

TO DO! 2005
Contest Socially Responsible Tourism

Award Winner

KUVONA CULTURAL TOURS
Socially Responsible Tourism in South Africa

represented by:

Mr. Abel Baloyi,
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Elim, Provinz Limpopo,
South Africa

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Rationale for the Award

by

Dr. Hermann Warth

1. INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung) the author travelled to Elim, Ribolla District, Limpopo Province in South Africa, during the period from 17 to 23 November 2005, in order to assess on location the contest entry of KUVONA CULTURAL TOURS. This project was developed together with SKR, Studien Kontakt Reisen from Bonn, Germany, five years ago. Following its successful trial run in practice, it was submitted to the TO DO! 2005 contest.

The assessor recommends that KUVONA CULTURAL TOURS be awarded a TO DO! prize during the ITB 2006, in appreciation of the objectives, the concept and the realisation of its measures. Particular mention should be made of the role of the tour operator SKR, Studien Kontakt Reisen, Bonn, which has supported the regional development programme of KUVONA CULTURAL TOURS from the very beginning, and offers the trip to the region on the German market under the heading "Gesichter Südafrikas" ("*South Africa's Faces*").

2. GENERAL CONDITIONS

The Republic of South Africa has a large potential for tourism. The revenue from tourism grew strongly in the past few years and amounted to US \$ 5.2 billion in 2003. Tourism thus contributed 3.3% to the gross national product (GNP). During the period of Apartheid, South Africa's tourism was concentrated mainly in a few "hot spots", with an insignificant impact on the broader economy. The Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism worked on a national tourism strategy from 1994 through 2000. The "Reconstruction and Development" Programme also includes conceptual guidelines for "responsible tourism". According to the guideline, tourism should be shaped in a manner that achieves sustainable effects in the economic, ecological and social fields. "In essence, our approach is that tourism should be government-led, private-sector driven, community-based, people-centred and labour-dependent."

In the following, a few measures that were realized by the authorities as a result of the programme:

- South Africans are encouraged to travel in their own country and to create jobs and income for the local population (e.g. with the TV-campaign "South Africa to South Africans").
- The tourism issue is currently given strong emphasis in the lower secondary schools in order to educate and train qualified workers for the tourism industry and to promote awareness for the significance of tourism.
- An inventory list was created in order to obtain data on the status of the "Black Economic Empowerment" (BEE) in the tourism sector. The list included questions such as: ownership of the businesses, amount of investment, respectively, management and control of the companies, educational level of employees.
- The strict separation of the natural parks / sanctuaries from the local population is being relaxed. In these areas, temporary and long-term workplaces are to be created for the conservation of the parks and sanctuaries.
- Efforts are being expanded to complement the "Hot Spot Tourism" (i.e. Table Mountain, Diamond Mines, Kruger National Park, etc.) and to support provinces and communes in the development of route travel offers, which involve all population groups in the tourism industry and achieve a broad impact, such as for example the "Shebeen Tour" through Soweto, the "Jazz Route", the "Ivory Route", the "Ribolla Open Africa Route" and others.

Poverty alleviation through tourism is a goal of South Africa's government, which it seems to pursue with emphasis. However, there is a lack of educational training programmes and opportunities in tourism, especially for black South Africans.

The activities of KUVONA CULTURAL TOURS are based in the District of Rimbolla (district capital Makhado, former Louis Trichardt) in the Limpopo Province.

The Limpopo Province lies in the outermost northeast of the country (the capital is Polokwane, former Pietersburg). This province is among the poorer regions with a high illiteracy rate of the adult population and a high level of unemployment. In particular, it is home of the Shangaan and Venda tribes, with their rich and active cultural heritage, which is manifested in legends, stories, dances, music, in traditional medicine and craftsmanship. In general, the people still know where they belong and are not plagued by any doubts regarding their identity.

The potential for tourism in this region has been explored systematically only in the last few years comprising savannah, scrub land, sandstone ridges, and up to 1700-metre-high mountains and mountain ranges. In addition, it has a large number of lakes, rivers and canyons. Such a terrain offers a multitude of opportunities for tourism activity, which the tourism industry is making increasing use of. The diverse wildlife, particularly in Kruger National Park and other nature reserves is of outstanding beauty.

3. PROJECT KUVONA CULTURAL TOURS

KUVONA CULTURAL TOURS (in the local language "Kuvona" means "see, understand") is actually considered to be an incoming agency / tour operator in the legal sense and is registered with the central government as a closed corporation. However, the actual work comprises more than this. KUVONA strives to bring tourists to the north of the Limpopo Province, to show them the culture of the Venda and Shangaan tribes, to implement a "soft tourism" in partnership with the local communities, as well as to educate and train tourism personnel and to create manifold employment opportunities. From 1995 to 2000, structures were developed, and artists and craftsmen, as well as key institutions and individuals in tourism, were identified. The tourism potential carried by the communities was analysed and a lot of personnel was trained. Currently about 80% of KUVONA's activities take place exclusively in the Limpopo Province. However, the enterprise also uses the potential of the Ivory Route and Kruger National Park, and takes groups of tourists into Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia. Generally, travellers of the tour operator SKR make use of these offers. A smaller share of the customers is comprised of individual tourists or come from other tour operators.

3.1 History of the Project

In 1998, the white South Africans Eric (father) and Paul (son) Girardin, who at the time were owners and operators of the SHILUVARI LAKESIDE LODGE in Elim, recognised that they did not work profitably. A "high volume - low income" situation existed. This is how the plan to establish a business branch and to actively engage in professional marketing was developed. In 1999, the first partnership agreement was concluded with SKR, Studien Kontakt Reisen in Germany, which had already worked with the Lodge prior to that time. SKR announced its intention to cooperate on a long-term basis. This in particular gave Paul Girardin the courage to finally implement his ideas in the form of a new enterprise called KUVONA CULTURAL TOURS.

The work of KUVONA is supported by a network that has continuously developed in the past ten years. Locally, the main members of the network are the SHILUVARI LAKESIDE LODGE and the tourism organisation RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION (RTA).

The unofficial name "Kuvona Cultural Association" is occasionally used as a collective name for all three organisations. Within their abilities, the three enterprises together contribute to the development of the region with the help of tourism. In the source countries of the travellers, the tour operator Studien Kontakt Reisen (SKR) in Bonn, Germany, with its two-week journey "Gesichter Südafrikas" ("*South Africa's Faces*") is responsible for a large share of the success of KUVONA's tourism programmes. The entry of the tour operator into the unknown region enabled establishing the first successful tour already in the year 2000. In 2005, 101 tourists with a total of 14 travel groups visited the programmes of KUVONA; 72 travellers from Germany came through SKR. For 2006, the programme has already been booked by 210 tourists in 22 groups.

From the very start, the Girardin family acted as a catalyst in the development on site. Paul and Michel Girardin are fluent in the language of the indigenous people. Furthermore, both went through highly qualified tourism training.

SHILUVARI LAKESIDE LODGE

Eric Girardin and his son Paul Girardin founded the "SHILUVARI LAKESIDE LODGE" in Elim at the Albasini reservoir as early as 1995. In the local language SHILUVARI means "wild pear". It is also registered with the central government as a closed corporation, and offers lodging for 28 people. The lodge was built by unskilled local craftsmen. Concurrent to this, from the very beginning, Eric Girardin supported an 'Artist Association' (wood carvers, potters and embroiderers) in Elim and the surrounding area, and brought tourists in contact with the association. The lodge was used mainly by the guests of the tour "Gesichter Südafrikas" ("*South Africa's Faces*"), which is offered through Studien Kontakt Reisen. In 1997, Eric Girardin climbed the approximately 1100 metre-high Ribolla Mountain. In the local language "Ribolla" means "bee stinger". Overwhelmed by the panorama of the vast landscape with the villages embedded in it, he developed the idea of a working community for the region, into which the indigenous population should be firmly integrated. Subsequently, the 'Artist Association' was renamed into the "RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION".

RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION (RTA)

RTA was registered as a non-profit organisation in Polokwane (Pietersburg). In the meantime RTA has over 200 members. Unfortunately, only 55 members pay their annual fees. The annual fees are ranked according to different categories: enterprises, such as lodges and hotels pay 500 Rand (100 Rand correspond to about € 13.80), artisan groups pay 300 Rand and an additional 10 Rand per group member, drummer and dance groups pay 100 Rand, and individual persons also pay 100 Rand. In addition, certain percentages of the proceeds of the RTA tour guides and the sale of handicraft products are paid into the account of the Association. There were also regular contributions from different institutions and individuals.

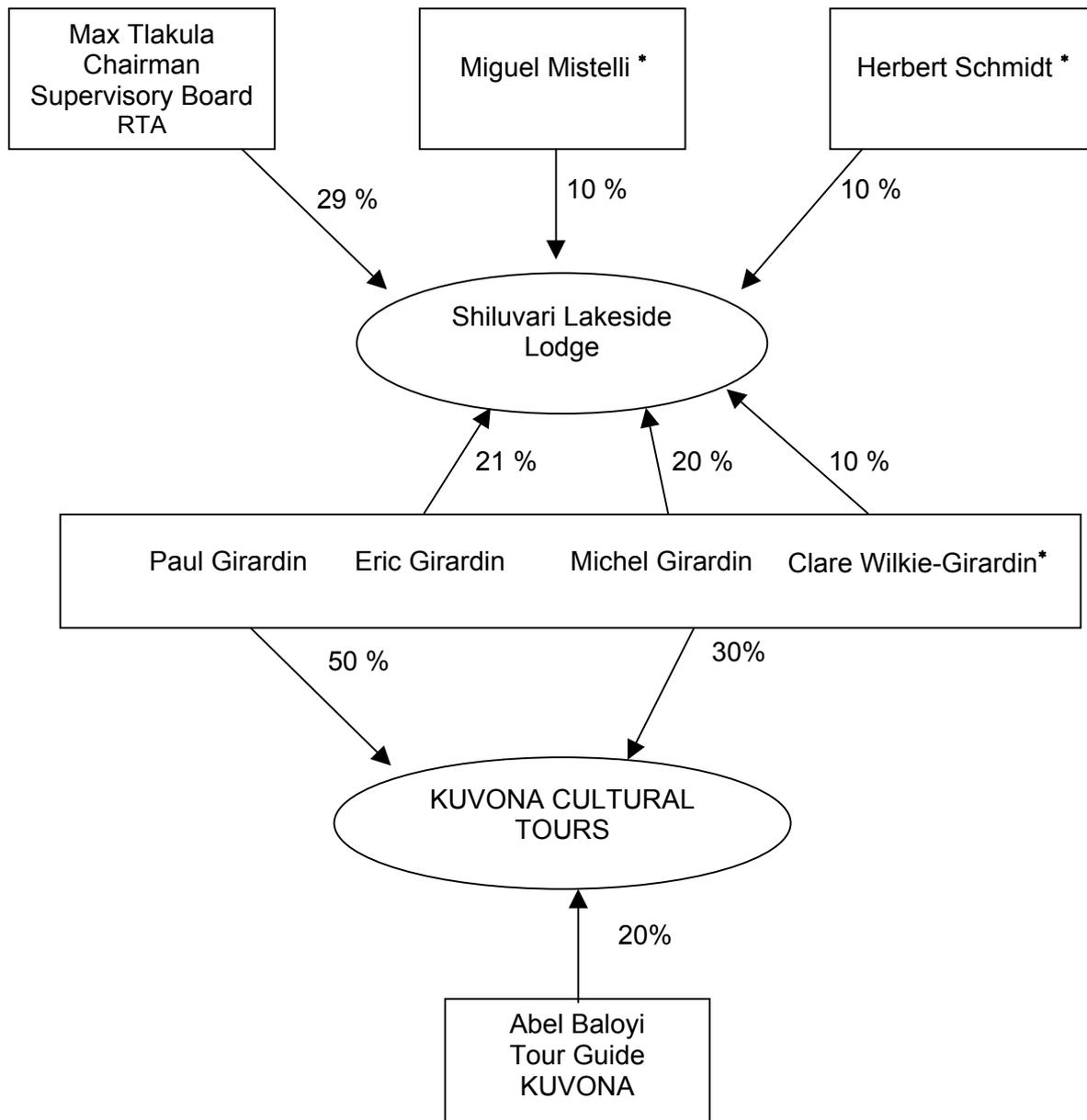
The SHILUVARI LAKESIDE LODGE and RTA profited from one another from the very beginning: RTA was able to offer many cultural attractions to the SHILUVARI tourists. In return, SHILUVARI helped RTA by purchasing handcrafted products, through educational measures and by providing financial support for the tour guides. Nowadays, all KUVONA tourists are accommodated at the SHILUVARI LODGE. In addition, due to the mutual memberships and different measures for mutual support, but also on the basis of the ownership situation, all three enterprises maintain close contacts.

3.2 Ownership Situation

Paul Girardin's share in KUVONA amounts to 50%. The black South African Abel Baloyi holds 20% and Paul's brother Michel holds 30%.

KUVONA holds no shares in the SHILUVARI LODGE, but uses the lodge to accommodate its tourists within the framework of an agreement. Since November 2005 there is also a letter of intent between KUVONA and RIBOLLA TOURIMS ASSOCIATION (RTA). SHILUVARI and KUVONA are members of RTA.

Fig.: Ownership Diagram*



* Miguel Mistelli and her husband Herbert Schmidt, both Swiss nationals, met Michel Girardin and Max Tlakula during the pilot phase in the certification process of the organisation FAIR TRADE IN TOURISM SOUTH AFRICA (FTTSA). Miguel Mistelli was then employed with the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources). The couple was so convinced by and enthusiastic about the Lodge and its concept that they bought the shares of Michel's brother Paul (then 20%) with each of them holding 10% up to now. Clare Wilkie-Girardin is married to Michel Girardin.

4. APPRAISAL OF THE PROJECT

4.1. Methodological Note

In the following rationale for the recommended award, the main focus has been placed on KUVONA. Since the work of KUVONA, as described above, is strongly linked together with the work of other enterprises, the SHILUVARI LODGE was also included in the analysis in partial aspects. The certification with a "Fair Trade in Tourism Trademark" provided grounds for hope that the relevant TO DO! criteria are also fulfilled there. This certificate is awarded by the tourism organisation "Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa" (FTTSA) in Pretoria. It was not possible to assess the work of RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION (RTA) with regard to concept, activities, internal structures and decision-making processes.

In view of the short stay of the assessor at the location, it was only possible to check the fulfilment of the contest criteria within the District of Ribolla. The events offered outside this area, in the Kruger National Park, along the "Ivory Route", in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia, could not be personally inspected.

4.2. Appraisal on the Basis of the TO DO! Criteria

Assessing the activities of KUVONA CULTURAL TOURS with the **eight TO DO! criteria for socially responsible tourism** leads to the following valuation:

Involving of the different interests and requirements of the local people through participation
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KUVONA is the result of a process, in which the local population was involved from the very beginning, since the founding of the SHILUVARI LODGE in 1995, and is increasingly being involved at present. The vision of KUVONA is that one day the RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION (which is primarily carried by black South Africans) will also have a second development "pillar" in the form of their own tourism enterprise.

A position statement of RTA/KUVONA says: "We have to develop tourism in close partnership with the rural communities in order to avoid imposing international tourism on the people."

- After providing RTA with strong material and above all conceptual support, the Girardins withdrew from all board of trustees and managing committees in the years 2001 through 2003, so that the planning and management of RTA is now wholly in the hands of the black members. However, the Girardins are still members of RTA.
- Initially, the needs of the population were for employment opportunities. These needs were met: The lodge was built by local craftsmen who were provided with further training by Eric Girardin. The lodge was and is being operated by indigenous staff, which was trained by Paul Girardin, since no one had any training in the tourism sector at the time.
- When KUVONA was founded in 2000, Paul Girardin made the black South African Abel Baloyi into a partner of the company next to himself and his brother Michel. He gave him the required capital as a gift.
- The three proprietors officially meet three to four times a year for round-table talks. Informally, they meet more often. All participants have equal access to all computer data at all times. The relevant German correspondence is translated into English for Abel Baloyi by Angelika Girardin (Paul Girardin's wife), so that he is informed on transactions

conducted in the German language. The transparency of all business transactions is therefore assured for everyone.

- The "Ribolla Open Africa Route" is an integral component of the SKR travel programme "Gesichter Südafrikas" („*South Africa's Faces*"), and was identified in cooperation with the black South Africans Aldrin Ndalani and Daniel Khosa (both of whom were trained as tour guides by Paul Girardin of RTA). The route was worked out together with the local people. Before KUVONA brings tourists together with artisans, drummers and dance groups, or storytellers and traditional healers of RTA for the first time, KUVONA conducts talks with the indigenous people and implements workshops. Any issues that exist or can be anticipated in connection with the expected tourists are addressed. In the interim, KUVONA employees are in contact with the people on site. Tribal chiefs are consulted and are additionally visited when dance performances coincide with a traditional festival.

Unfortunately the "Route Forum", which is formed by representatives of SHILUVARI, KUVONA and RTA, seems only to meet on a very irregular basis. Large distances, transport problems and costs were named as reasons for this.

Strengthening the awareness among the local people with regard to the chances and risks of tourism development in their everyday economic, social and cultural life

The local people are aware of the economic chances and risks to their region associated with the emergence of tourism. Just two years after the formation of the 'Artist Association', the organisation was renamed into "Ribolla Tourism Association". In addition to the approximately 200 members, family members are also being brought into the projects.

- For years, KUVONA invested into the training of the tour guide and marketing expert Aldrin Ndalani. In addition to his duties as a tour guide, he explores market opportunities in all of South Africa, sells products of the RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION (RTA), organises trainers for the artisan groups to improve their products, and conveys information on the customary market prices to the manufactures. The latter is very important in the transitional phase from a subsistence-based economy to a market economy, which the region is currently undergoing.
- RTA pays heed to the seasonal fluctuations in the tourism sector and therefore also markets the products (e.g. big wood sculptures) to large chain stores and ministries or hotels. The communal production in the handicraft sector (pottery, woodcarving, drum-making, batik) - currently there are 27 such groups - promotes and strengthens social cohesion and the "Ubuntu" consciousness ("I am because we are") of many people. Women in particular, i.e. women who work in the pottery and batik groups, profit more than just economically from the new tasks.
- With regard to the cultural aspects, the groups work with products that originate from their own social environment and tradition. They become aware that their tradition and culture are esteemed by the foreign visitors. This is very important for their sense of location, for the safeguarding and advancement of their self-confidence, as well as for the shaping of their identity.

Participation of broad local population strata regarding the positive economic, social and cultural effects of tourism.

The association of KUVONA with RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION is a very important factor for the RTA members with regard to their economic existence. KUVONA brings tourists and therefore income for the RTA members, and as far as they are involved in activities, for their extended families.

- KUVONA donates 3% of the profit to community development. Approximately 60% of this amount is used for tourism-related activities, such as the construction of a cultural village, education and further training, and logistics-administrative support of RTA. The remaining 40% flow into the support of non-tourism related projects, such as a children's hospital, an AIDS-support centre, private kindergarten, a senior citizen residence, blind people's group, a women's cooperative for chicken farming, computer classes for needy teenagers.
- Indigenous dancers, drummers, storytellers and female cooks also come to the evenings, which are arranged for the travel groups in the cultural village at the foot of mount Ribolla (known as "Luvhola" in the language of the Venda). Most of them are not RTA members and in this manner they are also able to profit from tourism. (For details on the contents of a cultural village, please see the contest criterion "Strengthening the cultural identity").
- All food needed by KUVONA and SHILUVARI come from the local markets. Nothing is imported.
- KUVONA ensures that its travel groups do not only visit RTA members who live along the main roads and are therefore easily accessible. If for example the "Ribolla Open Africa Route" is extended in the framework of new programmes, suggestions of "poorer addresses" are also included in the offers. The "Ivory-Route" which was developed with government support is carried by nine communities (community-based tourism). KUVONA has given preferential treatment to the three weaker communities along this route by taking them into their programme.
- Beside the tour guides who work regularly for KUVONA and RTA, up to nine indigenous part time tour guides are employed as needed for the tours outside of their own region. This applies for travels to destinations like Johannesburg, the Kruger-National Park, the Ivory Route, etc.

Guarantee of the attractiveness of jobs in tourism for the local people by improving working conditions in relation to payment, social security, working hours, education and training

SHILUVARI, KUVONA and RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION (RTA) are closely interlocked with each other. At this point we will therefore not only go into the KUVONA's achievement with respect to the aforementioned criterion but will also consider the contribution of the two other enterprises to this aspect of tourism development.

- Paul Girardin is active as a manager at KUVONA. His wife works as a volunteer. She assists in the administration, translates and leads groups. Abel Baloyi is shareholder (see ownership situation). Since January 2004 he has also been active as a tour guide of the highest category. Abel Baloyi has been systematically supported by Paul Girardin since 1999. He enabled him to pursue his training up to the 'Diploma in Tourism'. He

also took over the costs of computer courses, and a special driver's licence for transportation of tourists. In addition, Paul and Michel Girardin also provided him with training. Meanwhile, he is qualified enough to also replace Paul Girardin as a tour guide. Josef Khosa is currently undergoing similar systematic promotion. He has been employed as a trainee with KUVONA since October of 2005, and shall be trained to a tour guide.

- Abel Baloyi receives a minimum salary of 2,500 Rand that can reach up to 6,400 Rand depending on the development of business. Josef Khosa has a salary of 1,500 Rand. Depending on the progress of his training, it will be raised to 2,000 Rand. Both salaries are above the minimum wage as laid down by the government. Both have written employment contracts that can only be cancelled for gross misconduct. Unemployment insurance and contributions to a pension scheme are paid by the employer. The latter is not regulated by law. Medical care is free in South Africa.
- The SHILUVARI-LODGE currently employs thirteen people. The general manager is Clare Wilkie-Girardin, Michel's wife. Two further executive positions are occupied by black South African women, who were also given intensive training by Paul Girardin: the lodge manager, Betty Hlungwane was a gasoline station assistant, and the kitchen chef, Poppy Ramashia began as a cleaning lady.
- Three of the RTA tour guides, Mrs. Mpatheleni Makaulule, Aldrin Ndalani and Daniel Khosa were specially trained and supported by Paul and Michel Girardin. With the support of KUVONA Mpatheleni Makaulule has built up the cultural village "Luvhola" (for further details please see the next criterion). Aldrin Ndalani is currently building a second cultural village. Here accommodation facilities are being built, which after completion shall be used by KUVONA.
- RTA tour guides also guide travellers from other travel agencies concurrent to the tourists referred through SHILUVARI and KUVONA. They receive € 800 for a two-week guided tour of KUVONA tourists. That is more than they would earn as exclusive guides for RTA, and is above the average pay in South Africa.
- On behalf of the government, KUVONA educated about 60 indigenous people in the tourism sector. The subjects include: mechanisms of the tourism industry, tourism structures of the provinces and their use, communication techniques, contacts to relevant companies, as well as identification and use of new routes.

<p>Reinforcement of the local culture as well as the cultural identity of those living in tourism destination areas</p>
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- It is a principle of KUVONA to offer the tourists only what is really there. The tourists are expected to show a high degree of adaptability to the conditions in the region. To safeguard the identity of the local people no "artificial worlds" and programme elements are offered that have nothing to do with the tradition and way of life of the people.
- The skilled artisan groups make products that are closely connected with the history, religious rites and living environment of the people. An example: the woodcarver John Baloyi drives to the forests with helpers and apprentices, searches for old bizarre wood pieces and compares their forms with figures from legends, history and culture. He then moulds an expression on them in his workshop, exhibits the sculptures in a gallery in Elim (together with works of other artists), and sells them. This is how the closeness to nature, contemporisation of tradition and culture, craftsmanship, training of junior employees, messages to the public and earnings become closely interlinked.
- The cultural village at the foot of mount Ribolla initiated, organised and supervised by Mpatheleni Makaulule was financed for the most part by KUVONA. The village offers the

possibility to introduce children and youths to the Venda culture, and the village is also a destination point for tourists. The village is a kind of "living museum". Here you can play the drums, dance, play and prepare traditional meals. One talks about the fruit and vegetables found in the primeval forest and of the necessity to protect it. Traditional tools are shown and stories of the region's past are told. Mrs. Makaulule said, "Women and men are like a living library." This is also where travellers of KUVONA regularly spend an evening, which they value as much as the indigenous people. Similar contents and chances are to be created in the second cultural village that is currently being built.

Avoidance or minimisation of social and cultural damage caused by tourism in destination areas

KUVONA nurtures a respectful and partnership like interaction with the people involved in the development of tourism in the region.

- It is of a great advantage that KUVONA is in indigenous hands, and that the owner Paul Girardin, Eric Girardin and Abel Baloyi speak the language of the indigenous people. Their good training and the integration of a large part of the KUVONA-programme into the programmes of RTA through artisan groups, dancers and drummers, do not permit any negative side effects of tourism to evolve.
- All travelling groups of SKR, KUVONA or other organisations never comprise more than twelve participants. This is done to minimize excessive dominance in the villages being visited.
- In promoting projects, attention is paid to ensure that these do not become dependant on KUVONA. Projects are also supported in their search for other sources of assistance. A large number of adolescents are trained in computer courses financed by KUVONA. There is an arrangement that the skills gained through this are compensated by a "return donation" as soon as the adolescents earn their own income.

Projects and measures entered into the contest must be in line with the principles of environmental compatibility

As portrayed, KUVONA uses the SHILUVARI LAKESIDE LODGE for the duration of their guests' stay in the Ribolla region. The lodge offers overnight accommodation for 28 people. The lodge, restaurant and conference hall are located in a nature preserve at the Albasini reservoir (which serves as a drinking water reservoir and for irrigation). The lodge is managed in conformity with the principles of socially responsible and therefore also environmentally compatible tourism development. For this reason, the SHILUVARI LODGE was happy about being awarded the certificate "Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa" of the FTTSA as the very first enterprise to receive such a certificate in South Africa.

- All buildings are constructed with local materials and almost all of them have thatch roofing.
- Energy-saving bulbs are installed in all buildings. The initial efforts to replace and support the power supply by solar energy are underway.
- Utility water and toilet water are disposed of in separate soaking pits. The toilets were built on the side that is away from the lake, to ensure that no polluted water can reach the lake. Drinking water is drawn from a deep well. If the water surface has sunk due to low precipitation, the adjacent big tract of meadow is not irrigated. Visitors are informed of this through a signpost.

- Garbage is sorted out in six categories and transported for recycling.
- About 120 rather tall Eucalyptus trees are located on the plot. Each of them draws about 50 litres of water per day from the ground water. SHILUVARI was asked by the regional government to replace these trees with indigenous species. This should take place in 2006.
- According to the information given by the married couple Angelika and Paul Girardin the camps of the "Ivory Route" and those of the Namibia tours offer the highest ecological standard. In the Botswana's Okavango region ecological guidelines are followed and monitored very austere by the government. During all of KUVONA tours, all non-rotting garbage is taken back.

<p>Implementation of measures or mechanisms which can guarantee the economic and institutional sustainability of the project</p>

From an economic perspective, the sustainability of KUVONA appears to be assured. The number of arrivals increases yearly, particularly due to the good cooperation with SKR Studien Kontakt Reisen and a Dutch travel operator.

- SHILUVARI and KUVONA enjoy a high reputation with the province and the central government. The tourism implemented by KUVONA and RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION (RTA) fulfils the specifications of the government concept for "Responsible Tourism" from the year 2000, described at the beginning of this report.
- On average, the participants in the travel programmes are between the ages of 45 and 68 years. At this time, KUNOVA is working on a programme for younger travellers.
- KUVONA took out a business interruption insurance policy, which enables the company to survive for three to six months in the event of absence of tourists due to force majeure.
- Furthermore, Michel and Paul are highly qualified and respected trainers for natural resources (Michel) and tourism (Michel and Paul). Their services are in continuous demand, also by the government.
- If continuity is ensured, the cooperation with RTA offers a chance to continue to provide a rich cultural programme for the tourists. In November 2005, KUVONA drew up a signed "letter of intent" for the regulation of business relations with RTA. In this letter of intent KUVONA declares its intent to intensify the financial support of RTA in the tourism area and to use RTA's infrastructure and tour guides more often. In return KUVONA expects to receive proof of the use of the funds provided for this purpose. From the point of view of the assessor, the formalisation of the relation between the enterprises is an important step in the recognition of RTA as a full-fledged business partner. The letter of intent provides both KUVONA and RTA with more planning safety, facilitates the financial monitoring by KUVONA and is an important contribution to the sustainable development of both organisations.
- KUVONA has the vision that RTA will develop its own travel business as an additional sector. However, the time does not seem to be ripe yet. RTA does have qualified tour guides but, due to their level of training, they are not permitted to lead travel groups into all regions. Furthermore, the RTA employees are not qualified enough to deal on a level with the airlines, insurance companies and foreign travel agencies. However, this idea is being pursued by the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) for the long-term future.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the most important representatives of RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION, SHILUVARI und KUVONA live on the same grounds and could exchange information without any difficulties, the assessor recommends that a formal "Round Table" should be established. The participants should meet on a regular basis in order to communicate and coordinate their decisions. However, it should be possible that internal decisions pertaining to one particular enterprise can be taken independently. The managing director and the marketing expert of RTA should also sit at this "Round Table."

KUVONA lacks a structured monitoring and evaluation system (M+E), which enables recorded assessments of the individual activities and their costs, as well as of the impacts of the measures taken, and ensures regular controlling. (This was already proposed by FTTSA). Such a system could also be used by RTA. Furthermore the M+E could provide new insights into the effects the different donations by institutions and tourists have on the recipients.

Until now the relations between KUVONA and RTA were not formalised but were based on oral agreements for the most part. With the "letter of intent" a first step to a stronger planning security for both sides was taken. This should be continued and be wrapped up in a contractual relationship.

Comments regarding the contentment of guests could for example be recorded with the help of a questionnaire in the rooms of the lodge in order to obtain valuable advice on the further development of services being offered.

6. CONCLUSION

KUVONA CULTURAL TOURS in cooperation with SHILUVARI LAKESIDE LODGE, RIBOLLA TOURISM ASSOCIATION (RTA) and with SKR Studien Kontakt Reisen in Germany succeeded in developing a holistic tourism approach. The development of tourism so far is consistent with the conceptual specifications for "Responsible Tourism" and the aims of the "Reconstruction and Development Program" of the government of South Africa. KUVONA offers individual, special and general possibilities for education and further training. Many actors take part in the implementation of the programme, and a lot of people benefit from it.

In addition to providing employment and continuing education and training for indigenous staff, special features of the project are to be found in the cautious encounter with the culture and way of life of the Shangaan and Venda peoples, environmental-conscious conduct, and economic promotion of as many people as possible within and outside the institutions and enterprises cooperating with KUVONA.