



Business Enterprises for Sustainable Travel

BEST

P r a c t i c e s

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Conservation Corporation Africa

Category	Ecotourism operator
Ownership	Private
Product	Luxury lodges, private game reserves, and tour/safari operations
Area of Operation	Africa
Project Location	Botswana, Kenya, South Africa Tanzania, and Zimbabwe
Affiliations and Awards	CCAfrica: Conde Nast (United States) Ecotourism Award, 2000 Londolozi: <i>Conde Nast Traveler</i> Top Safari Resort, 2000; <i>Travel & Leisure</i> World's Best Value, 2000; Association of South African Travel Agents (ASATA) Game Lodge of the Year, 1997
Practice Keywords	Marketing; customer satisfaction and retention; human resources; government/community relations; corporate contributions

Making Tourism Work for Africa's Developing Economies

Some 13 percent of the world's population lives in Africa, the second largest continent after Asia. Yet, despite its abundant natural resources—including one-third of the world's tropical forests—Africa has the lowest life expectancy, the highest child mortality rate, and the heaviest burden of disease in the world.

According to the World Bank, Africa includes seven of the 10 poorest countries in the world, and, of its 640 million inhabitants, over 215 million were living in poverty in 1990. From 1990-94, the region's GDP declined by an average of 1.5 percent per year.

Few doubt the potential of tourism to infuse much-needed prosperity into the region. Tourism generates increased wealth and employment, and can stimulate the protection and enhancement of environmental and cultural resources.

But Africa's tourism industry provides typically seasonal, low-wage work, and there is significant leakage of tourism-generated revenues. Many non-African airlines, hotels, and tour operators export the bulk of their tourism earnings from the region without making any financial, ecological, or cultural contribution to African communities.

Conservation Corporation Africa (CCAfrica), the continent's largest ecotourism operator, is one major exception to the rule. Since its inception in 1992, CCAfrica has been increasingly involved in community development projects. Today, these efforts are coordinated by the CCAfrica Foundation and extend to all the five countries in which it operates in southern and eastern Africa.

"People must have a relationship with the land of their ancestors, and CCAfrica's efforts are important in creating models of development for the future," says Mohammed Valli Moosa, South Africa's Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Company Snapshot

CCAfrica comprises three separate companies: CCAfrica Safari Destinations, a lodge operation founded in the early 1990s; Afro Ventures, a tour operating and mobile safari division; and Into Africa, a groups, incentives, and conferences division. The three were merged into one company in February 2000, creating South Africa's largest ecotourism group, offering lodges, large tours, mobile safaris, and destination management.

With over 25 lodges and camps spanning five countries, CCAfrica employs a staff of around 3,000. The group has offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town (South Africa); Maun (Botswana); Swakopmund (Namibia); Nairobi (Kenya); Arusha (Tanzania); and Harare and Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe).

Several of CCAfrica's lodges and private game reserves, which have won numerous awards over the past decade, are members of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Londolozi in South Africa, perhaps the most famous of these, was the first game reserve in the world to be granted Relais & Chateaux status. In 1997, Matetsi Lodges won the award for the Greatest Contribution to the Development of the Tourism Industry in Zimbabwe from the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority.

Dave Varty, CCAfrica's founder and first CEO, says he hopes his company's brand of ecotourism—hallmarked by care for local environments and cultures—will serve as an example for the industry.

"We set out to create a model in wise land management, integrating international travelers and rural people to their mutual benefit," says Varty, "and demonstrating that wildlife can be used on a sustainable basis by all."

With just the Londolozi lodge to its name, CCAfrica first became involved in community work in 1992, after only two years of operations. The first new project of the Foundation—in Phinda, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa—was an unprecedented conservation achievement. In the largest private game relocation project ever undertaken, more than 17,000 hectares of degraded and bankrupt farmland were restored, creating opportunities for rural communities and stimulating the regional economy.

"We are in the extraordinary position of working on a daily basis with rural communities," says Anthea McGregor, Director of the Foundation, "while having close relationships with some of the world's high-profile companies and individuals that support our work."

"Many companies have social investment budgets, but they have no way of creating or implementing really meaningful projects because they simply do not have the necessary on-the-ground presence. Through our daily interaction with our neighboring communities, we can truly partner with their people and facilitate relevant, consultative projects that the communities want to 'own' and we can help sustain."

The CCAfrica Foundation in Action

The CCAfrica Foundation is both an operating foundation and a grantmaker. Interest from the Foundation's reserve fund of US\$1.1 million—endowed by an anonymous Swiss donor—is used for projects. CCAfrica contributes more than US\$180,000 per year for the Foundation's operational budget and also provides considerable support through its lodge infrastructure. Cash donations—which vary from year to year, depending on funding requests—totalled some US\$300,000 in 2000, from around 25 individual and five corporate donors; the target for 2001 is US\$600,000. Of the total US\$1.2 million in donations received to date, 90-95 percent has come from CCAfrica's guests, with the balance provided by corporations—including British Petroleum, Moët & Chandon, and IBM—and other foundations.

Non-cash donations, including books and computers, are common. In 2000, some US\$254,000 worth of medical equipment was received from the United States.

African communities make proposals to the Foundation, and these are reviewed twice a year by trustees. The Foundation's International Board of Trustees includes Robin James, Director, Singer & Friedlander Ltd., Isle of Man; Tara Getty of the Getty Africa Trust, United States; Howard Buffet, Chairperson of GSI Group, United States; and Bill Newsom, President, Newsom Investments, United States.

Every guest at a CCAfrica lodge is given an orientation that provides details about the resort, the Foundation, and the local community projects in which the Foundation is involved. In addition, materials on the Foundation and a donor card are placed in guestrooms. Most of CCAfrica's guests visit the local communities and are eager to contribute in some way—either by making a donation or actively involving themselves in a project.

Building the Future

The Foundation solicits charitable donations for projects in five areas:

Basic Needs and Regional Infrastructure

Education: The Foundation has built 35 classrooms and has constructed and/or upgraded 18 preschools. It also facilitates the distribution of paper, books, and other educational aids, including equipping 17 schools with an Edu-Peg Program—a multiple-choice, self-corrective teaching aid with a focus on math and reading. To date, 36 schools and 18,864 students have been helped by the CCAfrica Foundation.

Health: In a 1995 joint venture with the South African Government, the CCAfrica Foundation helped fund a US\$110,000 24-hour medical clinic in Mduku, South Africa. The clinic serves 11,000 residents, and its six-bed prenatal facility enables expectant mothers to stay close to medical care overnight. The Foundation also employs a medical assistant at a clinic serving 8,000 people in Zanzibar, and has funded the purchase of a solar-powered refrigerator that is able to store vaccines.

AIDS Awareness: According to 1997 United Nations statistics, HIV incidence in the countries in which CCAfrica operates is among the highest in the world. Two-thirds of the world's 30.6 million HIV cases are in sub-Saharan Africa. This has resulted in 8 million AIDS orphans in Africa, representing up to one-third of all children in the nine most heavily affected countries. In 1999, the Foundation approved plans to build the Umt-Omanze Orphanage Home for AIDS orphans near Matetsi at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, giving a home to children rescued from garbage dumps. CCAfrica lodges also distribute approximately 200,000 condoms a year and perform other awareness and prevention measures, including training AIDS theater groups to perform at school and community halls.

Water: An estimated 12 million people in South Africa have to walk more than 200 meters to their closest water supply. The weight of 20-liter water containers carried on the head has led to spinal, neck, and other physical injuries, especially to children. For the past two years, the CCAfrica Foundation has donated some 1,200 'hippo rollers' to four communities in South Africa, and also to Zanzibar. These rollers, costing US\$65 each, roll 90 liters of water along the ground, saving time and strenuous physical effort.

Capacity Building and Training

Scholarships: The CCAfrica Foundation launched its Community Leaders Education Fund in 1995 and today awards 90 scholarships for post-graduate education each year to residents of communities surrounding Phinda, Ngala, and Londolozi. In return, the students are expected to contribute to their home communities for a year after completing their studies.

Transfer of Skills: To develop entrepreneurial and business skills, especially in rural areas where job opportunities and start up-capital can be scarce, the CCAfrica Foundation hosts workshops largely focused on basic bookkeeping, motivation, problem-solving, and accountability. In KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, three Training and Production Centers are under construction, and the Mngobokazi Market Association identifies potential business opportunities in the area. CCAfrica is also campaigning to collect used computers to begin computer training courses.

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Benefits

To CCAfrica:

Continued profitability and credibility as an ecotourism destination by working with local cultures and communities

Enhanced reputation

Access to a large, talented labor pool from local communities, which helps the company to improve services, leading to improved customer satisfaction

To local communities:

Improved local education, including environmental awareness programs for schoolchildren; scholarships for post-graduate education

Upgrading or creation of health facilities and AIDS awareness activities, including free condom distribution

Easier transport of water from water sources to homes

Availability of workshops on entrepreneurial and business skills, and small-business loans for rural entrepreneurs

Clinics and workshops on sporting and other activities, providing performers to entertain guests at CCAfrica lodges

Ability to sell organic produce and recycled paper to CCAfrica lodges

To CCAfrica customers:

Opportunity to enjoy the performances of local talent during their stay in the lodges, providing a more authentic experience of African customs and people

Knowledge that tourism dollars are benefiting, rather than harming, local communities

Opportunity to make a difference in the quality of life of local people, through a direct charitable contribution to the CCAfrica Foundation or, indirectly, through patronage of CCAfrica lodges

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Environmental Awareness

Education: The CCAfrica Foundation provides environmental education to children in primary schools and Sunday schools. It has already reached approximately 250 teachers and 3,500 children in South Africa. The Foundation has also sponsored an annual Environmental Debate since 1998, when 10 school teams of four members each debated the level of South African awareness of the benefits of nature conservation. The winning team received a cash prize, most of which went to pay for school equipment such as photocopiers.

Agricultural Initiatives: CCAfrica lodges buy organic vegetables grown under local initiatives developed by the Foundation. The Foundation also introduced two breeding bulls in Maasai to improve the gene stock of cattle herds and dissuade herders from overstocking goats. The lodges donate their used paper to Mauvuso Junior Secondary School near Phinda. Students recycle the paper and produce handmade paper using local seeds, grasses, and other organic matter. The students sell the paper back to the lodges and have so far made a profit of nearly US\$600.

Sports and Cultural Development

Local Culture: CCAfrica has sponsored rugby and cricket clinics, promotes dance performances, and is active in drama workshops, which are used to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. Participants at drama workshops also become performers in shows for guests at CCAfrica lodges. The Foundation maintains that sporting activities can provide invaluable community unity and motivation, and instill ambition and self-confidence in young people.

Small Business Development

Rural Job Opportunities: Rural job opportunities help prevent urban sprawl by countering a need to go to the city for work. However, it is difficult for rural entrepreneurs to borrow start-up capital. In 1995, the CCAfrica Foundation extended a US\$4,500 interest-free loan to the Sondela Community Center, which issued 131 loans totaling US\$10,350 (average US\$80 per loan). In addition, thanks to a CCAfrica Foundation business management program, a women's sewing club won a contract to sew new school uniforms for a community school. The Foundation granted them a US\$250 loan to purchase materials, and they repaid it with profits from this and other contracts.

About The Conference Board

The Conference Board creates and disseminates knowledge about management and the marketplace to help businesses strengthen their performance and better serve society. As a global, independent, public-purpose membership organization, we conduct research, bring executives together to learn from one another, convene conferences, publish information and analyses, make forecasts, and assess trends.

About BEST

Business Enterprises for Sustainable Travel (BEST) is an initiative of The Conference Board, in association with the World Travel and Tourism Council. Support is provided by several foundations, including the Ford and Charles Stewart Mott Foundations.

BEST's mission is to create and disseminate knowledge for the travel and tourism industry and the traveling public on business practices that enrich travelers' experiences; while enhancing the social and economic well-being, and contributing to the long-term sustainability, of destination communities in which the travel and tourism industry operates.

BEST Practices highlights successful business practices drawn from BEST's extensive and expanding database of the latest sustainable travel and tourism practices. If your company has practices that we should be aware of, please contact us.

About the World Travel & Tourism Council

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) is the global business leaders' forum for travel and tourism. Its 112 members are chief executives from all sectors of the industry, including accommodation, catering, entertainment, recreation, transportation, and other travel-related services. Its central goal is to work with governments to realize the full economic impact of the world's largest generator of wealth and jobs—travel and tourism.

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