

Opportunities and Constraints in the Establishment of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park

Hosi Shilungua Mhinga II

The Mhinga Tribe

The Mhinga tribe inhabited what today is referred to as the northern section of the Kruger National Park dating back to the 1400's. The Mhinga Community lived peacefully in the area and in harmony with wildlife until its members were forcefully moved when the Kruger National Park was established. The last of the communities to be moved was the Makuleke Community in 1969.

Throughout this period of dispossession, no great benefit accrued to the Mhinga Community. Instead the community suffered hardship, and they lost their land, their kingdom, and most of all their dignity.

Democratic South Africa

The new South Africa has brought about significant change in the lives of the people, in particular in the lives of the Mhinga community. The holding of this event in Durban is evidence of the fruits of the new South Africa. The Mhinga Community's representation at such an auspicious occasion is symbolic of the potential for great social and economic benefit to accrue to the Community. The Mhinga Community sees the establishment of the Congress as a vehicle to derive prosperity from the established Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

Benefits Beyond Boundaries: Our Perspective

We have already made mention that no great benefits accrued to the Mhinga Community. However, negotiations are underway between the Community and Kruger National Park. The negotiations are an attempt to align the Community with the Kruger National Park. It is hoped that the outcome will result in prosperity for the Mhinga Community.

As a way forward, the Mhinga Community has been proactive in conceptualising eco-tourism projects that have potential to transform the lives of the people around them.

Proposed Developments:

Wisani Lodge:

Wisani Lodge was developed and launched in 2000 and is a fully owned and operated

“Community lodge”. This is one of the first lodges to be developed, operated and managed by the community within South Africa. The lodge is located approximately 8km from the Phunda Maria Gate to the Kruger National Park. As such, it is ideally suited to take advantage of the traffic to South Africa’s premier game reserve.

Wisani Lodge accommodates 60 guests in 30 chalets, of which 18 are standard rooms and 12 are deluxe rooms. There is a full service kitchen that offers meals throughout the day, as well as a bar facility. The lodge has a pool and each of the chalets has its own private deck area. Further investment is required to bring the lodge in line with guest expectations and to make the lodge a more user friendly environment. As the investment required is not too onerous, we recommend the lodge partner with a lodge operating and marketing company.

Wisani Cultural Village

The proposed Wisani Cultural Village is also located approximately 8km from Phunda Maria Gate to Kruger National Park and is ideally suited draw interest from passing traffic to South Africa’s premier game reserve.

The Cultural Village already has a large central indoor/outdoor dining and entertainment area, a boma and a retail outlet under construction. It is proposed that the Cultural Village be themed in traditional Tsonga style, with various local arts and crafts being manufactured and sold within the Cultural Village.

Guests will have the opportunity to visit the village and see local craftsmen ply their trade as weavers and beaders, carvers, potters and in the art of manufacturing various day to day necessities. In addition to this, a full service restaurant and an Arts and Crafts’ curio facility will be made available for guests.

Mhinga Mhinga Leisure Development

The proposed Mhinga Mhinga Leisure Development is a tremendous opportunity to gain a foothold in one of the most spectacular tourism areas in South Africa. The development proposes a combination of Golf and Safari which, if achieved, will be one of only a handful of such developments across southern and east Africa. The proposed development is an eco-tourism venture within the Mhinga Community region, bordering both the magnificent Luvuvhu River in the west and Kruger National Park to the east and north.

The concept is to incorporate into Kruger National Park a 2000 hectare area of community land that has already been designated for tourism development. In exchange, the Community would gain access to some of the most spectacular wilderness areas of Kruger National Park on a long-term concession basis. This arrangement has been discussed and needs to be ratified by all parties concerned.

The Mhinga Mhinga Development is to be made up of an 18 hole golf course and a ninety bed safari lodge. The Golf course is to be located in the south-western sector of the designated area and alongside the Luvuvhu River, which is a vital river system in Limpopo Province. The ninety bed safari lodge is to be built on the boundary of Kruger National Park within the Mhinga

Development Area. The lodge will focus on safaris into Kruger National Park, Golf and Corporate Conferencing.

It is proposed that development be a joint venture between the Mhinga Community and an investment partner.

Mhinga Luvuvhu

In this ancient countryside, running through steep gorges and over rolling mountains, we find some of the most spectacular and remote wilderness areas within the Kruger National Park. The Mhinga Luvuvhu Development is an initiative to be defined together with the Mhinga Community, Limpopo Province and the Kruger National Park, as a community concession area within the park.

Within the proposed incorporation of 2000 hectares of community land into the park, the community is to negotiate for a long term concession into the park.

The Mhinga Luvuvhu concept is to develop an up-market sixteen bed safari lodge, overlooking the Luvuvhu river and the Makhuya Provincial Park. The lodge is to focus on the unique terrain and offer a combination of walking safaris and game drives through this magnificent countryside.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the projects presented before you have the opportunity to transform lives of ordinary citizens. The Mhinga Community requests the assistance of financiers and investors to cooperate in these self-sustainable projects.

On behalf the Mhinga Community, I would like to thank the organizers of WPC 2003 for hosting such an auspicious event in our country, I would like to thank all those involved in making it possible for the Mhinga Community to be present here today addressing the WPC 2003, and also I would like to thank all the participants who are proactive in issues of such global importance.

God Bless!!!

Hosi Shilungwa Mhinga II is leader of the Mhinga Community, Limpopo Province, South Africa.