border, and have started to explore common family history. The exchange reduces formerly existing misconceptions and prejudice of the guides. Community representatives mentioned the importance of re-establishing social links and the potential of good cross-border communication to prevent future conflicts between communities. Therefore, these first efforts provide a good example to establish cross-border ties.

3.4 Sustainability

This section elaborates on questions pertaining to the sustainability of project outcomes. Joint project activities are based on already existent TFCA management structures (Park Management Committee) providing a good basis for the continuation of the Desert Kayak Trails. Yet, the seven years recurrent compulsory transfer of park managers in both protected areas is critical to TFCA management as well as the sustainability of kayak activities. The success of projects depends on the people involved and how permanently they occupy their positions. Despite the institutionalisation of the project within the joint park management strategy, changes in personnel may jeopardise the continuity of the Desert Kayak Trails (see 3.7.1). To address this problem, the contingency plan of the implementing partners in case of replacing the current project coordinator provides for the employment of a dedicated, possibly local coordinator paid by funds or from revenues generated by the project.

Apart from questions concerning the sustainability of project management staff, questions concerning the sustainability in terms of employment of river guides raise additional uncertainties. In this respect, the delay in starting the first kayak tours caused by failures to deliver the equipment (see 3.6) and to carry out the missing trainings led to resentments among the guides which could prompt them to apply for a different job. Moreover, some kayak guides consider the project merely an opportunity for career advancement, and are consequently not very passionate for kayaking. This might result in a fluctuation of guides. Both, the slow implementation of the project and the missing commitment for the job as such could be to the detriment of project sustainability as investments made in trainings would not benefit the project.

However, commitment of employees is not just influenced by personal preferences and future wishes, but also by working conditions of which several ones re-

main unaddressed in the context of the project. This does especially pertain to the legality of issuing work permits to the South African guides employed by Namibian Wildlife Resorts. The deployment of guides during the off-kayaking season is not yet fixed. The lack of supervision of the guides by the project management is criticised. In addition, the job as a kayak guide is considered dangerous, and the issue of insurance in case of injury has not been addressed to the satisfaction of the guides. Failures to leave unaddressed these working conditions may result in further resentments of the employees possibly challenging project sustainability.

As employment of further guides (around nine) is important to guarantee full operation of the Desert Kayak Trails, project partners seek to employ further committed local staff willing to take over the responsibilities that kayaking entails. Yet, recruitment of local guides is difficult for the following reasons. First, in the Richtersveld, the project may not be able to attract local people as the income a guide presently earns can hardly compete with the wages paid by the mining companies⁵, the major employer. Second, people may be reserved to apply for the job as most of them grown up far from the river are not able to swim. A lack of local job applicants however, may probably result in a project that cannot be called "local" any more as employees may be recruited from other parts of the countries. This is a dilemma which needs to be addressed to ensure long-term success of a project aiming at enhancing local employment.

Financial plans vaguely provide for capacity development in kayaking and customer service and payment of additional staff employed when the project starts generating revenues. The current gross income of the guides is pre-funded by Namibian Wildlife Resorts and will be refunded as soon as the project creates profit. A business plan has merely been developed for the four-day kayak tour. It does only insufficiently include recurrent costs and projects year-round revenues in the calculations, though these would mainly be generated during the peak tourism season. This business plan is rather imprecise and may not suffice to ensure project sustainability. The implementation of the current business plan focusing on four-day kayak tours highly depends upon further funding in order to purchase required equipment such as cars for transportation and construct the campsites at Gamkab and Grootpenseiland (estimated at around 1 m NAD). However, granting of funds, e.g. through the Peace Parks Foundation or the Ministry of Environment and Tourism Namibia, is insecure at the moment, and project implementers have

⁵ Interview respondents mentioned an annual salary of a miner of more than 120,000 ZAR (around 8,690 EUR).

to seek for further sources of funding. Due to inadequate financial planning and financial uncertainties, the project cannot be considered sustainable at present.

Apart from questions pertaining to financial sustainability, the success of the project is also dependent on adapted immigration procedures that allow for the implementation of cross-border tourism. The border post between Namibia (near Rosh Pinah) and South Africa (Sendelingsdrift) allows for immigration of park staff or tourists within the ARTP. Customers kayaking on the Orange River do however necessarily cross the border in the course of the tours at sites along the river without border posts. To ensure compliance to immigration regulations, project implementers need to address this issue. Otherwise the joint project may come under severe pressures.

The sustainability of the Desert Kayak Trails is further dependent upon two recent developments delineated hereinafter. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism Namibia has granted a concession along the south-western stretch of the Orange River within the ARTP to the Bondelzwarts community to develop tourism. This is considered a potential for the Desert Kayak Trails by the implementing partners. First, additional tourist offers could attract more customers to the region which would be also beneficial to the Desert Kayak Trails. Secondly, a tourism operator needs to be found through a tendering process. If the Desert Kayak Trails operators provide a good competitive service offer, they could run kayak tours and would benefit from the cooperation with the Bondelzwarts community. Yet, whether decisions on awarding the tender will be in favour of the Desert Kayak Trails cannot be ensured and consequently future competition on the stretch of the river and loss of an important unique selling point cannot be ruled out.

Currently, there are discussions under way to establish an Integrated Water Resources Management Plan for the Orange-Senqu River Basin. Several interview partners knew about a new flow regime being negotiated. In order to protect the Ramsar site at the river mouth, larger annual fluctuations in the water flow would be required to emulate the natural, originally ephemeral flow regime. This restoration of the natural flow regime would imply higher water levels in summer and lower levels in winter. The extent to which changes in the flow regime are detrimental to kayak operations mainly taking place during the peak tourism season in winter remains unclear so far. Details on the new regime cannot be clarified within the framework of this report, but require further investigation with the regional Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM). The ARTP Joint Management Board is in a good position to do so, as it was identified as a stakeholder in the strategic management planning for the Ramsar site and its task is to "ensure that

the ecotourism uses of the river and conservation objectives are considered and recognised" therein.

The tourism concession for the Bondelzwarts community and the planned change in the flow regime are highly laudable steps towards greater community participation in protected area management and nature conservation, respectively. Yet, the impacts they have on the establishment of the Desert Kayak Trails are currently insufficiently taken into account by the project implementers. Both developments potentially influence the ability of the project to achieve all of its results and if these can be sustained in the long run.

Overall, project sustainability depends upon several internal and external variables. Risks and uncertainties that endanger the success of the project are partly addressed by implementing partners. Yet the project can build upon strengths and potentials which if exploited further contribute to the sustainability of the undertaking.

3.5 Relevance

This section seeks to analyse whether project objectives (see 2.2) and the approach are in line with the given local context, address the problems of the target group and are in harmony with relevant development strategies and policies. The establishment of kayaking activities along the Orange River (objective 1) has already been identified relevant in order to foster eco-tourism development, initially by the Richtersveld Community and later on by the ARTP Joint Management Board and Park Management Committee (see 2 and 1.5). *"By focusing on the unique selling features and activities that are suited to the ARTP it is believed that financial sustainability can be achieved, enabling the continued protection of the biodiversity of the ARTP, as well as the provision of substantial benefit to the Richtersveld Community specifically and broader community generally"*. On the one hand, kayaking as a joint eco-tourism product is assumed to enhance income in the park (objective 2) and thereby promote joint operations of the park management agencies to, among others, conserve the rich biodiversity which is of international importance.

On the other hand, respondents emphasise the relevance of the Desert Kayak Trails to create employment in the region (objective 4) as job opportunities, especially on the Namibia side, are scarce. The project particularly addresses a younger target group including women thereby seeking to reduce the high unemployment among youth and females (see 1.3 and 1.4). The special focus on these groups is in line with the SADC Programme for TFCA. In general, eco-tourism in the ARTP is

supposed to offer potentials for creating livelihood opportunities in the region and aims at enhancing the often poor socio-economic situation of local communities.

On the contrary, the relevance of the project to substantially benefit local populations can be questioned given that most people lack the respective basic skills to work as kayak guides as became evident during the kayaking training phases (see 2.4). In addition, the project may not be appropriate offer attractive jobs for women and hence its relevance to reduce female unemployment is low (see 3.1). Questions remain whether a different project would have better suited for the local context. Project implementers nonetheless hope that the currently approved guides may serve as an example to motivate more local people for the job.

The importance of community beneficiation and participation in tourism development to improve livelihoods and consequently reduce poverty is stressed in the SADC Programme for TFCA. The ARTP Integrated Development plan states that, *"frameworks and strategies through which local communities can participate in, and tangibly benefit from, the management and sustainable use of natural resources"* should be developed. Project objective 3 aims at enhancing the participation of communities in kayak operations up to a certain level. Currently, this only pertains to the local people actually employed as kayak guides. Broader community outreach is yet also limited due to the huge distances to the transfrontier park or the poor infrastructure, respectively.

3.6 Efficiency

The undertaken activities (see 2.4) and purchased equipment form a basic element of product development and thus justify the financial investment. The training of people who hardly had any experience in kayaking before or even feared water is cost intensive. Yet, capacity development is necessary given that the project should be run by local people in future. Resources for product development are hence used appropriately.

On the other hand, the implementing partners pointed out that due to the communication and administration procedure with GIZ, the administration of the financing turned out to be detrimental in terms of efficiency. Since Namibian Wildlife Resorts is a company, the instrument financing agreement could not be used. Instead, a consulting contract was signed to cover trainings, while GIZ Namibia put out a tender for the procurement of fixed assets, i.e. kayaks, trailers, and camping equipment. The implementers reported that it was especially difficult and communication-intensive to advise GIZ Namibia in the procurement process in order to receive the right equipment. Also, GIZ Namibia seemed not to fol-

low-up on the purchase and NWR sent one of its own employees on own account to check the status of the order. Consequently, the equipment was delivered only in September 2014.

3.7 Cooperation

Cross-border development of tourism activities with local community involvement requires cooperation. The following sections elaborate on how stakeholders involved in project planning and implementation cooperate with one another and evaluates the success of this cooperation.

3.7.1 Cooperation among implementing partners

Cooperation within the pilot project is based on the provisions of the joint management strategy. The Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism, SANParks and Namibian Wildlife Resorts all hold an equal stake in the project. Yet, Namibian Wildlife Resorts is in the lead for coordinating the project, employing the guides and being responsible for purchasing the equipment. According to the project implementers, this decision was taken for practical reasons, as SANParks' rules for supply chain management are rather rigid and bureaucratic making the purchase of equipment more complicated. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism in Namibia is responsible for protected area management but not able to run commercial operations.

According to the implementing partners, their cooperation builds upon good personal relationships that facilitate TFCA management as well as the establishment of the Desert Kayak Trails. The project coordinator is said to be an energetic person rich in ideas. The management of the project, among others marketing, procurement, employment of river guides, mainly relies upon him. Project issues are either discussed in regular meetings of the Park Management Committee or via e-mail. All major decisions are taken according to the rules of the committee with a two-thirds majority between all three partners. Nevertheless, continuous information flow among the project implementers and other key personnel involved in the Desert Kayak Trails is partly low, especially during the busy time of preparation for the Desert Knights event and due to the frequent absence of the implementing partners. Personnel who becomes involved in organising project-related activities is apparently not always fully informed about proceedings and procedures to plan and act properly. The lack of communication and information flow partly results in discontent among involved personnel as well as a lack of understanding and transparency concerning project proceedings.

Failures to share information are also the reason why opinions on product design and implementation strategy partly differ between project partners. Since the transfer of the former /Ai/Ais Game Park warden who signed the proposal and initiated the project on the Namibian side, the park warden of the neighbouring Sperrgebiet National Park has taken over management tasks. As acting park manager, he participates in park-to-park meetings and is responsible for the implementation of the eco-tourism product in Namibia. However, since he has not been involved in project planning and implementation from the start, he is not completely informed about the Desert Kayak Trails.

In terms of joint financial administration of revenues generated by the Desert Kayak Trails, the Park Management Committee plans to use a ring-fenced account. This form of financial administration has already proven suitable for depositing and sharing of funds generated by the Desert Knights tourism event. The account is held by Namibian Wildlife Resorts on behalf of all the implementing partners who agree upon the purpose for which funds are spent, and can be considered an appropriate instrument for joint financial appropriation.

Cooperation between implementing partners can generally be considered good at personal and institutional level. However, lacking information flow and change in personnel need to be addressed by implementing partners to ensure that desired outcomes can be achieved and results can be sustained.

3.7.2 Cooperation between implementing partners and other stakeholders

During planning and implementation of the Desert Kayak Trails, project partners have cooperated with other operators running a canoe business along the Orange River and with Boundless Southern Africa, a brand for promoting TFCA in Southern Africa.

The cooperation between the implementing partners and other commercial canoe operators has been supportive. During planning of the Desert Kayak Trails, project implementers consulted canoe operators, i.e. Amanzi Trails and Felix Unite, to gain product and market information. Amanzi Trails and another canoe operator, Gravity, hosted potential river guides for an internship. Furthermore, Amanzi Trails has been involved in the Desert Knights event several times cooperating with the ARTP. Established commercial canoe operators stated that, in general, a good relationship and cooperation between canoe operators were important and professional competition was highly welcome since an operator running a poor business could make a bad name for all.

The cooperation with Boundless Southern Africa is very favourable for marketing the Desert Kayak Trails. Boundless Southern Africa has already been engaged in promoting the Desert Knights event in the ARTP and relationships between the project coordinator and the marketing manager have existed for five years. With the provision of technical support and an elaborated marketing strategy, the Desert Kayak Trails has a professional cooperation partner at its site.

3.7.3 Community participation

Community participation is envisaged in the mission of the ARTP. Yet at present, rather weak forms of community participation are prevalent. The planning of the eco-tourism product involved the passive participation of the Kaptein of the Bondelzwarts community (Namibia) through information sharing. Though community members perceive passive forms of participation adequate, more extensive information on the project should be shared to create stronger affiliations between the communities and the project. In the Richtersveld, community representatives participated interactively during discussions on the establishment of the kayak trail in the joint management committee (RGBK). Yet, as per agreement with SANParks, community representatives of the RGBK are neither involved in day-to-day management of the Richtersveld National Park, nor in operational decisions of the Desert Kayak Trails. It remains unclear to what extent the Richtersveld Community was informed about the Desert Kayak Trails by their representatives. In general, community members criticise that there is insufficient information by the RGBK community representatives concerning park management. On the other hand, residents poorly attend community meetings.⁶ Thus structures for passive community participation in the Richtersveld exist, but are only partly functional. Besides, community members wish to benefit more adequately from the park in general as well as from the project. The ideas of the implementing partners to include the broader community in benefit sharing are in its infancy and only partly elaborated.

As outlined above, planning and implementation of the Desert Kayak Trails through the Park Management Committee was based on an initial idea of the Richtersveld Community and assessments pointing to the profitability of kayak activities along the Orange River. Further planning of the project was however undertaken without any in-depth study concerning the feasibility of community guide involvement. Employment of local people was mainly stimulated through

⁶ Reasons for the poor attendance have not been explored within the framework of this evaluation.

GIZ prescriptions. As a result, the approved river guides benefit from the project through economic participation.

Actually, the implementing partners take a leading role in developing the Desert Kayak Trails. However, taking over the responsibility for project operation (objective 3) entails a strategy for political participation and capacity development. Up to date, guides have been in part consulted on their opinions concerning product features; yet, activities are generally planned without previously obtaining opinions of the river guides. They therefore seek greater involvement in information-sharing and decision-making in project-related activities, which is indeed a prerequisite to create stronger ownership and thus sustainability of the project. Information flow is considered difficult, specifically during the absence of the project coordinator when third persons take over the responsibility to communicate with river guides. Due to a lack of open dialogue with the project implementers, the guides are often unassertive to give their statements or raise their concerns. On the one hand, this may be the result of labour relations and employment hierarchies. On the other hand, relationship building requires time and trust.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

At present, the Desert Kayak Trails is a small-scale project providing employment for seven local guides from the Richtersveld and Karasburg communities. If it runs well, there is potential for future development in terms of increased involvement of community members. The recruitment of further local river guides is already envisaged by the implementing partners. Though the management responsibility of the Desert Kayak Trails will remain with ARTP, a clear long-term strategy to allow for gradually increasing political participation of local guides in the operation of kayak activities is necessary to achieve objective 3. This strategy should give details on the rights and duties concerning project operation. We recommend the implementing partners to negotiate these together with the river guides as this would enhance ownership and sustainability of the project.⁷

To ensure that all actors involved in project planning or implementation support decisions, respective information should be shared timely and appropriately.

⁷ As it is written, project objective 3 pertains to the South African Community only: "*Empower the Richtersveld Community*" (project proposal). Though property rights of the Namibian and South African communities over the individual protected areas differ (the Richtersveld National Park is owned by the Richtersveld Community, the /Ai/Ais Game Park is state-owned), members of the Karasburg community should be granted rights to politically participate within the context of the project.

In case of absence of the project coordinator, a responsible contact person who is properly instructed and familiar with the project should be appointed to guarantee information exchange with employees. In addition, relationship building requires the creation of an atmosphere and structures that allow for open dialogues.

The operation as well as the management of the eco-tourism product requires skills that partly need to be developed first. Already carried out and planned trainings in swimming and kayaking of community guides as well as permanent park staff creates a basis to offer kayak tours. Additional trainings on customer service and knowledge about the environmental features of the ARTP would add a lot to the qualification of river guides and hence to the quality of the tourism product.

The management of a tourism product requires advanced planning and business skills. Especially financial planning of the Desert Kayak Trails has been deficient so far. Project implementers should seek for external business expertise. The employment of a person with expertise in business management or with the potential to develop the respective skills could benefit the project. If the Desert Kayak Trails becomes a viable business, this expertise and probably a full-time management position are necessary.

In the light of increasing recognition of community participation within TFCA of the SADC region, opportunities to economically involve the broader communities of the Richtersveld and Karasburg should be assessed. Additional efforts may be required to enhance the capacity of communities to provide goods or services. Cooperation with communities may also stimulate mutual marketing of the Desert Kayak Trails and the tourism destinations within the communities. Moreover, to establish good cooperation, on-going information exchange with community leaders and representatives concerning project activities is necessary to get support for the project.

We recommend the project implementers to continue organising cross-border community visits. Also, inviting community members for kayak trips on the river could be considered a way to foster exchange and interaction between the TFCA and the communities. Such events could demonstrate the progress of the project to increase support and marketing for it, get people interested in kayaking or establish cross-border community relationships. Moreover, implementing partners should carefully tackle the issue of conflicts unintentionally raised by the project. Reasons for employing only local people as kayak guides must be sensitively explained to non-local staff.

The focus of the eco-tourism product lies on a four-day kayak tour which requires greater logistics and transport. On the contrary, we recommend focusing

on day excursions at the beginning of the project which can be considered more suitable to raise funds insuring the necessary investments. Besides, the kayak team could concentrate on step-by-step development of kayaking skills and customer service, and logistical organisation could be postponed to a later date. Adding to a diversification of the tourism market within the ARTP, synergies between the kayaking and other offers such as mountain biking should further be exploited.

Several risks and uncertainties concerning project planning and implementation have not been sufficiently taken into account (see 3.4). These have to be assessed and clarified as soon as possible. To reduce uncertainties for the project pertaining to changes in water flow regime of the Orange River, the project implementers should either address the ARTP JMB or use contacts within GIZ as the organisation funded the integrated water resource management planning.

During the kayak tours, customers will occasionally cross the border between Namibia and South Africa. To ensure that border crossing at undesignated posts complies with national immigration regulations, the project can apply for visa waivers. These allow tourists to move freely within the TFCA. Regular immigration procedures will then be taken at the border post.

SADC and GIZ should take up the lessons learned on constraining factors from legal frameworks and work towards greater harmonisation on the regional and national level. For ARTP, the most pivotal aspects would be the issue of handling work permits within TFCA and immigration procedures. SADC and GIZ could advocate for issuing exemptions of certain regulations within TFCA, which would not require changing laws nation-wide. As GIZ supports ORASECOM as well, these contacts could be used to inquire further about the planned changes in the flow regime, thus reducing uncertainty for the project.