



PRESENTATION BY SIBONGILE MTUNGWA

TRANSFORMATION OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. Introduction

I work for the **Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Project** which is a Conservation and Development initiative between South Africa and Lesotho. One of its aims is to develop tourism in the Transfrontier area. A tourism book which aims at selling the Transfrontier tourism products is about to be published. The biggest challenge that has been identified by MDTP is Marketing and Product Diversification. I work with three communities in KwaSani Municipality to develop a Land Use Management Plan to help them decide how they want to utilize their land. Although most communities still value nature, there is a pressure from developers and the people themselves to exploit the land unsustainably. This is very short-sighted. It is necessary to protect natural areas so that rural communities can benefit from tourism by sharing with visitors their natural environment, cultures and crafts. Tourism can provide livelihoods in areas where agricultural land has been degraded and cannot support families any more.

MDTP is funding the training for six people in Introduction to Tourism. MDTP is phasing out at the end of 2007 and handing over to the Municipalities and KZN Wildlife. The funding of projects in the future is uncertain.

2. Who benefits from the Tourism Industry?

The big challenge in the Southern Berg, KwaSani Municipality, is **to assist the Historically Disadvantaged to move beyond being employed in the lower levels of the tourism industry to become owners of tourism businesses.** The KwaSani area is one of the prime destinations of both South Africans and international tourists because of its natural beauty, and the Ukhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site. Eco-tourism related jobs include rock art and mountain guiding, bird guiding to see rare birds, 4x4 trips up the dangerous steep Sani Pass into Lesotho, adventure tourism including rock and ice climbing and white water rafting. Special events bring thousands of visitors and their supporters to canoe and mountain bike races, horse trials, polo tournaments, road races up the Sani Pass (the "Sani Stagger"), trout fishing competitions, and the Splashy Fen music festival.

To cater for these visitors there are 110 accommodation establishments offering 3 269 beds. Most of the establishments are B&Bs. During peak holiday periods and events like canoe and bike races there is a shortage of accommodation and this is a niche that communities could fill if they were trained and financed to run B&Bs that met SA Tourism standards. The only Zulu-owned B&B in the

area burnt down in a veld fire in 2004. The rondavels have still not been rebuilt because the KwaSani Municipality did not assist the family.

3. A Case Study: Reichenau Mission

Reichenau Mission near Underberg is a potential tourism hotspot in our area that could benefit many of the approximately one thousand Zulu people living in its vicinity. This Roman Catholic mission was established by German and Austrian Trappist monks in 1886. It was the second Trappist mission after Mariannahill, near Durban. The founder Abbot Francis Pfanner was asked by Inkosi Sakayedwa Duma to come to the Underberg area and establish a school for his people. The Trappists bought the land from Inkosi Duma and built a beautiful self-supporting village with school, butchery, bakery, farm, church, mill and forge. Both Duma and Pfanner were men of vision and their stories and the places associated with them, are fascinating to tourists.

I have been involved in the development of Reichenau Eco Tourism for the past few years. The NGO I worked for until last year, Women's Leadership and Training Programme, established four groups to take advantage of the tourism potential at Reichenau, Catering and Hospitality, Reichenau and Rock Art Tour Guides, Ikhwezi Crafts and Bird Guides.

A Lack of Tourism Understanding and Vision

Rural groups face many challenges in trying to understand tourism and to take advantage of the opportunities opening up for them:

1. They have **no personal experience of being tourists** besides visiting relatives in other areas for weddings, funerals and shopping.
2. They have had very little interaction with people of other local cultures let alone people from exotic places like Tokyo, Sao Paulo, Los Angeles or Munich. It is important to build relationships with visitors but most of the people in the Reichenau Eco-Tourism businesses miss this point. **They lack basic skills like an understanding of Geography and where people come from.** It is difficult for them to engage in friendly conversation with the tourists about the places they come from and **their** cultures. Opportunities to grow in mutual understanding and respect are missed.
3. They live on a subsistence level at home and for that reason **they find the concept of giving good service with a smile difficult.** Despite the importance of "ubuntu" in Zulu culture, it was difficult for the Catering group to apply this to their tourists whom they felt owed them a living. On some occasions they offered half a service and were angry when tourists refused full payment.
4. The Tour Guides took **a long time to understand that they have simple things to offer tourists like aspects of their Zulu culture,** their music, their

crafts, their way of life, the architecture of their homesteads. On one occasion a group of Norwegian visitors and was shown around by the Zulu guides. The Norwegians were musicians and both groups sang songs to each other. One of the Norwegian men was moved to tears by the beauty of the traditional Zulu music.

5. Ikhwezi Craft Group finds it **difficult to be flexible in adapting products to the demands and the fashions of the tourist market**. The members live in an area where craft grass grows prolifically along the rivers and in the wetlands, but only one member can make the high quality grass work that is in demand while others continue to make beads that are not the tourists' priority

6. **Lack of experience and lack of capital is another stumbling block**. One newly struggling business is birding. There are four trained bird guides but they lack capital to develop their business and enter into partnerships with experienced people. They registered with Umsobomvu and have a business plan. A very experienced birder in the area could form a partnership with them, but he would **only consider** that if they were more competent. That gap needs to be bridged but it takes time and money which is not available.

4. The Potential of BEE Partnerships

❖ Hands on training to sustain businesses.

To run a business, a level of skill is needed. The groups I have been associated with have attended many courses on business and financial management, catering and marketing, but they still struggle to run successful businesses. **The ingredient that is missing is someone with tourism experience to guide them and ensure quality control. What they need is hands-on training and mentoring. This need could be met by a full-time training team that is based in our region, not in Durban.**

This team could help new businesses find and develop BEE partnerships. This requires work with the present tourism owners as well as with the prospective Black partners. They need encouragement and support to make the move from poorly-paid employment, what many seem comfortable with, to being owners.

❖ Developing Cultural Tourism. This is highly underdeveloped in KwaSani but it is the aspect of tourism that is sought after by visitors who like to experience how people live. Families need funds to build accommodation that would meet the standards of a registered B&B. This would include overcoming water and sanitation problems.

5. Conclusion

Tourism in our area needs a lot of transformation including a large injection of funds and expertise before all levels of society benefit equally from it. At present the ownership is totally in the hands of a minority. There is no BEE tourism business that I am aware of.