

# Bringing Heritage Management and Tourism in Botswana under the Spot Light: Notes from Lekhubu Island

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## ABSTRACT

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This paper presents notes from qualitative study carried out in Mmatshumu and Lekhubu Island during the first half of 2012. The study utilized long interviews, focus group discussions, observations and informal interactions with different stakeholders including ordinary members of the community, civic and tribal leaders as well as members of the technical Advisory Committee. In a country where heritage and monuments sites are generally “free access”, the investigation here centers on efforts aimed at managing Lekhubu as a tourist destination. While findings note some successes such as the creation of relevant institutions and paid access modalities, they also reveal some interesting “talking points” concerning heritage management and tourism development. Among others, the paper notes lack of communication between stakeholders on the ground and those based away from the site; poor information sharing between previous and current board; inconsistencies between nature of development at the site as well as government policy. In the end, this paper argues for more robust training and mobilization to ensure sustainable utilization of heritage resources designated for tourism development. It accepts that without deliberate efforts to balance the interests of heritage and those of tourism development, the results may be unpleasant for both.

**Keywords:** community-based tourism, heritage management, conservation, Botswana

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s, when formal tourism began to take shape in Botswana, the largest investment in this industry has come from foreign owned companies head quartered in and controlled from their countries of origin. Owing to the structural dependency created through this trend, large sums of proceeds accruing from this industry are consequently repatriated to the companies’ parent countries (Mbaiwa, 2005). Another concern resulting from this dispensation relates to disenfranchisement of local people. On the one hand, local people’s participation in this all important sector has been minimal due to their lack of skills, knowledge and investment capital to start up and run tourism related businesses. On the other hand, local communities residing in the same neighborhoods where tourism resources abound began to feel disconnected and alienated from such resources as wildlife, firewood, thatching grass and veldt products (Arntzen, Setlhogile and Barns, 2007).

This continued, real or perceived, alienation fueled some resentment among local communities towards both the tourism industry and the resources on which it depends (Mbaiwa, Ngwenya and Kgathi, 2005). In realization of the growing resentment and

attendant conflict, a need arose to formulate some strategies that aimed at creating an environment of mutual existence. Among the different attempts to diffuse community resentment was the birth of community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) model. This model sought to facilitate community involvement in the management of and benefit from natural resources found within the immediate vicinity of where they live. Most of the early CBNRM enterprises were wildlife based. In recent times, a number of culture and heritage based enterprises have begun to surface as well. Unlike their wildlife based counterparts where lucrative hunting and photographic safari opportunities could easily lure some investors into joint venture partnerships, some small heritage based community projects have to endure some periods of existence without partner investors in the short term. In such cases, the local community would rely on its own personnel as well as advice from other stakeholders to run the project during its formative years. Using Lekhubu Island as an example, this paper explores the idea of turning heritage resources into tourism products. It outlines some of the challenges and achievements through community management of a heritage site.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This subsection provides some highlights of the literature reviewed for this paper. The review is categorized into: community based tourism; heritage management; conservation and tourism as well as presentation. It explores the relationship between these and sets a tone concerning their compatibility and non-theof.

### 2.1 Community-Based Tourism

The community-based natural resources management idea was borne out of an apparent growing frustration with conventional approaches to natural resources conservation in Botswana. Like many other countries in the Southern African region, colonial and post-colonial Botswana had embraced a protectionist approach, where ownership and control over natural resources was an exclusive preserve for the government. This approach is also known as 'fortress' style of conservation (Phuthago and Chanda, 2004). In this prose, Zuze (2009: 5) captures the essence of fortress conservation style, thus;

*This conventional approach to management of natural resources, including wildlife, reflected poor awareness about human issues. Ownership and decision-making concerning wildlife were taken away from rural communities who had to bear the cost of living with the wildlife, either through the effects of problem animals or the opportunity costs of limited access to land set aside as Protected Areas. However, if the rural communities were to tolerate and co-exist with wildlife, affected communities must derive sufficient benefit from it to offset their losses (Zuze, 2009: 5).*

The advent of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in Botswana in the late 1980s ushered in a new paradigm in natural resource management (Phuthago and Chanda, 2004: 57). Its primary objective was to conserve natural resources, particularly wildlife, in partnership with local communities. To achieve this, it was recognized that there should be some form of benefits accruing to the local communities. Therefore, these communities were encouraged to establish community-based organizations (CBOs). These are structures through which they could be assisted to set up and run small community tourism enterprises. This was almost formulaic, entailing; election of a committee by the community to facilitate the development of a constitution or Deed of Trusts and registering

that document with the relevant Authority. Depending on the resource to be utilized, the CBO would then develop a management or business plan and use it to apply for a lease agreement with the Land Authority for use of the designated piece of land. This would be followed by either opening tenders to sublease the area to an investment partner for photographic safari tourism activities or applying for a wildlife quota for sport hunting.

In recent times, more CBOs have been formed in areas with less wildlife abundance. These CBOs deal in a variety of things including; veldt products (e.g. thatching grass, firewood, *phane* [mopane worm], wild berries and *sengaparile* [devil's claw]), culture (e.g. traditional dance festivals, local cuisine, basketry, and other forms of art and crafts) as well as heritage (e.g. mainly heritage sites). Lekhubu Island is an example of a heritage site managed as a CBNRM project in Botswana.

## 2.2 Heritage Management

The politics of heritage management in sub-Saharan Africa have evolved through a number of phases in history. Some pre-historic sites were either living spaces or places of worship for indigenous communities of the region. Over time, these indigenous communities were displaced by African societies who, in turn, established themselves as local communities and traditional custodians of the heritage sites and resources, with their traditional chiefs, healers and spirit mediums being the intermediaries and controllers of access (Long, 2000). During the colonial period, Western legal dispensations and principles were imported, effectively shifting this custodianship role to the Western occupiers (Ndoro, 2000). Post-independence governments in the region simply helped to maintain and continue this legacy (Chirikure, Manyanga, Ndoro, Pwiti, 2010) with central governments establishing such arms as National Museums and Monuments and using them to identify, register, conserve and protect heritage sites in their own countries. Botswana is not an exception in this regard.

However, a new way of thinking has emerged in recent times. This thinking is premised on the recognition that for conservation of heritage sites to be successful it has to be undertaken in conjunction with those communities residing around the site (Grimwade and Carter, 2000). This approach also accepts that, in order for these communities to be actively involved in heritage conservation and management, there should be some benefits accruing to them (Chirikure, *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, the concept of CBNRM, which had initially been primarily aimed at wildlife conservation in Botswana, was extended to heritage management. To this end, any community residing close to a heritage site may establish and register a CBO through which it may seek rights to manage this resource (Zuze, 2009). Through these CBOs, communities could then establish tourism enterprises. It is worth noting that, unlike the management of other resources such as wildlife, heritage management usually poses a number of challenges. Among the myriad of challenges related to this is the fragile relationship between heritage management as an institution and practice, conservation aim, objectives and rationale, as well as tourism development.

## 2.3 Heritage Management, Conservation and Tourism

From the onset, tourism and heritage management have an awkward relationship (McKercher, Ho and Cros, 2005). At the most, the orientation of traditional heritage management and the objectives of tourism are different. On the one hand, the tradition of heritage management is premised on preservation of the heritage resources to near pristine and unspoilt status for posterity. This 'curatorial approach' has been observed in the manner

in which some heritage managers conceive their role as being guardians of the heritage as opposed to providers of public access to it (Garrod and Fyall, 2000). This orientation stands at odds with the objective of tourism development which obviously follows an income generation model (Keyser, 2009).

Tourism development relies on commodification. Cohen (1988) defines commodification as a process where 'things' acquire status of goods as a result of their being evaluated mainly according to their exchange value. If tourism is developed on the basis of heritage, an argument can be made that "as a part of the tourism industry, heritage is a cultural commodity" (Levine, Britt and Delle, 2005: 401). Understandably, some analysts note that tourism development has a potential to compromise the inherent value of the heritage resource by turning it into a market commodity. As McMorran (2008: 336) puts it "in the case of heritage tourism, commodification of the past can result in landscapes or relics being given a new meaning, or new landscapes being constructed to reflect society's collective memory". A counter-argument holds that blaming tourism for spoiling heritage may also compromise the good intended values of tourism development (MacKercher *et al.*, 2005). If anything, commoditization of heritage resources through tourism development is seen as a necessary evil because "without the opportunity of actively promoting public visitation, local communities are also denied possible economic benefits that may otherwise accrue" (Grimwade and Carter, 2000: 34).

To this end, the ideology of conservation often represents the necessary interface between these two seemingly unrelated representations of man's relationship with the heritage resource. The conservation interface becomes even more apparent where tourism is conceived and developed following a sustainability framework. Sustainable tourism development concerns itself not only with the needs of the current generation, but with those of the future generations as well (Saarinen, 2009). It advocates for the type of resource exploitation for the benefit of present generation, with the view to allow future generations an equitable ability to benefit from exploitation of the same resource base (Lane, 1994; Hunter, 1997).

Similarly, heritage management is premised on the idea that, whatever the present generation inherited from its forebears, should be handled in a way that the future generation shall also inherit it intact. Thus, heritage management is permeated by 'relationships between people, objects and memories that serves present and future generations' (Levine *et al.*, 2005: 401). It is this shared concern for present and future generations between heritage management and sustainable tourism development that underlines the importance of the conservation interface. As MacKercher *et al.*, (2005: 539) argue, "...the sharing of the resource creates partnership opportunities, whereby mutually beneficial outcomes may be achieved". Put differently, "...heritage and sustainability evidently share a common theme of inheritance" (Fyall and Garrod, 1998: 214). Therefore, heritage management and sustainable tourism development may be considered compatible on this note.

Some analysts have embraced this optimism about partnership and mutually beneficial outcomes with caution, particularly where small scale baseline heritage resources are being managed as tourism sites by local communities. It has been argued that, management of small scale heritage sites should make conservation and retention of the site's heritage values its core business. In essence, the argument goes, "economic gain should not, of course, be seen as the primary goal of conservation but it is, nonetheless, a worthy secondary aim" (Grimwade and Carter, 2000: 36). This assertion is premised on the acknowledgement that,

while these small sites have a potential to generate economic income to the local communities, this potential is limited by their scale. Therefore, if economic gain were to be the primary goal in their management, their inability to generate sufficiently high returns would lead to frustrations and disillusionment on the part of the communities and the management.

Literature indicates that the idea of pricing for heritage resources has always been a sticking point among heritage managers (Garrod and Fyall, 2000). On the one hand, there is a school of thought that advocates for at least 'free public access' to the heritage sites or a 'token fee' at the maximum. Advocates of this dispensation argue that putting a price tag to some heritage resource contradicts the idea that these heritage resources are for everyone. They maintain that, pricing a public resource among others, acts as a policy of economic exclusion as the poor and other ordinary members of society would not be able to access such resources (Hodges and Watson, 2000). Furthermore, pricing heritage resources has been faulted for its failure to capture the non-economic value of the resources with the result that such resources are inevitably undervalued (Grimwade and Carter, 2000).

Another school of thought advocates for 'user pays' principle in the management of heritage resources. According to proponents of this paradigm, pricing a heritage resource has a number of advantages for both the resources and the society in general. Among others; a price can be used to control visitor numbers to the site, thus encouraging its sustainability; setting some access fee helps generate funds for conservation of the same resource; pricing a resource serves to underline the value and importance of the resource as well as the need to share in its conservation by its visitors; pricing a resource can contribute to improved standards of service delivery and an attendant value for money to the visitors (Fyall and Garrod, 1998).

In light of this ongoing debate, countries around the world have elected different approaches with different justifications within their own contexts. Botswana is a case in point. Obviously, with the long standing tradition of government responsibility of protection over heritage resources in Botswana, these sites were never viewed as potential commercial entities. The primary government's role was never perceived as business. Rather, it was seen as custodianship on behalf of the nation. However, with the emerging paradigm shift towards shared resource management and conservation as well as emphasis on benefits accruing to the local communities, heritage resources in the country are slowly being turned into tourism products managed through the CBNRM model.

## **2.4 Presentation**

According to Grimwade and Carter (2000), interpretation at heritage sites is a critical tool for their conservation. Interpretation involves explaining values and significance of the sites to the local community as well as to visitors (Hodges and Watson, 2000). To this end, heritage interpretation should be done appropriately, based on correct information and by the right people. Therefore, Grimwade and Carter (2000: 44) recognize that "the greatest risks of presenting small rural heritage sites relate to who is responsible for management". On the one hand, they note that, presentation by well intentioned, but inadequately skilled locals may be problematic, not least because of the potential danger of not being able to adequately sustain interest from visitors. On the other hand, if the management and presentation of such sites is located with external entities, the danger of a local community losing their 'sense of ownership' of the site is ever present. It can also be added that the potential for

misrepresentation and distortion also exists. Therefore, this predicament calls for a balance to be struck between legitimacy of ownership and adequacy of heritage presentation skills.

### 3 STUDY SITE AND METHODS

#### 3.1 Geographical Description of Study Setting and Site

The empirical study for this paper was conducted in the Mmatshumu village. This rural village of approximately 1600 people is located on the southern margins of Makgadikgadi pans. Owing to the poor soils of Makgadikgadi pans landscape, subsistence agriculture is the main livelihood activity for the local people, with pastoral farming being more popular than arable (DEA and CAR, 2010). Other than cattle production, Makgadikgadi pans landscape is also conducive for certain species of wildlife and thus has a reasonable tourism potential. Mmatshumu community currently operates a culture and heritage tourism venture Lekhubu Island located 45 kilometers north of the village. Lekhubu Island covers an area of approximately 60 hectares within the interior of Makgadikgadi pans. It is characterized by an outcrop of bare rock kopjes interspersed with a unique vegetation of baobab (*Adansonia Didgitata*) and African star chestnut (*Sterculia Africana*) trees as well as some umbrella thorn trees and grass savanna. This Island may be reached from two directions. The shortest route is a 45 km stretch from Mmatshumu village via the Mokumojena veterinary cordon fence gate. The longest is a 100 km road connection to the Francistown-Nata highway through Tshwagong veterinary gate (Segokgo, 2006). Both roads are rough and rugged requiring use of 4 wheel drive vehicles.

Lekhubu Island is a heritage site of national importance having been declared a National Monument in 1938. Protection of such features is realized under the country's National Monuments and Relics Act (Government of Botswana, 1970; 2001). In addition, the Island has always had cultural and religious significance for the residents of Mmatshumu village and the surrounding localities. Local communities in this area have used the area for ancestral worship, traditional and cultural rituals as well as for hunting purposes. Among the archaeological features found at the island is the popular shrine (Campbell, 1991) believed to have served as the initiation center for boys during the 17<sup>th</sup> century (see Campbell, 1991; Huffman, 1996). In the absence of accurate dating, researchers believe that the stone wall was either used as a fort during times of war while others contend that it was simply symbolic (van Waarden, 1998; Huffman, 1996). Other features include heaps of stones arranged in grave like formation. It has been suggested that these heaps marked the graves of those boys who passed away from hemorrhage during circumcision. An alternative explanation is that at the end of the initiation, boys built those heaps as a sign of their legacy. Furthermore, some pottery and fragment remains and beads made from shells and bones have also been found at the site.

#### 3.2 Gaing'O Community Trust (GCT)

For purposes administrative and operational purposes, the community of Mmatshumu formed a community-based organization (CBO) called Gaing'O Community Trust (GCT) in 1997. This was done in accordance with established CBNRM guidelines wherein for any community to qualify to participate in CBNRM it is required to form a CBO. A CBO is a legal entity with a mandate to run business on behalf of the community. It is empowered to enter into legal transactions and has the legal capacity to either sue or be sued as an entity.

Formation of such CBOs is usually facilitated by either state organs like the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In the case of GCT formation this facilitation role was performed by, among others, Department of Museums and Monuments as well as Permaculture Trust. While the former is a government organ, the latter is a NGO promoting sustainable use of natural resources in the country.

At the time of forming the GCT there was a concern that Lekhubu Island resources were being exploited by non-residents for economic benefits at the exclusion of Mmatshumu residents. According to the local chief, it was felt that unregulated tourism activity at the island would ultimately destroy its historical, cultural and natural resources (Mmatshumu chief, personal communication). Indications were that some individuals and groups of people were, actually, removing some arte-facts from the site without permission, a practice in contravention of the code of conduct applicable to visitors to sites of this nature (Lekhubu field assistant, personal communication). The purpose of forming the GCT was, therefore, to provide a forum through which the community of Mmatshumu could gain control of the Island and the resources found therein.

It was envisaged that once equipped with such control the community would then mobilize the resources to generate income that would be used to uplift their socio-economic conditions as well as ensure continued conservation of the Island's environment and resources. The GCT was expected to draft a management plan outlining how the conservation and utilization of Lekhubu resources would be carried out. The GCT engaged a consultant for this work. The outcome of the consultancy was Lekhubu Island Management and Development Plan (LIMDP) of 1997. The objective was to profile the various aspects of the environment amenable to tourism development with the view to ensuring conservation of the area's archaeological, aesthetic and environmental integrity. Therefore, the LIMDP spelt out the various development scenarios of the Island and presented them within the segments of development plan, management plan and environmental impact assessment program. According to the LIMDP (1997), for the GCT to actualize its role as a vehicle of empowerment it had to 1) protect and preserve the archaeological site on the island; 2) preserve natural environment; 3) preserve traditional cultural practices which have been responsible for the protection of the site until recently; 4) utilize Lekhubu Island as a stimulant for sustainable natural resource development; 5) gain benefit from tourism by preserving the natural resources and to use them for the benefit of the residents, as well as; 6) encourage wildlife in the surrounding areas.

At the time of the research, Lekhubu Island offers outdoor camping and guided walks to different sites of the Island. Opportunities for cycling and off-road motor or quad biking were also available for those visitors able to bring their own bikes. Plans were also underway to incorporate other aspects such as guided walks to the flamingo nesting site.

### **3.3 Research Process and Material**

The primary research material for this work was collected during the first half of 2012. A mixed method qualitative approach was adopted. A total of 17 long interviews were conducted, categorized as key informant, in-depth and interview. These interviews targeted those individuals considered information-rich about Lekhubu Island project because of their role in its development and operations. A total of five in-depth interviews were conducted involving community civic and tribal leaders such as the village development committee (VDC) chairperson and secretary, incumbent and retired local chiefs and area councilor. Six

key informant interviews were conducted with the local Trust manager, board chairperson and secretary, ordinary board member and former board chairperson as well as the site field assistant. Furthermore, six members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) were also interviewed.

In addition, seven focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with ordinary members of the community in Mmatshumu village. These individuals were invited to attend FGD sessions at specific times and locations within the village. Invitations were made by way of visits to individual homesteads, clinics, shebeens (beer brewing and selling outlets), *Ipelegeng* sites (*Ipelegeng* is a government initiated labour intensive scheme involving menial works such as bush and grass clearing e.t.c). The FGDs were comprised of persons of various demographic profile mixes. The idea behind making different group compositions was to allow for discussions between persons of similar demographics as well as between persons across different demographics. This was to observe if there were any variations and similarities between in information given by different group compositions. In addition to the long interviews and FGDs some informal discussions were conducted with other members of the community on an ad hoc basis. Table 1 summarizes FGD compositions from the study.

**Table 1: Focus Group Numbers and Compositions**

Group	FGD composition	M	F	Total	Age range
FGDa1	Mixed gender- mixed age	8	8	16	17–69 years
FGDa2	Male only- youth	12	-	12	16–31 years
FGDa3	Female only- adult	-	12	12	39–57 years
FGDa4	Mixed gender- youth	8	4	12	17–32 years
FGDa5	Male only- adult	9	-	9	50–78 years
FGDa6	Male only- elderly	8	-	8	65–81 years
FGDb1	Female only- youth	-	12	12	16–35 years

## 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Achievements

#### 1. Establishment of Paid Access Modalities

Since Lekhubu Island was established as a tourism site, a moderate version of the ‘user pays’ model has been put in place. Here, it is deemed moderate because, while the charge is usually slightly above the token charged by government for similar sites, the tendency is usually to keep it lower than entry fees to other tourism destinations in general. This situation, obviously, lends itself to the explanations given by Garrod and Fyall (2000) about heritage managers’ perceptions of heritage pricing. During the author’s discussions with members of the Board and guides at Lekhubu, it emerged that, while they all had a vision for the project to grow and generate higher returns in the future, they were generally weary of charging a high entry fee. One of the reasons frequently advanced was that, since the project is still at its infancy, higher entry fees at this point may keep away potential visitors and thus affect its growth in popularity. As one of the guides put it, Lekhubu relies heavily on word of mouth for marketing. Another concern raised about higher entry fees was that, with very minimum developments at the site, higher fees would be unjustified because visitors would have higher expectations prior to their arrival.

Besides the concerns about pricing, like many other CBNRM projects in the country, Lekhubu project has managed to establish clear payment modalities. According to management of Lekhubu, there are two ways in which a visitor to Lekhubu Island may make payments. The first is through an electronic bank transfer of funds into the project's account. This option is said to be used mainly by international tourists. Another is where visitors pay on arrival. This payment may be made either at the project office in Mmatshumu or at the site in Lekhubu. All monies received are recorded and customers issued with official receipts. Establishment of these payment modalities is considered a success as it enables the project to receive and keep track of income accruing through visits to the site.

## **2. Presentation by Local Community Guides**

In the case of Lekhubu Island, presentation and conservation of the site are the responsibility of local guides. While most of the guides employed by the Trust do not have any formal training, they have been doing the job for the last 8 years, during which time they have amassed a considerable wealth of skills and knowledge about the island. One of the guides based at the site is an employee of the National Museum. He represents the only formally trained personnel at the site. During the author's stay and discussions with the guides at Lekhubu Island, it became apparent that they derived a considerable sense of pride from being tasked with looking after and presenting the site and its history to visitors. As one of the guides suggested, "I feel so lucky to be among this group of men and women looking after Lekhubu Island. I feel I am making a very crucial contribution towards preserving my own community's roots as well as making that known to the rest of the world" (Guide 1, personal communication). Another guide noted,

*since I started working here some 8 years ago, I have managed to interact with hundreds of visitors from all over the world including South Africa, Germany, USA, Montenegro, even some of the countries I did not know existed before. The way I feel now, from these contacts, is that I have friends all over the world. Most importantly, these people have gone back to tell others that there is a little village called Mmatshumu and a small fascinating island called Lekhubu somewhere in Botswana. That is why I feel it is my responsibility to always make them feel at home while at this island. I know I'm representing my people and strive to demonstrate their hospitable character to all visitors here (Guide 2, personal communication)*

The sense of pride derived from local management of Lekhubu Island was also evident during interviews with community leaders as well as during FGDs. One of the most popular phrase used in relation to the Lekhubu Island project was "*Lekhubu e re baya mo mmepeng*", loosely translated into "Lekhubu Island project is putting us on the map". In essence, there is a clear appreciation among Mmatshumu community members that the existence of the project is helping in promoting the name of their village. This is a positive sign.

## **4.2 Challenges**

### **1. Lack of Communication between Stakeholders**

Evidence of poor information sharing between stakeholders emerged, primarily from individual interviews. Among members of the TAC, a critical complaint was raised to the effect that new members joining the TAC are not normally brought up to speed with the

developments on the ground. As a result, there is sometimes a feeling of isolation and frustration as such members tend to feel left behind. This is significant as it has a potential to impact negatively on the project's continuity. Continuity is a cornerstone of any project, especially in business. One way of ensuring continuity of development, is through proper information sharing between those leaving office and those coming after them. Central to this process is proper handing over of all necessary documents as well as update on all ongoing and planned development. From the interviews with members of previous and current Board of Trustees, it became evident that there is little, if any information exchange concerning the development and running of Lekhubu project. Members of the current Board of Trustees proclaimed ignorance on a number of developments concerning the running of Lekhubu project. For instance, they emphasized that they were not even sure if the structures being built at the Island are either in accordance with BTO standards or Monuments and Relics Act stipulations. This coupled with their continued insistence that they lacked the necessary skills and knowledge on how to run a conservation and tourism project on behalf of the community are a cause for concern about the future of the project.

## 2. Compatibility of Development and the Site

Any development taking place at Lekhubu Island may be viewed from different perspectives. On the one hand, Lekhubu is a heritage site protected under the Monuments and Relics Act of 1970 (Chapter 59:03) (plate 1). In part, the Act referred to states that,

*“no development of land within one kilometer of any national monument shall take place without the Minister's prior written approval, which approval shall not be granted unless the Minister is satisfied that- (a) such development will not be incompatible with the preservation of the national monument; or (b) it is in the national interest for such development to be undertaken”... “the relevant land board, council or other land authority, as the case may be, for the area in which the national monument is situated, shall advise the commissioner of any developments that are likely to interfere with the monument's integrity, setting or atmosphere”* (Government of Botswana, 1970, chapter 59:03–9)

On the other hand, any tourism oriented structural development taking place at Lekhubu should, at least, adhere to the standards set by the Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO) in order that such structure can be eligible for grading. Furthermore, development of Lekhubu Island into a tourism destination is assumed to an ecotourism model, so as to be sustainable (Segokgo, 2006). In essence, ecotourism principles advocate for the type of tourism development which does not spoil the appearance and ambience of the environment within which it takes place (Weaver, 2002). However, during the field work leading to this paper, a number of observations made suggested that some of the developments at the Island may be in contravention of some of the principles noted. To begin with, the current Board of Trustees does not know if the development of the reception area observed the requirements in the Monuments and Relics Act of 1970. According to members of the Board chairperson and secretary, they are in the dark about any existence of such information because no proper handing over from the previous to the current Boards was done. Furthermore these Board members noted that no representative of the National Museum, besides the resident guide, have visited them in well over 2 years. As a result, they felt that they had been deprived of expert advice from Museum personnel for the same time period.

Community-based tourism enterprises in Botswana are generally expected to follow the ecotourism business model. One of the primary tenets of ecotourism relates to the up-keep

and maintenance of local atmosphere, landscape and ambience. The idea is that, any structural development undertakings should not spoil the scenery and ambience of the surrounding. In other words, the buildings and other man-made structures created should blend well with the view of the site. The nature of the reception was brought under scrutiny by some interviewees. One of the guides at the site noted that the building had taking a number of shapes before it came to look the way it does today. According to him, the initial plans were modified a few times during the construction period, with the result that the building does not look anything like it was initially conceive. He believes the size of the building has, consequently increased considerably making it a huge structure notable from a distance. Another guide recalled the number of instances where visitors have complained about the unsightly building in the Island. In fact, one of the concerned TAC members referred to this building and the ‘giant white structure in the island’.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

“The idea of managing cultural heritage assets as products for tourism consumption is relatively new” (Ho and McKercher, 2004: 256). This is, particularly true in the Southern African region. Therefore, “given the sad history of alienation of many sub-Saharan local communities in the management of their heritage until recent times, the discourse of community participation naturally stimulated immense hope for heritage managers and communities alike” (Chirikure *et al.*, 2010: 32). The idea that through this arrangement, ownership, responsibility and control over heritage resources can be restored to the traditional custodians speaks clearly to the ideology of social justice. Furthermore, the prospects of economic benefits deriving from such restoration accruing to the local communities is in sync with the principle of economic sustainability. Despite the debate that surrounds the issue of heritage pricing, adoption of the ‘user pays’ principle is gaining currency (Garrod and Fyall, 2000), *albeit* moderately within the heritage management circles. Chirikure *et al.*, (2010) allude to the mixed results that this process of heritage commoditization through community participation has yielded. To this end, these authors assert that each case should be treated as a separate one within its own context. They warn against simple generalizations that do not account for individual case contexts and merits.

This paper arrives at a similar conclusion. It is noted here that, Lekhubu project has realized mixed results since its inception. Among the success stories of Lekhubu project is its ability to use local guides for presentation of Lekhubu Island and attendant cultivation of pride in the community as well as establishment of institutions and payment modalities for visitations. On the downside, the challenge of poor information sharing between stakeholders is evident as is that of general lack of capacity (skills and knowledge) among key stakeholders with the result that questionable decisions have been taken. While acknowledging the necessity of turning heritage resources into tourism products for the involvement and benefit of local communities in the management of such resources, this paper notes that heritage management is a special area that requires relevant training. It advocates for proper mobilization and training of communities and CBOs involved in this business so as to ensure that the resources are exploited and managed sustainably. Furthermore, the paper opines that heritage management for tourism development should embrace sustainability principles so as to ensure that resources are not lost.

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