

Community based tourism (activities 1.4.4. to 1.4.7.)

In the Integrated Management Plan of Iona National Park, that is currently being finalized, the park zones with their respective ecologic, economic and social uses have been identified and delimited. One of the economic uses that is currently underexploited in the park is tourism. There are no proper infrastructure/facilities, nor signalization or any individuals in the communities in the park that are trained to receive visitors inside the park. The only tourism undertaken in the park is vehicle-based “adventure tourism”. The visitors are all self-sufficient in terms of transport, camping equipment, fuel and other supplies and contribute very little to the park in terms of benefits to the communities or the park management.

Given that an increase of tourism exploitation is to be encouraged, the widely dispersed negative impacts of camping by the tourists, even if environmentally aware, will eventually become a problem if tourist numbers increase, as is likely to happen within the next years. It is considered necessary to concentrate these activities in carefully selected camping sites and to prohibit all camping outside designated areas. This will make monitoring the tourism activities easier for the park management and will avoid undesired forms of contact between tourists and communities. The establishment of campsites would also provide a source of revenue and employment for the local communities that desire these contacts. Providing training for communities on tourism, establishing minimum tourism facilities as well as improving road signs in the park (e.g. clearly demarcating forbidden or restricted paths) are also key-actions to minimize environmental damage and improve the quality of the visitors’ experience.

The activities to be undertaken by the project to promote community based tourism have been identified in a workshop in Moçamedes, Namibe, on 2nd of September 2016 with participation of the Municipal and Provincial Governments, local NGOs and tourism operators. They focus on a network of simple camp sites with a minimal infrastructure (sheltered area, barbecue site, simple toilets) that will be managed by appropriately trained members of nearby communities with backstopping from the park management and a local NGO (to be selected) and the tourism operators themselves. The sites will be chosen together with the communities and their leaders (sobas), with in principle one site being built for each of the 6 sobados in the park. At each site, tourism activities will be identified with the communities – examples being hiking trails, natural pool, boat trips in the Cunene river, handicrafts, cultural activities, natural honey, etc. The tourism opportunities and rules of the park will be communicated via a new or improved website as well as printed materials. An internship program for interested and suitable community members will be developed where these can participate for some months in the work of local tour operators to obtain an improved understanding and skills for this new activity. The budget for community based tourism activities as detailed below is similar to that for “income alternatives” in previous versions of the project budget, although some changes have been made among line items, as shown below and in the revised work plan.

1.4.4. Training for communities (Budget Lines 11,36,45,46)

Former budget for 2016-7: \$116.716

New budget for 2016-8: \$110.000

- Develop internship program for community members to work and receive training with local tour operators. Pay small scholarships for interns with cofunding from companies (\$333 per month x 3 months per intern x 10 interns) (\$10.000)
- Contract local NGO or company to identify and develop with communities simple tourism activities at each site and train select community members as guides (hiking trails, bird watching, visits to local dwellings, handicrafts, cultural activities such as dancing etc). Provide on-the-job training and backstopping during 1 year (\$100.000)

1.4.5. Confidence building, skill development, recruitment of comm. members (Budget Lines 37,48)

Former budget for 2016-7: \$260.664

New budget for 2016-8: \$140.000

- Communicating and consulting communities about zoning plan (\$80.000)
- Provide start-up funding to community in Monte Negro for boat trips for tourists on Cunene River incl. purchase of outboard engine, storage room and training (\$25.000)
- Create and populate Iona National Park website with information, maps for download, list of licensed tour operators, possibly booking facility, to be hosted at INBAC (\$20.000)
- Design and print folder with information for tourists about Iona National Park for distribution at park entrances, hotels and airports (\$15.000)

1.4.6. Equipment for communities (Budget Lines 8,38)

Former budget for 2016-7: \$121.700

New budget for 2016-8: \$255.000

- Contract local company to construct simple infrastructure with shelter, picknick area, barbecue area, bathroom for camp sites (6 sites, \$40.000 per site) (\$240.000)
- Build pool at scenic site with natural spring water for bathing including fencing against domestic animals (\$15.000)

1.4.7. Supplies for communities (Budget Line 39)

Former budget for 2016-7: \$28.148

New budget for 2016-8: \$22.228

- Meetings with sobas and communities to explore interest in tourism and identify sites (6 sobados, 2 meetings each). Costs for food and fuel for meetings (\$7.228)
- Improving road signs in the park (with distance information) (\$15.000)