



## NAMIBIA

# Increased prosperity for people living in conservancies through wildlife

**WWF Namibia and Scandinavian tour operator Jambo Tours are working together to generate income for the local population through increased tourism to the Namibian nature conservancies. The partnership is expected to protect wildlife, generate income locally and contribute to environmental investments such as solar energy.**

Grootberg Lodge is owned by the Khoadi Hoas Conservancy and is situated in an area of natural beauty on the edge of the Etendeka plateau in Namibia. Within the conservancies, membership-based cooperatives have been established. Hilga Gawases is the manager of the Khoadi Hoas Conservancy. She has been involved in developing the area so that its natural resources and animal life are used in a sustainable way, while also increasing job opportunities. Of the employees at Grootberg Lodge, 95 per cent are from the area, meaning that employees and their families can continue to live in their villages.

“Previously, there was not that much wildlife. Previously most of the community farmers were themselves poachers. We hunted to eat,” explains Hilga Gawases, manager of the Khoadi Hoas Conservancy.

Namibia’s conservancies have a rich wildlife in a spectacular environment that could attract many visitors from Sweden. The national branch of the WWF in Namibia actively sought a Swedish partner to strengthen its objective of preserving these environments. Kent Wallstedt, CEO of Swedish Jambo Tours, considers the partnership a natural part of the company’s operations.



“Game numbers have increased – and as the wildlife becomes more plentiful, people grow more aware of the conservation concept,” says Hilga Gawases, manager of the Khoadi Hoas Conservancy.

“By visiting Namibia, our travellers generate job opportunities. The tourists want to see the animals and the local population wants to preserve wildlife so that visitors continue to come. For me, this is very much a win-win situation,” he says.

Lodge employees are able to obtain an education and make a career. Charl van Taarsveld is the new general manager at Grootberg Lodge and would like to improve the employees’ own skills and knowledge. He explains that the game trackers at the lodge have herded their families’ livestock since they were children.

“To learn from these guys, their field and bush knowledge, their tracking capabilities, is absolutely immense,” he says.

“In the bush we learn many things like the natural marks found on rhinos and the footprints which are like an ID. You need to identify a rhino just by looking at its tracks,” explains rhino tracker Immanuel Arebeb.

Over recent years, Hilga Gawases has observed how the residents of the conservancies have come to view themselves as “conservers”.

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When tourism activities perform well, the surplus from the lodge is transferred back to the members of the cooperative. This often ben-



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PHOTO: CARL MYRÉN

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/KENT WALLSTEDT

efits an entire village or area, through the allocation of livestock, school fees, childcare or medical care. Jambo Tours has also invested in solar energy at Grootberg Lodge. Kent Wallstedt points out that his sector demands sustainability – and it insists they accept responsibility when bringing people into new environments.

“If we do not accept that responsibility, we will not be able to mediate the experiences we would like to in the future, because the animals will have gone. We make active investments entirely because of self-preservation,” he says.

And the WWF? “Well, the conservancy model is a major success,” says Patricia Skyer who is responsible for the programme at the WWF in Namibia. Representatives from more than 20 countries have visited Namibia to learn how the model works.

## THE FACTS

### PARTNERS

WWF Namibia and Jambo Tours (a Scandinavian tour operator).

### COST

9,240,491 SEK

### SIDA CONTRIBUTION

5,306,491 SEK

### PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

3,934,000 SEK

### TIMEFRAME

2012–2013

### RESULTS

■ Seventeen conservancies (personnel and committees) have undergone basic training in business administration, including budgeting, financial planning and accounting, while the Scandinavian tour operator sells Namibia’s conservancies as travel destinations and, together with WWF Namibia, develops environmental funds for tourists to contribute to locally in the conservancies, such as for funding the use of solar cells[i].

■ The use of solar cells at the local tourist facilities (lodges) has increased and the use of fossil fuels (for diesel-powered electricity generators) has decreased. WWF Namibia has supported the work by providing feasibility studies and investment analysis (assessment data) for investing in solar cells at the lodges.

■ A process and modelling have been developed for the implementation of audits of the local conservancy boards to safeguard transparency in the finances of the conservancies and to ensure that part of the income reaches the individual members of the conservancies.