

## 2015 Submission for African Responsible Tourism Awards: Progressive results as TFPD's "Partnerships with communities to commercialise their tourism assets"



In 2006 Transfrontier Parks Destinations (TFPD) entered the rural tourism market with a 10-bed safari camp in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, employing 5 staff members. By the end of 2015, TFPD will manage 300 beds in remote, community-owned destinations. Their 170 staff members will earn more than R9 million this year. Along with the local economy benefits created by local procurement and additional tourism spend in these remote areas, each rural employee supports their family, often as many as eight people, and benefits other entrepreneurs when spending salaries locally.



TFPD manage and market community-owned destinations in South Africa. As a result, today !Xaus Lodge in the Kgalagadi, Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge in the Drakensberg and the camps of the African Ivory Route are open for business, providing a steady income to both their employees and the benefitting communities. All of these operations were either closed, or receiving no business due to a collapse of the tourism infrastructure, at the time that TFPD took over. Today, a key outcome of TFPD's philosophy is that the ownership of the physical assets of the tourism business (land, building and furnishings) vest with the community owners.



!Xaus Lodge is jointly owned by the Mier and #Khomani San communities, and was built as a result of a land-claim settlement. TFPD designed the operation to maximise employment opportunities, and local procurement of food and services. Today the Lodge has 30 employees and accounts show that during the first seven years of operation the Lodge put R20,4 million of income into the Northern Cape economy above the Orange River.



Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge was about to be closed by Morena Lekunutu Mota (Traditional leader of the Batlokoa, owners of the Lodge) in December 2010 due to a lack of guests. Staff had not been paid for four months at that stage. TFPD stepped in and assisted the Batlokoa owners to leverage funds through NDT's EPW program and with the revamp still in progress, have managed to save all the jobs and now employ 35 people full time. A second phase of renovations will further extend local employment at Witsieshoek in line with TFPD's objective of creating rural employment.



Started by provincial authorities in Limpopo, the African Ivory Route was originally a state-sponsored initiative, aimed at the adventure traveller and designed to create tourism revenue in remote rural areas. 12 Years after first opening TFPD were appointed as management and marketing operators when most of the camps were closed due to severe maintenance issues. In its third year of management, TFPD are now supporting the roll-out of a CESVI-led EU grant to improve environmental sustainability at the camps and in the surrounding communities. Today there are 38 full time staff members with various local community service providers building their businesses to support AIR’s tourist needs.

With contracts already in place, during 2015 TFPD will be opening two new Lodges in Limpopo for the benefit of their local communities. The business plans allow for the employment of 56 new staff members, all of whom will be recruited from the local areas.

By the end of this year, TFPD will be employing over 170 people in sustainable tourism jobs in remote, rural areas of South Africa. The salary bill for the rural staff alone will top R9 million this year. TFPD’s philosophy is to ‘partner with communities to commercialise their tourism assets’. The value these stable tourism assets bring to their community owners goes well beyond employment and the salary bill. Procurement is prioritised for local areas, and micro traders (like crafters) are earning a reliable income-stream from the visitors. Bushman crafters in the Kgalagadi, carpet-weavers in the Drakensberg and community caterers in Northern Limpopo all now have regular markets for their goods and services.

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TFPD won a 2015 African Responsible Tourism Award for ‘Best in Poverty Reduction’ with the following citation: *“The scale and ambition of the Transfrontier Parks Destination’s work is truly remarkable. To actively seek out failing tourism businesses in areas of very high unemployment is very admirable but to them turn them round into viable businesses again employing many locals on a living wage giving them long term stability and income displays true leadership.”*

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TFPD manage and market !Xaus Lodge in the Kgalagadi; Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge in the Maloti Drakensberg; Machampane Wilderness Camp in Mozambique’s Limpopo National Park; and in Limpopo Province - African Ivory Route, Awelani Lodge and Nahakwe Lodge. In addition they are concessionaires for 4x4, walking & canoe safaris in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

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