



bulungulaincubator

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Lessons learned and practical strategies for poverty alleviation in a deep rural environment

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**The Bulungula Incubator is an approved public benefit organisation,
registered in terms of Article 30, section 18A of the ITA No. 58 of 1962.**

Our vision is to be an innovative agent in the creation of vibrant, sustainable rural communities

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1. BACKGROUND

The Bulungula Incubator was formally constituted in 2007 although the work of the founding members of the organisation began in the area in 2002. The organisation is based on the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape in a remote area of the former Transkei 'homeland'. Development in the homelands, especially of the rural areas, was practically non-existent during Apartheid. Little has changed post democracy, and still today basic government services such as roads, clean water and healthcare do not reach many villages. Formal education has always been, and remains largely extremely weak. Our work in the area began with the establishment of the environmentally sustainable, community owned Bulungula Lodge and expanded into the four development areas of the Bulungula Incubator, namely Education, Health and Nutrition, Sustainable Livelihoods and Basic Services.

The organisation was launched in response to the lack of government services in the area. Community development, social inclusion and cohesion and human rights awareness have become an integral part of our work. We strive to create an environment that builds cohesion with government departments and facilitates state involvement in the community where relevant and necessary. Our mission is to achieve our vision of the creation of vibrant and sustainable rural communities by partnering with our community, government, NGO's and other innovative thinkers to find synergies between the traditional rural African lifestyle and culture, and external technologies and innovations. These synergies must always seek to enhance the positive aspects of traditional rural life and/or mitigate the problematic aspects. They must be in accordance with our values and must recognise the fundamental human rights enshrined in our constitution. The Bulungula Incubator further aims to be an influential agent for change by spreading our vision widely and working to inform government and corporate policy.



The Xhora Mouth Area where the Bulungula Incubator is based

The Xhora Mouth Administrative Area, in which we work, is made up of four villages: Nqileni, Folokwe, Mgojweni and Tshezi located in a remote part of the Mbashe Municipality. These four villages have a population of about 6000 people; the StatsSA community survey estimated the Mbashe municipality to have a population of 262 008. This is the poorest municipality of the Amathole District. 96% of households in this municipality have an income of less than R1600/month and 78% of the population is below the poverty line (an increase of 10% in a decade). 75% of the Mbashe population have no access to clean drinking water and 74% of the population have no access to any kind of toilet at all and thus are forced to defecate in bushes near their homes. 72% of the population use firewood for cooking and 79% live in self-built mud brick houses. Our offices are located in Nqileni village, the most remote of the four villages in which we work. Just over half (53.8%) of households have had at least one child die and a third of those have lost more than one child, mostly due to diarrhoea, probably caused by the lack of clean water and sanitation. The Bulungula Incubator was launched in response to this dire situation.



The original Noofisi SP School, the rebuilding of which was the first BI project



The only drinking water in Nqileni Village before the BI was started

2. ALIGNING WITH GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

Since inception, the Bulungula Incubator has strived to build relationships with relevant government departments in all our programmes and projects, with the goal of procuring government support and funding. Thus far we have successfully managed to access funding and support across all our programmes through the government job creation Community Worker Programme (CWP), now run by the Ministry of CoGTA (this programme was originally launched as the Expanded Public Works Programme [EPWP] managed by the Ministry of Public Works). The programme tries to facilitate partnerships and linkages between community needs and government programmes and strategies. Building relationships with government officials and participating in government programmes can develop community cohesion.

The Community Worker Programme is a nationwide government job creation initiative that provides stipends for wages, training and some materials for community-benefiting projects. The budget is divided into provisions for wages (60%) and non-wages (40%) which includes training and materials and can be used to supplement the wages of skilled workers. Initially we accessed funds from the programme for school and road infrastructure repair, fencing of communal grazing land and the removal of alien vegetation and then began to apply them to our Early Childhood Development (ECD) projects. We began our relationship with the CWP at the end of 2010. Since then it has grown and we now facilitate benefits from the government initiative for about 200 community members in four villages. Further details on how we apply the CWP programme to our projects appear in the thematic sections to follow.

Through this programme we are building our relationship with local government structures and we hope to participate in and facilitate community involvement in government planning and

programmes. Through significant effort on our part, we have, in some areas been able to build partnerships with the relevant government officials but there is much room for further improvement and it would be useful if local government authorities were more active in pursuing the development of these relationships.

In the sections below where we detail our work in the four focus areas of the BI, it can be seen that our strategies and plans are aligned to government policy initiatives and plans. In particular, the Community Care Worker model, jointly designed by the Department of Social Development and Department of Health, mirrors our own work in our Health and Nutrition focus area and Early Childhood Development. This has become the cornerstone of our Education programme, echoing the emphasis placed on this aspect of Education in the recently released National Development Plan: Vision 2030 by the National Planning Commission.

3. FOCUS AREA: EDUCATION

3.1 Current Education projects

Within our Education programme, there are 7 main focus areas:

1. Early Childhood Development
2. Support of rural government schools
3. Primary School After School Programme
4. Provision of library facilities
5. Vulindlela Scholarship Programme
6. Parent activism and participation in education
7. Education advocacy, informing government policy

In the most recent Mbashe Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP), it is shown that, within the Amathole District, Mbashe is the municipality with the youngest population (54% under 20 years old), it has a poverty rate of over 90%¹, unemployment of just under 80% and it is the most grant dependent municipality in the Eastern Cape province. The IDP report finds that functional literacy is below 50% and only 9.4% of residents have achieved a matric qualification. Given these statistics and the findings of the recent survey conducted by the Bulungula Incubator of households in our Xhora Mouth Admin Area, where a large percentage of households report that not all children of school going age attend school, the outlook for the area is not good.

Education is a central focus of the integrated rural development strategy of the Bulungula

¹ The definition of poverty is based on Global Insight data which uses the Bureau for Market Research (BMR) Minimum Living Level (MLL) that ranges from R893 for a single person household to R3314 for an eight person household. See “Growth and Development Summit, Amathole District Municipality, 2007

Incubator. Rehabilitation of No-ofisi Senior Primary School in Nqileni Village was the project that prompted the formal incorporation of the NGO in 2007. At that time the only educational facility available was a collapsed wattle and daub structure where little teaching of any kind took place.



Original No-ofisi School in 2007

While working in this area we have found it challenging to mobilise the community to exercise their right to demand quality education for their children. Their expectations of the schools in the area are, understandably, limited to that which they have experienced themselves. Few adults in the area have ever experienced any formal education and those who have, have experienced little different to that of dysfunctional schools like No-ofisi SPS. We then established the Jujurha Education Centre (JEC) in mid 2009 as part of our efforts to demonstrate the delivery of *excellent* education in the area.

Although a few daycare facilities and play centres are dotted around some villages in our area, there are no institutions that offer ECD education. The positive impact of early childhood education is now widely acknowledged: a vast body of research exists to inform societies and educational institutions of its importance. The earliest of life experiences have a direct impact on the development of the brain and future lifelong cognitive ability. The value of early intervention in the lives of all children cannot be overemphasized, yet benefits increase significantly for children living in under-served populations where parents have had little formal education themselves, in environments with limited access to books and educational toys. The JEC addresses this gap with a holistic approach to early childhood education with attention to physical, social, emotional, and mental development.



Jujurha Education Centre Opened in July 2009

The Centre is open to all 3-6 year-olds of Nqileni Village, it offers library facilities for the whole community, support for schools in the area through our After School Enrichment and Rural Schools Outreach programmes and runs regular workshops for parents on topics such as “You are your child's first teacher”. The Parent workshops encourage participation in the education process by teaching parents the importance of toys for learning, making toys from easily accessible and low-cost materials and developing an understanding that learning from birth has an impact on a child's long-term development.

During the process of establishing the Centre, we actively sought to build local skills, sourcing and training employees directly from the community, we created permaculture gardens to supplement a planned nutrition programme, developed appropriate infrastructure in an area with no access to running water, electricity, sanitation or road access infrastructure, we developed a practical curriculum which delivered excellent early childhood education and managed to access government funding to support the set-up and daily running costs of ECD centres.

Since its launch in mid-2009, the JEC has trained five ECD practitioners from the immediate area. These teachers started with no prior experience and no relevant formal qualifications. At the end of 2010, each child in the 5-6 year old class (Grade R) was formally assessed for school readiness by an independent registered psychometrist. All the children were found to be school ready, and some were found to have exceptional ability. The testing process confirmed the quality of the teacher training methods of the JEC in an environment where children come from homes with no books, educational devices, very few, if any, toys and parents who are very likely to be functionally illiterate.

In 2006, when we began developing our plans to assist No-ofisi School, a register of teacher attendance, administered by ourselves, showed a mere 6 days of attendance by any teacher in October of that year. There was no parental response to the situation. After just 2½ years of the delivery of educational excellence at the JEC, the communities of the other 3 villages in the area, Folokwe, Mgojweni and Tshezi, approached the BI to start preschools in their areas. This clearly demonstrated a success of the JEC as a way to develop parent activism for education.

In order to contain costs and enable us to launch the additional preschools within a short space of time, each village agreed to donate 2 huts or provide the materials for 2 classrooms and the BI would apply for funding through the government Community Worker Programme, run by CoGTA, for additional set-up costs and daily running costs. Some set-up costs would be supplemented through private donor funding, where accessible. The first

of these preschools was opened on 1 June this year in Mgojweni Village and the other two will be in operation by early next year.

Budget for monthly running costs for a preschool of 40 children, operating during the full school year, funded entirely by the Government Community Worker Programme (CWP):

WAGES	64.46%
1 x Head Teacher	R 1,900
2 x Teachers	R 1,280
1 x Gardener	R 520
2 x Cook / cleaner	R 1,040
4 x Guards	R 2,080
TOTAL WAGES	R 6,820
NON-WAGE	35.54%
Wage Supplement Teachers	R 1,260
Nutrition Programme	R 2,000
Consumables	R 500
TOTAL NON-WAGE	R 3,760
TOTAL BUDGET	R 10,580

3.2 Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our Education programme

Programme Objective (Education)	<i>Improve access to quality Education for the children of the Xhora Mouth Area</i>
Activities (Education): what we do to achieve the objective	<i>1. Continue to provide excellent ECD education at the Jujurha Preschool for the children of Nqileni Village.</i>
	<i>2. Assist the communities of the 3 surrounding villages to set up ECD centres of their own</i>
	<i>3. Enable the children graduating from the Jujurha Preschool to access funds for further Education through the Vulindlela Scholarship Programme.</i>
	<i>4. Work with the Primary Schools in the Xhora Mouth Area to improve infrastructure facilities, teaching materials and upskill teachers and SGBs.</i>
	<i>5. Provide after-school enrichment facilities for the learners of Noofisi Primary School.</i>
	<i>6. Provide quality library facilities for the community of the Xhora Mouth Area.</i>
	<i>7. Share lessons, experience and knowledge from the Jujurha Education Centre through training potential ECD practitioners in the area, providing onsite training, facilitating formal training, contributing to the national and international movement to prioritise ECD and influence</i>

	<p><i>government policy in this regard.</i></p> <p><i>8. Actively contribute to advocacy for quality education for all and keep rural challenges and issues at the forefront of the development debate.</i></p> <p><i>9. Continue to expand parent and community workshops in 'Parental contribution to a child's education' and stoke activism amongst parents for quality education for all.</i></p>
Outputs (Education): the immediate results we expect after completing the activities	<p><i>1. 60 children receive access to quality ECD education annually at the Jujurha Preschool.</i></p> <p><i>2. An additional 120 children receive ECD education in the 3 surrounding villages as the ECD centres are opened and become operational.</i></p> <p><i>3. 20 ECD practitioners receive formal NQF4 qualifications.</i></p> <p><i>4. 9 ECD practitioners receive onsite training in excellent ECD at the Jujurha Preschool.</i></p> <p><i>5. 3 Head Teachers receive training in Centre management at the Jujurha Preschool.</i></p> <p><i>6. Training provided for SGB's of 4 Primary Schools in the area.</i></p> <p><i>7. 7 children provided with financial means to access good quality primary education through the Vulindlela Scholarship Programme.</i></p> <p><i>8. Minimum of 60 books borrowed weekly by preschool children and an additional 50 books borrowed by school going children and adult community members.</i></p> <p><i>9. All learners from Grade 1 to Grade 6 at No-ofisi SPS have access to the After-School Programme presented at the JEC</i></p>
Outcomes (Education): the changes that we expect as a result of the activities	<p><i>The children of the Xhora Mouth Area access quality education and become role models and advocates for the opportunities that education affords. The parents and community members of the area become active advocates for quality education for all children.</i></p>
Indicators (Education): how we know that these changes are happening	<p><i>The children of the Jujurha Preschool graduate from Grade R as 'school ready'. Government responds to the infrastructural needs of the primary schools, schools are regularly monitored and operate with the requisite complement of teachers to ensure quality schooling. Primary school education in the area provides learners with a solid enough foundation so that the majority are able to proceed to high school.</i></p> <p><i>Library admin system records numbers of books borrowed.</i></p>

3.3 Recommendations for government

3.3.1 Funding

Because the administrative process towards registration and accessing funding for ECD from the Department of Social Development is so onerous and the probability of success so low, being able to access government support through the CWP plugs the gap effectively (for a detailed report on the difficulties experienced by ECD centres with the registration and funding processes see: *Giese S, Budlender D, Berry L, Motlatla S and Zide H (2011): Government funding for early childhood development - can those who need it get it? Ilifa Labantwana, Cape Town*).

While we are not sure whether or not the CWP will be an ongoing government programme, we are using the opportunity to set up ECD centres now so that the government departments of Education and Social Development can then take over, fund and manage them when they have the capacity to do so. Creating an efficient and accessible preschool registration and funding process for preschools is the key to opening the road to the provision of ECD services countrywide.

3.3.2 Public Schools

The primary schools in our area severely lack adequate infrastructure, teacher absenteeism is rife and the low quality of education obvious after any brief interaction with a school going child in the area. With functional literacy in the municipal area below 50%, the situation is dire. Official partnerships with organisations, such as the Bulungula Incubator, in public schools in the area will assist in the improvement of the delivery of quality education. In 2010 and again last year, we approached the Department of Education with a proposal towards the development of such a partnership but there has been no response from the Department, as yet.

While there are many factors contributing to the exacerbation of the problem and the path towards full resolution of the challenges is complex, we offer three suggestions that will make an immediate impact:

1. the installation of digital (biometric) clock-in systems at all schools to accurately and effectively monitor teacher attendance.
2. require all meetings, workshops and training sessions to take place during school holidays (as is the norm in some provinces) and after hours with consideration for lengthy travelling times.

3. the erection of an information board outside all no-fee schools explaining its status as a no-fee school with a telephone number (freecall from cellphones!) that parents can call if teachers turn learners away due to lack of fees, uniforms, stationery etc.

4. FOCUS AREA: HEALTH AND NUTRITION

4.1 Current Health and Nutrition Projects

Within our Health and Nutrition programme, there are 5 main focus areas:

1. Monthly on-site voluntary HIV testing and counselling facilities
2. Community Health workshops: HIV, TB, Hypertension, Diabetes, Health in Pregnancy, Alcoholism
3. Home-based care
4. Community Care Workers and Community Health Points
5. Permaculture gardens, nutrition and eradicating intestinal parasites

The situation regarding healthcare in our area is in crisis with the lack of access to basic and emergency medical care a clear human rights violation. In a community survey conducted by the Bulungula Incubator this year of 437 households, we found that just over half (53.8%) of households have had at least one child die. The village of Mgojweni has the highest percentage of households that have experienced a child death (61%). Broken down further, 26% of households have had one child die, while 29.5% have had more than one child die. The greatest number of child deaths per household was nine, although only one household had had nine children die, and only one had had eight children die. Twelve households had had six children die, however, and several dozen had experienced three child deaths. These child deaths do not appear in Home Affairs records due to the fact that these children normally die before their birth is registered. In effect, it is as if they never existed. The vast majority of childhood deaths occur in the first years, if not months, of life. When asked why these children had died, most people attributed these deaths to diarrhoea. There are no toilets and no access to piped water at all. Our opinion is that these horrendous statistics are indicative of the situation in all unserved rural areas in the former Transkei.

While the area is one of subsistence farming, food security is compromised by the vagaries of the weather with no water available for agriculture. In our community survey we asked: "How often in the past year have you been without enough food to eat?" We asked people to specify "Sometimes, Often, Never, or Rarely." More than half of households report "Often"

and “Sometimes” being short of food.

No village has its own clinic, travelling distances to any kind of healthcare facility involves crossing rivers, walking long distances and waiting for infrequent taxis. There is no access to emergency or ambulance services of any kind. This is a violation of a basic human right with daily life and death consequences.

With the support of the government Community Worker Programme (CWP) and private donor funds, we now run a range of projects in this focus area:

- 2 permaculture gardens supplying the School nutrition schemes at Jujurhra Preschool and No-ofisi Primary School, feeding over 300 children every day with a hot, balanced meal
- Four more community gardens to benefit the elderly, orphans and vulnerable children are being set up
- A regular deworming programme for the children and families of Nqileni Village
- A cataract eye surgery programme
- Home based physiotherapy sessions and wheelchairs for homebound patients with disabilities, significantly improving their mobility and quality of life
- The establishment of a local Health Point, at a site donated by the community, with the medical staff from Madwaleni Hospital, for regular HIV counselling support groups, Anti-retro viral medication distribution, a venue for the bi-weekly mobile clinic and ad hoc workshops and open days in a range of health services including chronic care and ante and post natal services
- A second health point is being built by the community with mud bricks, additional building costs will be sourced from the CWP

4.2 Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our Health and Nutrition programme

Programme Objective (Health&Nutrition)	<i>Improve access to health care facilities and awareness around primary health issues in the Xhora Mouth Community</i>
Activities (Health&Nutrition): what we do to achieve the objective	<i>1. Continue to manage and grow 2 permaculture and organic gardens at the Jujurha Preschool and Noofisi SPS.</i>
	<i>2. Assist the communities of the other 3 villages to establish permaculture and organic gardens at their preschools.</i>
	<i>3. Continue to provide a deworming programme for the children and staff of the Jujurha Preschool and the community members of Nqileni Village.</i>

	<p>4. Expand deworming programme to community members and especially preschool children of the 3 surrounding villages.</p> <p>5. Continue to facilitate the provision of monthly voluntary HIV testing and counselling facilities for the 4 villages of the Xhora Mouth Area.</p> <p>6. Collect and analyse Community Profiling data to inform, guide, monitor and improve on all projects.</p> <p>7. Train 9 Home based care workers in health related skills.</p> <p>8. Continue to support OVC's, the elderly and people with disabilities in our communities.</p> <p>9. Continue to assist all community members with government grants and official document applications.</p> <p>10. Strive to improve government service delivery in the area through advocacy campaigns to ensure the long term sustainability of essential services.</p> <p>11. Continue to build awareness in HIV and health issues and potable water usage and harvesting.</p> <p>12. Quarterly eye-clinics held (doctor availability dependent). Grow the cataract eye-surgery project.</p> <p>13. Manage and improve services provided at the BI set-up Community Health Point servicing the villages of Folokwe and Mgojweni and begin the establishment of a second Community Health Point to service the villages of Nqileni and Tshezi</p>
<p>Outputs (Health&Nutrition): the immediate results we expect after completing the activities</p>	<p>1. 180 children receive hot, nutritious lunches every day of the school year once 4 preschools are operational.</p> <p>2. 250 meals supplemented with fresh vegetables at No-ofisi SPS every day of the school term and a further 650 once all community gardens are operational in the other 3 villages.</p> <p>3. Permaculture community gardens established in 4 villages.</p> <p>4. Deworming programme open to 900 community members of Nqileni Village and expanded to include community members of the 3 other villages.</p> <p>5. 200 people per month attend the HIV Health Awareness Days. 100 people per month participate in the voluntary testing and counselling facilities.</p> <p>6. 500 households profiled in the Community Profiling Project.</p> <p>7. 9 Home Based Care Workers receive training in First Aid, HBC, Caring for people living with HIV, TB and disabilities, Chronic Pain Management and Caring for OVC's and the Elderly.</p> <p>8. Eye-clinic and facilitation of cataract surgery</p>

	<p><i>offered to community members of 4 villages</i></p> <p><i>9. 2 community health points set up to facilitate the distribution of ARV's, HIV counselling, Ante and Post-natal care, mobile clinics, provide basic first aid, management of chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes to all community members of the Xhora Mouth area, about 6000 people</i></p>
Outcomes (Health&Nutrition): the changes that we expect as a result of the activities	<i>1. Reduction in stigma and negative attitudes to people living with HIV and AIDS.</i>
	<i>2. Compliance with HIV, TB and other medication.</i>
	<i>3. Increased presence of government Health professionals in the area.</i>
	<i>4. Reduction in children with chronic worm infestations.</i>
Indicators (Health&Nutrition): how we know that these changes are happening	<i>1. Well attended Health day events (about 200 community members per month).</i>
	<i>2. At least 75 community members make use of voluntary HIV testing and counselling facilities per month.</i>
	<i>3. Follow-up Community Profiling survey data and HBC workers report compliance by community members to medication courses.</i>
	<i>4. Fewer preschool children complain of worm infestations and the problem is reported less on the Community Profiling Surveys.</i>
	<i>5. Community Health Points set up by the BI are used regularly by hospital and clinic staff for training and outreach programmes in the villages.</i>

4.3 Recommendations for government

As with our Education programme, the government funded Community Worker Programme can be used to launch health services that the Department of Health can then take over and manage. The Community Care Worker Management Policy Framework, jointly developed by the Departments of Health and Social Development, usefully outlines the role home based care workers can have towards a community based healthcare strategy. The Bulungula Incubator Health programme is expanding towards including the different aspects of this framework.

One blatant human rights abuse in these deep rural areas is that there is no provision at all of ambulance services. To be clear: it is not that there is a dysfunctional service, there is in fact no budgetary provision for ambulance services to areas with gravel roads. As a result, the poorest communities are forced to hire vehicles at an average cost of R700 to transport sick family members to hospital in emergencies. An immediate intervention required is that 4X4 ambulances must be made available immediately to all remote rural communities. The

easiest way to do this would be to amend the existing contract that the Eastern Cape government has with the company providing ambulance services to the province to include a clause requiring them to service all areas in the province.



5. FOCUS AREA: SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

5.1 Current Sustainable Livelihoods projects

Within our Sustainable Livelihoods programme, there are 4 main focus areas:

1. Ecologically sustainable community based tourism
2. Development of the local economy
3. Development of agri-business
4. Development of a rural skills centre

In a 2007 Amathole District municipality report, unemployment in the Mbashe Municipality was measured at 75.8% (using the expanded definition of unemployment). The household survey conducted by the Bulungula Incubator this year for the Xhora Mouth Area showed that 24.7% of households have a family member working in a migrant labour position mostly on the platinum mines in Gauteng or fruit farms in the Western Cape.

Our region is remarkable for the lack of agricultural activity despite incredibly fertile soils

and abundant unused land. Similar regions in Sri Lanka, Rwanda, India and China would be intensively farmed with strong local economies providing inputs (seed, fertiliser, equipment) and assisting with the selling of goods to outside markets. In the former Transkei, cabbages are “imported” from East London and Kokstad on a daily basis.

When the Bulungula Lodge first opened in 2004, there was no other employment in the area and little informal activity except for a few spaza shops and shebeens. The Bulungula Lodge now provides an income for half the households of Nqileni Village and the Bulungula Incubator for just under 200 people in the four villages of the Xhora Mouth Area. About 60% of the households in the Xhora Mouth Area now receive some income from the Lodge and the Incubator together, either through formal employment or a micro-enterprise opportunity. In Nqileni Village, where the Bulungula Lodge is located, 72.4% of households have at least one family member working in an income generating position.

5.1.1 Ecologically sustainable community-based tourism

The Bulungula Lodge opened its doors to tourists in August 2004. It is 40% owned by the local Nqileni community and 60% by Dave Martin, an investor, who provided all capital and expertise. The lodge was started as a tool to assist with rural development in the area and operates in a number of unique ways:

- all staff members are selected for employment by the local community to ensure that jobs are fairly distributed amongst the different family clans and to the community members most in need.
- 24 of our 25 staff members are from the local community. When the lodge opened no-one had seen computers or TVs and awareness of other technologies was minimal. Today, after intensive training, the lodge is run and managed by members of the local community.
- The lodge is run on eco-sustainability principles: solar power provides all electricity, rain water is harvested, grey-water is processed, water saving technologies are applied, dry compost toilets are used etc.
- The community uses the profits to buy things that benefit the community as a whole: in the past this has included a tractor, a school classroom or a marquee tent for ceremonies.
- The lodge was built using local skills and materials only. No outside builders were used.
- The Bulungula Lodge has won several awards including 2nd place in the 2009 British Travel awards (Ethical Tourism category) and being named one of the World's 25 Ultimate Ethical tourism locations by *The Rough Guide*.

There are a number of reasons why we chose the backpacker/independent traveller market:

- Africa is full of luxury lodges in remote areas. Most of these end up with large fences and beggars at the gates. By targeting a budget tourism sector, the perceived inequality between our community and our guests is low. Our huts are the same as those found in the village and the furnishings are minimal. Similarly, our bar and snack prices are affordable for everyone which ensures that our bar is in no way exclusive.
- Luxury lodges often have strict requirements in terms of employee qualifications which means that local people only get the most menial jobs. At Bulungula Lodge, all but one of the staff members is from our surrounding community.
- A huge part of our focus is the establishment of successful community-owned tourism businesses. These businesses are owned and run by people who have no prior experience in tourism – our experience is that independent (backpacker) travellers are more flexible and constructive in helping these emerging businesses grow without demanding an unrealistic standard of service. What these small businesses lack in terms of “developed world” service standards is outweighed by the freshness and authenticity of the experience. These community-owned tourism businesses have created livelihoods for an additional 30 people in our community.

5.1.2 Development of the local economy

Although community owned, the Bulungula Lodge focusses on the tourist or 'export' market. In 2010 we launched a project to add a further dimension added to our Sustainable Livelihoods programme, focussing on the development of the local economy which was expected to generate a multiplier effect of income and jobs by reducing the outflow of cash to the surrounding towns:

→ The cook at the Bulungula Lodge spends R50 on a hair cut at the 'Hairdressing Microenterprise' → The hairdresser uses this income to buy a skirt from the 'Sewing Microenterprise' → The sewer buys a chicken from the 'Poultry Microenterprise' →

Net Effect: the original R50 earned at the Bulungula Lodge from a tourist has multiplied into R150 worth of goods and services, and thus jobs, within the village.

We found that enterprises which relied exclusively on the local market, such as Hairdressing, a local Photographer, Poultry had a higher chance of success than those which sold to the 'export' market.

It must be noted that these jobs, as with the opportunities created by the government Community Worker programme (CWP), are low income jobs. The unskilled positions in the CWP are for 8 working days a month with total earnings of R520 per month. Micro-enterprises produce a variable income but anything from R500-R1000 per month is considered a successful business. Given that there were no other opportunities for employment at all in the past and the only other access to cash income were social grants, community members consider this a significant improvement in their lives. High and unsustainable government salaries thwart these efforts.



ADVERTISEMENT OF VACANT POSTS: EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

REF. NO. S4/1/2012/03/06

POSITION: 2x General Assistants

DIVISION: Corporate Services

REPORTS TO: Unit Manager: Office Support

GRADE: 3

SALARY SCALE: R106 246 - R133 794 per annum

NOTCH: R106 246p.a

TOTAL PACKAGE: R210 474 inclusive of employer's Medical Aid contribution a maximum of R26 400 pa, housing allowance a maximum of R45 600 pa, 13th cheque and 22% of Employer's contribution to Provident Fund.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS:

- Grade 10-12
- Communication Skills
- General administrative skills

DUTIES:

- Cleaning of the Legislature
- Movement of furniture and equipment
- Office assistance

Advert from the Daily Dispatch (Friday, 27 July 2012 edition) by the EC Provincial Legislature for office assistants with duties that involve cleaning of the legislature and movement of furniture for monthly earnings of R10 000 per month (salary scale: R106 246 – R133 794)

When government salaries for office assistants for jobs that require low skilled work are in the region of R10 000 per month, small micro-enterprise opportunities seem a waste of time. Yet, they have changed lives without creating unrealistic and unsustainable salary scales. At R10 000 a month we could only employ one teacher for every four preschool teachers we currently have. If a cleaner can earn R10,000

per month, we create the perverse incentive for Pre-school teachers to resign and become cleaners. These government salaries are also completely out of line with our emerging economy peers.

5.1.3 Development of agri-business

In addition to building the local economy, we have explored opportunities in agri-business. The local community are traditionally subsistence farmers who own their land through communal land rights. Farming skills can therefore be harnessed to complement subsistence farming with organic cash crops for export. This is small scale and managed within the working day when the staple maize crop and vegetables are farmed. For this project we chose to grow lemongrass, a hardy plant for which there is local demand for good quality, fresh produce. The only other source of fresh quality organic lemongrass is Asia. The market for distilled lemongrass oils has already been successfully captured by Asian farmers but we have an advantage in the logistics of transporting the fresh produce to local buyers. The other successful dimension to the project has been the expansion into the high value beauty products, soaps, bath salts and creams made with the distilled oils that command high profit margins in a niche market.

5.1.4 Development of a rural skills centre

To ensure the ongoing expansion of opportunity through skills development, a new project by the Bulungula Incubator is the set up of a 'Rural Skills Centre' in Nqileni Village. Once again, we have applied funds procured through the government Community Work Programme for the initial set-up, trainer fees and trainee stipends. The centre will teach building techniques using local, natural materials, welding, carpentry, farming, working with water and electricity and other practical skills.

5.2 Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our Sustainable Livelihoods programme

Programme Objective (Sustainable Livelihoods)	<i>Develop the local economy in the Xhora Mouth Area</i>
Activities (Sustainable Livelihoods): what we do to achieve the objective	<i>1. Assist community members to set up 10 different microenterprise businesses.</i>
	<i>2. Assist community members to set up agribusiness and farming cooperatives.</i>
	<i>3. Access government funding through the government Community Work Programme to create employment for community members working across all BI programmes.</i>
Outputs (Sustainable Livelihoods): the immediate results we expect after completing the activities	<i>1. At least 20 community members actively involved in the set-up and management of their own microenterprise businesses.</i>
	<i>2. At least 20 farmers involved in the set-up and management of their own agribusiness enterprises using their own land.</i>
	<i>3. At least 20 farmers participate actively in their own farming cooperative.</i>
	<i>4. 200 Community members receive employment, benefits, training and skills across all BI programmes with funds accessed from the government CWP.</i>
Outcomes (Sustainable Livelihoods): the changes that we expect as a result of the activities	<i>1. Community members use local businesses for products and services – less money leaking out to the towns and cities.</i>
	<i>2. Fewer community members migrate to find work outside of the area.</i>
	<i>3. Microenterprise businesses and agribusinesses operate profitably and sustainably.</i>
	<i>4. The money multiplier of funds in the village being used to buy goods in the area creates further benefits, employment and development for the community.</i>
Indicators (Sustainable Livelihoods): how we know that these changes are happening	<i>1. 10 microenterprise businesses show sustainable annual profits.</i>
	<i>2. 20 farmers of Zizamele Co-op show sustainable annual profits.</i>

	<p><i>3. Follow-up Community Profiling Surveys show a decrease in migratory labour practices, reducing pressure on the urban areas for services and allowing community members the choice of living with their families in their traditional areas.</i></p>
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5.3 Recommendations for Government

5.3.1 Promoting community eco-tourism on the Wild Coast

There has been much debate about the lack of eco-tourism investment on the Wild Coast. As one of the few lodges to have successfully navigated (most of) the bureaucratic nightmares required, we are well aware of where the bottlenecks are. First, without doubt, there are many potential investors who want to engage in eco-friendly, community-based tourism developments on this coast. The primary problem they face is not the lack of roads or other infrastructure, it is the inability to get the provincial department of Rural Development and Land Reform to issue leases as required by legislation. See the appended Mail & Guardian article “The Wild Coast needs a one-stop tourism shop” which calls for the creation of a single office with all the relevant departments (Land Reform, Environment Affairs, Forestry and Municipal liaison officials) represented. Currently potential investors are giving up after years of trying to get the necessary approvals from dysfunctional provincial and municipal offices lacking the most basic administrative systems and few if any approval processes or precedents to follow. A single Wild Coast tourism investment office which would help facilitate all the necessary approvals would speed up tourism development and thus job creation enormously. This could be done in conjunction with an organisation like DBSA.

5.3.2 Reducing red tape for small businesses

5.3.2.1 Single government website portal

One challenge that all small businesses in South Africa face is trying to spend less time dealing with red tape and more time making their businesses more effective and efficient and thus profitable. Some strides have been made, by the South African Revenue Service (SARS) in particular, to simplify the red tape required to be legally compliant, however much more can be done. One fairly easy intervention would be to combine the various disparate government internet portals into one comprehensive portal which would allow a business to fulfil all their regulatory requirements in one place. This portal should combine all of the current portals: e-

filing (SARS), Ufiling (UIF), CIPC (Cipro), Workmen's Compensation Fund (Labour), etc. Currently one has to have separate internet profiles on all these different websites, none of which reference each other thus duplicating work and wasting a lot of time.

5.3.2.2 Grading: an unnecessary barrier to entry for emerging businesses

Worldwide, budget/backpacker tourism has been an entry point for entrepreneurs from poor communities to establish themselves in the hospitality industry. Across the globe one can find successful upmarket hotels and tour companies that started as bamboo and banana-leaf shacks on beautiful beaches in Thailand, Mexico or Brazil. The reason for this is the low barriers to entry to the industry at this level. Minimal capital is required and the rustic nature of the facility is in itself an attraction to more intrepid travellers. In time, money earned is re-invested in the business and standards and profitability improve. South Africa needs to recognise that the current focus on Grading tourism accommodation represents a barrier to entry that will close off opportunities as described above to poor people. Grading is a system that has failed everywhere it has been implemented and is being abandoned in the UK and Australia to be replaced by online customer-review systems (like TripAdvisor.com). We have helped two families to start basic homestay accommodation – the current intentions by government to make grading compulsory would force these small businesses and many others to close.

5.3.2.3 VAT: a disproportionate burden on small tourism businesses

The VAT burden on small tourism businesses is excessive. Due to the lack of deductible input VAT expenses (wages, diesel and local non-VAT registered suppliers make up the bulk of our inputs), small tourism businesses end up paying an effective flat revenue tax of 14% over and above the normal tax on profits. This contrasts with retailers who pay only 14% tax on their Gross Margin (profit) as almost all their inputs are VAT deductible.

As an example. Bulungula Lodge made a loss of R153,000 in 2010 yet paid R105,000 in VAT on total revenues of R1.6 million. While other small service businesses are similarly affected, they do have the benefit of being able to secure corporate customers who require suppliers to be VAT registered (so that they can in turn get an input VAT deduction). Thus other small businesses benefit from extra corporate customers who are only interested in the price excluding VAT. Small tourism businesses don't get corporate customers – they sell only direct to

consumers (tourists). So they don't get any extra business by being VAT registered but must give 14% of their sale price to SARS.

The result of this is that most small tourism businesses either hide some of their cash sales to avoid VAT or divide up their business into a number of smaller businesses (e.g. register three separate businesses for accommodation, restaurant and bar) so that they don't reach the R1 million VAT threshold which would force them to register for VAT. This puts an unfair burden on tax compliant businesses like ours which have to compete on price in a very price-conscious market. In addition, preparing and submitting VAT returns every 2 months is by far the biggest administrative burden for a small business. This problem has been recognised internationally and many countries have a special lower VAT rate for tourism businesses (e.g. Germany, Sweden, Iceland, Switzerland). SARS understandably needs to simplify the tax laws, not complicate them, so the other obvious solution to this problem would be to raise the VAT threshold to, for example, R5 million. This would be a huge boost to tax compliant, small businesses and would hopefully lead to more investment and job creation.

5.3.3 Agribusiness and Micro-enterprise

5.3.3.1 Need for Agricultural Extension offices

Any expansion or replication of our model in developing the local economy or the agri-business opportunities will require the set up of locally based Business and Agri-business Advice Centres. Because entrepreneurial and financial skills are so limited in remote rural areas, these advice centres should have field workers who actively work to assist business owners and farmers, *before* they get into trouble and actively seek out new opportunities for business development and new markets. The advice centres will have to visit the actual businesses and farms, on location and frequently, in order to provide a support safety net which could be necessary for several years.

These extension offices will provide/sell/lend farming equipment, seeds, irrigation equipment, fencing, etc and provides advice on best farming practices and viable new cash crops. The nearest place to us that sells tractors is in Kokstad, KZN, 5 hours away! In India, one can buy a cheap tractor in the neighbouring village and have a borehole drilled by someone in your own village.

5.3.3.2 Correct structuring of Co-operatives

There is a trend in government towards co-operatives as a job creation tool. Our experience has been that these only work where there is a clear link between work and reward. Our province is littered with community vegetable gardens which failed because too few people helped when work was required but everyone was present when the monetary proceeds were distributed. Our preferred co-operative model is one where each individual has their own distinct piece of land and everything produced there is their own. The co-operative members may help each other with labour at harvest time or with buying materials in bulk or problem solving, but the income is not pooled. Thus if a farmer wants to work harder and plant a bigger area or irrigate more regularly then they get increased benefit.

5.3.3.3 Lack of roads a barrier to development

Due to appalling roads, a bakkie taxi charges R800 to transport a load (700kg) of produce the 100km to Mthatha. This makes almost any village produce sold in Mthatha more expensive than the produce from commercial farms in KZN or East London. In Sri Lanka, by comparison, a farmer can transport his 50kg bag of rice on a public bus for R1 to the nearest town. Deep rural people don't know about potential markets in the cities and thus only produce for themselves and perhaps sell to a few neighbours. One way to address this would be to have trucks that operate on a monthly schedule that come into rural villages and pay on the spot for vegetables that would then be sold at the Mthatha fresh produce market. Initially these trucks would probably get very little fresh produce, but in time people would see the opportunity it represented. If well planned, this could be done quite cheaply. For instance, at present, *Mr Bread* sends trucks to virtually every village on a gravel road four times a week and returns empty. A possible arrangement could be that they be contracted to buy fresh produce in each village. The key point here is that small-scale, village agriculture, which employs hundreds of millions in India and China, will never emerge in the rural areas of South Africa if the government doesn't play a facilitating role in getting products to market.

5.3.4 Land Rights

There has been considerable attention recently given to the Communal Land Tenure system with many people criticising it as an impediment to economic growth and blaming it for rural poverty. The argument against the current system is that, should individuals in rural area be given freehold title, they could then mortgage their land and homes to raise capital for productive investment. This argument is based on

experiences in Taiwan, South America and other Asian countries. We strongly disagree with this argument. In our experience, the Communal Land Tenure system is the only system which allows widows and young people, no matter how poor, to get their own piece of land for free – something impossible where there is freehold title. There is no evidence in our area that it is the lack of mortgage finance that is preventing investment – on the contrary, we find that it is the lack of viable business ideas and plans rather than a lack of funds.

Due to complex historical, geographic and demographic reasons, the entrepreneurial culture of Asia and other parts of Africa is not present here. Grant funding (no repayment) and no-interest loans are available but very few viable businesses besides shebeens, taxis and small shops emerge successfully. The risk with changing the land tenure system is that the former Transkei might for the first time see the emergence of landless poor: those who weren't yet born when the freehold title was given away or those who mortgaged their land for current consumption and then had their land repossessed by the banks. The particular threat on the Wild Coast is that poor people living on prime coastal land will sell it cheaply and a version of the Garden Route will develop with rich outsiders living on the coast and the original land owners living in inland townships. Ultimately it would make a mockery of the land reform process if a freehold tenure system led to a repeat of colonial-era practices whereby black South Africans become landless. At this point in time, Communal Land Tenure prevents this from happening.

There may be a time in which to consider individual title deeds but it is not now.

6. FOCUS AREA: BASIC SERVICES

6.1 Current Basic Services projects

Within our Basic Services programme, there are 4 main focus areas:

1. Rain water harvesting
2. Education about water usage
3. Water filters
4. Solar and wind power

Within the Mbashe Municipality, the only access to water for 63.9% of residents is from rivers and streams and 72.4% have no access to any kind of proper sanitation or toilet facility. In the Xhora Mouth Area, when our work began here in 2002, there were no toilets

at all of any kind and only a handful of community members owned a rain water tank. Given that over half of the households have lost at least one child to diarrhoea, the need to resolve this situation without delay is obvious. As with the situation regarding the lack of access to emergency medical care, this situation needs to be elevated to that of crisis management and response.

Since 2007, the Bulungula Incubator has raised funds from private donors, the Community Work Programme and agitated the local municipality into some kind of water provision. Since then, we have protected most natural water springs to limit contamination from animal and human waste, successfully installed 3 boreholes for harvesting ground water, most households in Nqileni Village have at least one rain water tank and the other 3 villages have at least one tank shared amongst 10 households. Education workshops about water usage and harvesting are held monthly at our Community Health events.

While this is a significant improvement in the access to potable water, it is not close to being sufficient. The Bulungula Incubator, in partnership with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), is currently piloting a project to test the use of a new household water filter. The filter, called the Tulip Water filter is cost-effective, filters almost any kind of water and, when used in the Nazava model (with built in water buckets) seems to work very well.



Because there is no access to electricity, we have experimented with wind and solar power. Solar power seems to be the most reliable. Thus far, we have met with local and national authorities on the plans for electricity rollouts and these seem to be years away.

6.2 Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our Basic Services programme

Programme Objective (Basic Services)	<i>Improve access to basic services like water and electricity</i>
Activities (Basic Services): what we do to achieve the objective	<i>1. Establishment of rain water tanks in the 4 villages for rain water harvesting.</i>
	<i>2. Management of borehole water for ground water harvesting.</i>
	<i>3. Monthly training workshops for water usage, harvesting and storage.</i>
	<i>4. Facilitate water filter testing run by the CSIR.</i>
	<i>5. Establish a wind powered battery charging station.</i>
Outputs (Basic Services): the immediate results we expect after completing the activities	<i>1. Reduced child mortality from diarrhoea in follow-up Community Profiling Surveys.</i>
	<i>2. Household survey of water filter usage shows regular use of water filters.</i>
Outcomes (Basic Services): the changes that we expect as a result of the activities	<i>1. Improved understanding of water borne diseases and the importance of water filtration and sterilisation amongst community members.</i>
Indicators (Basic Services): how we know that these changes are happening	<i>1. Follow up Community Profiling Survey shows reduction in child mortality from diarrhoea.</i>

6.3 Recommendations for Government

There are currently activities underway to bring municipal piped water to our areas. We are unsure as to when this will be completed, and once completed, how well the system will run. Because the access to drinking water is a life and death issue, the roll out of the Navaza Water Filters to every household will solve the immediate problem. Currently they are manufactured in Indonesia and sell for about R150. On a large scale the price and transportation issues can be negotiated.

It is important to ensure that all piped water plans include considerations for water provision for irrigation. There is much farming potential in these areas, where the skills already exist and there are implications for nutrition and cash crop opportunities but a reliable water source is crucial.

7. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 *Incentivising service provision in deep rural areas*

One of the reasons for the acute poverty in deep rural areas is that they are often the more difficult areas in which to provide services. When connecting communities to piped water, it is natural that government took the easy wins first: those communities close to cities or major roads (e.g. N2). The problem with this approach is that it leaves the poorest communities until last, exacerbating inequality. Furthermore, the most remote communities are less likely to have transport to hospital, functional clinics, education on safe water hygiene, jobs and income, etc and so they suffer disproportionately if they get sick from not having clean water. In fact, it would make more sense to connect deep rural areas to piped water first. At the moment, the Department of Water Affairs gets equal “credit” for connecting someone in an informal settlement in East London as they would for connecting a resident of a remote village in the Transkei. The incentive is thus to connect whoever is easiest/cheapest to connect first: this will always be more advantaged people in or near cities.

A solution that may resolve the issue would be to introduce a weighting system which incentivises water projects in deep rural areas by giving a triple “credit” for each deep rural person connected to piped water i.e. connecting 35,000 people in deep rural Xhora would be equal to connecting 100,000 people in an urban informal settlement.

7.2 *Rural public transport*

The Department of Transport is in denial about the rural public transport system. By law, it is illegal to transport passengers in the back of a bakkie, yet in rural areas with gravel roads the ONLY form of public transport are bakkies with fibreglass canopies and two wooden benches seating 12 people. Minibuses will not survive the bad roads. These bakkie taxis are members of taxi associations and are run in exactly the same way as normal minibus taxis run. They regularly have accidents and roll over, killing many people. Obviously this is an unsafe form of transport and some solution, other than denying the existence of the problem, is needed. The scale of this problem is enormous: the former Transkei has only four proper tar roads (N2, R61, Coffee Bay road, Willowvale road) and thousands of gravel roads all served by bakkie taxis. Our proposal would be that the taxi recapitalisation scheme be expanded to include bakkie taxis which can be fitted with safe, steel canopies (similar to those used by police vans) and proper seats with seat belts.

7.3 Presidential Hotline

The Presidential hotline is an excellent initiative that, if implemented better, could significantly improve the lives of people living in deep rural areas. One of the biggest causes of the ongoing poverty in these areas is that rural people don't have a voice. In urban and peri-urban areas communities can protest by blocking roads, marching on municipal offices or speaking to the media. In deep rural areas this is not possible as no-one would see if a road was blocked and the municipal offices are 5 hours away on costly public transport.

Furthermore, the failed education system means that few people have family or friends in the media or in government. In our home village, Nqileni, there are only two people who have a government job: at a local school. No-one has family members in the municipality or Bhisho. Some people have family members working in blue collar jobs on the mines and others work as migrant workers on fruit farms. When the community faces a major problem they can only rely on the councillor or the chief who are often far away and are not necessarily very well-connected either. Added to this are the local and provincial governments who sometimes have a vested interest in not letting national government know how bad things are in their areas lest that should hamper career prospects for the officials responsible.

The presidential hotline could have been an excellent way for people from deep rural areas to voice their problems and for these problems to be seen at the highest level. A good hotline would have a Geographic Information System (GIS) system that would quickly begin to note multiple, serious problems coming from a particular area and flag that area as needing special attention. The problem with the current Presidential Hotline is that it is only free from a landline. This is a fatal flaw. There are no landlines at all in rural areas or in many townships. This means that only relatively wealthy people with their own landlines can phone for free. The poor must pay R2/minute to phone the Hotline where they may be on hold for 20 minutes! The Hotline therefore excludes the very poor! Clearly, the Presidential Hotline must become a free call from a cell phone. And that should apply to all government 0800 help lines. At present, all 0800 numbers are charged at normal cellphone rates from a cellphone.

8. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Bulungula Lodge was started with the personal savings of Dave Martin, about R800,000. In 2007 when we launched the Bulungula Incubator, we sent out an appeal to all previous guests of the Bulungula Lodge. We collected about R250,000 which was used to establish the organisation and begin our first project to rehabilitate No-ofisi Senior Primary School. From that start, the organisational budget grew along with our projects: including the government stipends paid directly to community workers, the annual budget managed by the Bulungula Incubator is now about R4 million annually. In addition to the funding received through the government Community Worker Programme, our funds are raised through a range of foundations, corporates and private individuals, including: The Old Mutual Foundation, The Deutsche Bank Foundation, DG Murray Trust, UEND Foundation, Rotary, Solon Foundation, Transnet, Raith Foundation, Ford Foundation, Homechoice, Breadline Africa, Greater Good South Africa, amongst others.

Because we work in a very poor community, on projects that provide basic services, it is important to forge partnerships in our work across government, philanthropic and private sector entities. We look for opportunities where private entities are able to assist in the setup of projects and programmes, provide training, infrastructure, materials and government is then able to ensure longer term financial longevity and support.

9. SUSTAINABILITY

For the long term and for emergencies, we have been actively building the organisation's sustainability fund. These are organisational savings that can be used in the case of any retrenchments due to projects having to terminate prematurely for funding or other reasons. However, the main reason for building this fund is for the community to develop a sense of financial independence from donor funding. The sustainability fund is grown with donations that are unallocated to specific projects (these are mostly from private individuals), interest earned and own income generated. In addition to developing a measure of financial freedom, all our projects, except the micro-enterprises, should eventually become government funded. Working with relevant government departments and accessing government funds is an important focus of our work. Already, core and project specific operations in all our programmatic areas are partly supported and are growing through the accessing of funds from government's Community Work Programme.

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APPENDIX

“Wild Coast Needs a One Stop Shop”

By: David Martin, Article in the Mail & Guardian Online 17 September 2008

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Throughout the storm surrounding the controversial mine approved at Xolobeni on the Wild Coast, the statement that “ecotourism has failed on the Wild Coast” has repeatedly been stated.

Bulungula Lodge is, apparently, the only lodge to be “approved” officially since 1994 on the Wild Coast and as such, our experiences are relevant to this debate.

The Wild Coast is potentially one of the world’s greatest community-based, ecotourism destinations. Nothing compares with this spectacular coast inhabited by vibrant, traditional communities of amaBomvana, amaMpondomise and many others living simple rural lives in harmony with their environment. Mud huts on rolling green hills overlooking jagged cliffs and pristine beaches frequented by cows and the occasional eland, endless lagoons and forests add up to one of South Africa’s most striking and marketable vistas.

But make no mistake, although it may seem a rural paradise on the surface, these communities are in the middle of a dehumanising poverty crisis. It has been my great privilege to become part of a traditional amaBomvana community and to experience the joy of a strong, supportive community where everyone knows everyone and everyone’s cousin’s children.

Here ubuntu is not discussed by intellectuals, it is lived. But as a member of this community I cannot ignore the reality that last year in just three months we buried six babies who died from diarrhoea.

The communities of the Wild Coast drink from polluted waterholes shared with dogs and livestock, there are no toilets, clinics are rare, ambulances don’t exist and schools are mostly diabolical.

There is nothing romantic about being trapped in a hut with a pregnant wife having a cystercicosis-induced epileptic fit without any medical help.

In this context what are the prospects for sustainable development on the Wild Coast?

Sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The Wild Coast clearly needs urgent intervention to address the appalling poverty in the region.

Most of the problems listed above would be addressed by effective service delivery and this should be made an urgent priority. But when it comes to the creation of sustainable jobs, it’s government’s role to create an enabling environment for the private sector to create wealth.

When looking at the Wild Coast there are two industries that stand out as having potential for sustainable development: agriculture and tourism. I believe Bulungula Lodge’s story will give insight into the reasons tourism has apparently failed to deliver.

Bulungula Lodge is a community-based eco-lodge owned jointly by the community of Nqileni village (40%) and myself, a private investor (60%). The lodge was built with capital of R800 000 and has created 20 permanent jobs in a community where there was previously 100% unemployment. The lodge has also facilitated the creation of 13 community-owned tourism businesses that provide services ranging from massages to fresh vegetables to forest tours with the herbalist. In total these small businesses have created another 23 jobs bringing the total employment generated by this entire project to 43 long-term jobs.

In addition to the community’s share, lodge profits have been used to build a classroom at the local school which collapsed years ago.

The culture of Bulungula Lodge is an open one—there are no fences, keys or locks here. Community members are welcome in the restaurant and bar at any time of the day or night and it is this cooperative environment that has resulted in crime being non-existent here. The unique atmosphere has resulted in Bulungula receiving many accolades, including being named by the UK’s *Guardian* as one of the World’s Top 10 Fair Trade destinations, as well as being named by the prestigious *Rough Guide* as one of the world’s top 25 Ultimate Ethical Travel Experiences.

But to understand why the Wild Coast is not teeming with similar community-based lodges, it is necessary to understand the tortuous process required to have the lodge approved.

In December 2002 the community of Nqileni village and I discussed and agreed on the establishment of a community-based eco-lodge as a joint venture. A proposal was produced and presented, using the Eastern Cape government’s Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy as a blueprint and working in partnership with the provincial departments of environmental affairs and land affairs.

After completing the necessary environmental report, permission was swiftly obtained from the department of environmental affairs. The difficult part was getting the necessary lease issued by the department of land affairs.

It is important to note that this department is run by a number of overworked, under-resourced people who are mostly operating within a procedural vacuum. As a lease had at that stage not been issued on the Wild Coast there was no precedent to follow.

This resulted in a ridiculously complicated process which invariably resulted in officials trying to pass the responsibility upwards to officials with greater authority.

Finally, in March 2004, an interim lease (the first apparently) was granted, which was to be used during the building of Bulungula Lodge while we waited for the long lease (30 years)

7/31/12

Wild Coast needs a one-stop tourism shop - Mail & Guardian Online

to be signed by the national minister of land affairs within six months. This long lease application then proceeded on a bizarre, convoluted journey between various offices within the department of land affairs in Pretoria for two years, after which the folder was lost in mid-2007.

For the past 18 months the DLA has been unable to locate the folder nor get a photocopy of the duplicate folder held in the provincial office. Thus the entire lodge currently operates on the basis of an interim lease that could be revoked at any time.

There have been dozens of similar attempts by investors wanting to start ecotourism businesses in partnership with local communities on the Wild Coast, but all have failed to escape the administrative maze required to have their projects approved. It is not that these projects were rejected for being inappropriate, but rather that the whole process of applying for permission took so long that the investors simply gave up.

So what is the solution? It is critical that the provincial government create a Wild Coast Investment "one-stop-shop" where potential investors can submit their applications to be assessed by officials from all of the relevant departments.

A sensible approval process must be created in line with the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy that has realistic and acceptable time scales. This office will need to be well resourced with skills and money to assess correctly and speedily the viability of proposed projects.

In addition this office should pro-actively identify and finalise leases for, say, 10 sites prior to inviting investors to tender bids to be the private-sector partner for the local communities.

Ultimately, it is time to face up to the absurd reality that it is easier to get permission to strip-mine pristine coastline and in the process destroy a people's way of life than to get permission to build a community-based lodge that would create the desperately needed employment while keeping both the people's land and their culture mostly in tact.

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