

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Re-defining the rural space in the Kuiseb Delta: Examining the potential tourism benefits for the Topnaars in Namibia**

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Accepted 1 December, 2011

**The purpose of the study was to redefine the rural space and explore the potential tourism benefits for the Topnaars in the Kuiseb Delta. Kuiseb Delta has unparalleled archeological/historical sites of which 235 have been well researched. The historical sites are being threatened by unauthorized tourism and recreational activities. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism proclaimed community concessions recently which hold out hope for the Topnaar and other communities' future to benefit from tourism. Topnaars are marginalized and are increasingly dispersing into adjacent towns or mines. The study utilised a naturalistic inquiry which is based on an illuminative approach. This involved the use of focus group interviews with participants in the tourism industry and a key informant technique with the Topnaar community. The method followed was important as it enabled the researchers to understand the principles underpinning potential community benefits and the industry's role in tourism development in the Kuiseb Delta. The study unearthed that the proposed tourism activities are ideally located and offer unique tourism opportunities for the Topnaars. The proposed tourism products appeals to a growing market segment and could be marketed through binding market agreements with chosen partners. In addition, the project could be viable and could be operated at marginal cash. The study recommends the granting of a concession to the Topnaar community, the proclamation of the area as a 'conservation area' in terms of the 'heritage act', development of a management plan and an environmental impact assessment, attracting private sector partnership and providing of appropriate training for tour guides. The study further recommends continued archeological survey and documentation of additional cultural/archeological sites.**

**Key words:** Tourism, community benefits, sustainable development, rural space, tourism products.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Kuiseb River meanders from the central region of the Namib Desert forming a delta as it flows into the Atlantic Ocean (Kinahan, 2000). The Topnaars have lived in this delta which is located near the present City of Walvis Bay

for approximately 2,000 years ago. They are an offshoot of the Nama people. The group known as Aonin was so closely associated with the sea such that they were once known as 'strandlopers', which translates to 'beach walkers' (Kinahan, 1991). They have survived on herding goats and living a nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle. The relatively rich plant life of the Kuiseb River valley provided them with additional sources of food, particularly the well-known nara melon (craven and Marais, 1986).

Although land is a communal resource, groups of nara

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Figure 1. Map of study area.

bushes belong to specific families and groups. Harvesting of the nara is traditionally done by men making it a rich cultural ritual. As a result of their unique culture, a number of tour operators include them in their itinerary visits to the Topnaar community. The recent proclamation of community concessions by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET, 2007) could enable the Topnaar to earn income from tourism directly and live as a coherent cultural group, thus holding out hope for their future.

Re-defining the Kuiseb Delta's rural space through tourism and by adopting a Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) model being applied in other parts of Namibia can improve their livelihoods, bio-diversity, ecosystem conservation and environmental protection.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In August 2009, an application for a concession, along the Kuiseb Delta was submitted to MET officials with the main aim of establishing a Community-Based Tourism Enterprise (CBTE) called the Kuiseb Delta Development Project (KDDP). Subsequently, the Kuiseb Delta

Development Trust (KDDT) was registered on April 12 2010 through a Trust Deed in terms of the Trust Monies Protection Act. KDDT is a legal entity that can venture into formal business agreements with business partners. The trust is being spearheaded by seven (7) trustees from the Topnaar community with the blessing of the Topnaar Traditional Authority. The trust comprises of 600 registered members. The concession which KDDT applied for spans 15 ha of real estate situated to the east from Walvis Bay. The area is threatened by unauthorized tourism and recreational activities (Kinahan, 2000) (Figure 1). The trust would like exclusive rights to the archeological/historical sites that are linked to the Topnaar community (Kinahan, 2001). By acquiring such concession rights to this area, the trust will be able to establish a central entry to the concession, to safe guard and manage the heritage/archaeological sites that date 2000 years on behalf of the community.

Sites include customary land, graves, waterholes, elephant tracks and historical art (Kinahan, 2000). Thus, the conception will entail erecting an 18 km barrier around important archaeological sites in the Kuiseb Delta with a reception area that includes a kiosk, information and booking center and a gallery for information

display/site museum. The concession therefore seeks to sustainably utilize resources in the Kuiseb Delta.

### **The aim of the study**

Tourism has continued to play a significant role in local economic development. Tourism-based development approaches can be found in communities of all sizes on the rural to urban continuum (Phillips, 2008), hence it has been termed the world's largest industry (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). The continued growth of the World Tourism Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is forecast to increase in real terms. Whilst the economic and societal significance of tourism varies considerably across the global stage (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001), its contribution towards local economic development will continue to be realized (Jones and Munday, 2001). This paper supports the notion that tourism can shape development outcomes for regions, individuals, households and communities, therefore it aims to interrogate this subject by re-defining the rural space for tourism purposes in order to benefit the poor. The study seeks to identify sustainable tourism products and activities thereof in the Kuiseb Delta. Furthermore, the study examines potential benefits to the KD community since tourism is an intermediate level of social life that provides a very important facet for influencing economic development outcomes.

### **Statement of the problem**

The role of tourism in local economic development remains a topical issue (Mbaiwa, 2005; Scheyvens, 2000) and it has been used as an alternative development strategy for economic and social regeneration of rural areas (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004). Community based tourism (CBT) is defined as an example of community development imposter driven by economic imperatives and a neo-liberal agenda (Manyara and Jones, 2007), rather than values of empowerment and social justice (Van Der Duim and Caalders, 2008). Whilst it is managed and owned by the community, for the community, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life (Richards, 2009) tourism benefits rarely filter to the needy. It has been argued that tourism can be foreign owned, foreign led and foreign controlled in which case it can have a detrimental effect on local economic development (Tosun, 2000). Albeit this argument, Manyara and Jones (2007) believe that if the local communities are highly involved in tourism through various community initiatives, the benefits would accrue to them. However, Jones and Munday (2001) argue that in more peripheral areas, external ownership of capital is evident, hence the low local retention of value added.

Questions have therefore been raised regarding the

levels of earnings, skills development, casual and seasonal employment within tourist related industries (Mbaiwa, 2005; Tosun, 2000; Scheyvens, 2000).

The devolution of rights over natural resources to rural people (NACSO, 2010) has enabled communities to sustainably manage their natural resources through Community Based Natural Resources Management initiatives which emphasizes on common property resource management regimes as a vehicle for community resource management (Novelli and Gebhardt, 2007). It has been observed that conservancies have not fully empowered local communities to make their own decisions about their own resources while enabling them to benefit from their resources (NACSO, 2004) in improving their livelihoods. CBNRM can suffer from the same flaws that threaten all forms of decentralized management (NACSO, 2004). Devolving decision-making power to the local level does not guarantee the poor a role in the process. The process may not create new opportunities for marginalized groups to gain control of local resources and capture more of the economic benefits but simply strengthen the local elite. Such a decentralized approach benefits mostly better-organized groups that are able to capitalize on the process (Scheyvens, 2000; Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004). In a blatant manipulation of the system, local elites can take advantage of community members that are not yet aware of how to use the law to protect and promote their interests thereby cutting off many of the poor out of benefits from community based tourism (CBT) (Manyara and Jones, 2007; Jamal and Stronza, 2009).

Nevertheless, the integration of tourism into the development agenda of a local area can bring about benefits through capacity building of the young people (Goodwin, 2008; Katjiuongua, 2008), which adds a new dimension towards the security of a place, solidarity and involvement of all stakeholders (Jones and Munday, 2001). Sometimes, within the local area, it is difficult to find people who are fully involved or organizations that are willing to set up community projects. This problem is exacerbated by lack of skills within the community (Novelli and Gebhardt, 2007). Locally trained people usually do not stay within the local area. They become mobile as they are attracted to better paying jobs elsewhere (Jones and Munday, 2001). Therefore, what are the potential tourism benefits that can accrue to the Topnaars in the Kuiseb Delta in Namibia?

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study utilised a naturalistic inquiry which is based on an illuminative approach. The proponents of a naturalistic inquiry are based on qualitative research which is carried out in a natural environment. Illuminative evaluation is a research strategy that takes into account the wider contexts around an evaluation activity and is primarily concerned with description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction (Andrews and Du Toit, 2010).

The approach is based on overlapping stages of observation,

inquiry and seeking explanations. The strategy was found to be adaptable and eclectic. Several meetings were conducted with the Topnaar community (24) who were randomly selected, the Traditional Authority (1), Management Committee (8) and the Tourism operators (5). One focus group meeting (20) was held at Walvis Bay with all stakeholders. The study also involved in-depth interviews with participants (15) from the tourism industry particularly those offering tented campsites and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (5) focusing on CBT. This was important as it enabled the researchers an understanding of the principles underpinning community benefits and the industry's role in tourism development in the Kuiseb Delta. Consequently, a total of 50 people participated in the study.

To ensure validity and reliability of the study, a pilot study was conducted with 20 people deemed to represent the target population. Both structured and unstructured questionnaires were used. In-depth interviews followed an unstructured interview guide. To ensure easy understanding, a translator from the Topnaar community was sought, which made the administering of the questionnaires easy.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### Tourism opportunities in the Erongo Region

Based on the official tourism statistics for 2009 (MET, 2009) regarding the origin of visitors to the coast, Namibians constitute 37%, followed by Germans at 21% and others from South Africa and the Region (17%). In the region, there are about 379 registered accommodation units offering 2,948 bed nights in Erongo. This constitutes the highest number of facilities in any region in Namibia. These facilities registered a 33% occupancy which was higher than the national occupancy rate. During the period of 2008/2009, the occupancy rate of all establishments in Erongo registered an increase in occupancy from 29 to 33%. These figures reflect the potential business that can be derived from the region but not necessarily for campsites. In terms of type of accommodation, there are 31 registered rest camps offering 748 rooms or 1,902 beds with an occupancy rate of 28%. There are also 17 registered tented camps with 183 rooms (that is 381 beds) achieving 43% occupancy. Most rest camps are owned by big operators, hence an exceptionally high occupancy rate. There are 12 tented lodges offering 151 rooms or 328 beds registering a 37% occupancy rate.

The nearest performers are Hotel Pensions with 39%. This shows preference by the market for camping and tented camps in particular.

### Possible tourism products

The proposal by the trust to establish tented camps was welcomed by all tourism operators that were interviewed which were seen to be suitable for cultural and eco-tourists (60%). A substantial number of respondents indicated that there is a significant market potential for

scenery and nature experiences (40%). Consequently, they expressed willingness to consider entering into a joint venture with the trust for tourist age groups ranging from 24 to 60 years (60%). It is worth noting that the marketing of a tourism product requires a costly outlay in terms of brochures, courtesy visits to intermediaries and it is competitive, hence the need for marketing collaboration. The study noted that 'eco-travelers' are well read and well educated regarding the outdoor life and national geographic scenes (75%) and they may not require intensive marketing. In view of the cost of advertising, it is prudent that the trust enters into binding marketing agreements with existing chosen commercial partners. Based on an intensive profiling and research work, it is apparent that the proposed campsites appeal to a wide market segment varying from economically comfortable, adventurous groups who prefer scenic driving, nature appreciation to those seeking soft adventures. The major highlights are given in Table 1.

The project provides congruency between the offering of the Kuiseb Delta trails and the prospective trail users. This is so because environmental concerns which are considered important by eco-tourists are taken into account (25%). This raises positive prospects given that soft adventure continues to increase in demand (55%). Since eco-vacations constitute the significant growth in the travel trade worldwide (65%), this product will attract a wider international market segment.

### Potential tourism activities

There are a number of tourism activities that are expected to complement than compete with existing ones. The trust intends to cooperate with commercial operators and offer new opportunities as reflected in Table 2. The results shows that the Kuiseb Delta trails need to be formalized. This will enable tourists to follow a clearly delineated path and use established tented camps sites (35%). Furthermore, the results indicate that tenure agreements for the trails/or drives need to be developed to provide Topnaar cultural performances at Topnaar settlements (40%) and viewing of Kuiseb Canyons (30%). The study noted that it is paramount to conduct guided walks to monument sites at Ururas (35%). Furthermore, the study showed that most hikers and dune drivers prefer undertaking long distances, however the most difficult drives should be undertaken by experienced drivers and professional guides. Referring to environmental management, the results highlight that management plans and mitigative measures (40%) regarding the environment have to be created. This should be supported by visible signage for the trails/drives. However, in order to balance natural resources management and tourism activities, the respondents further recommend the creation of a Kuiseb Delta Management committee which will develop a

**Table 1.** Possible tourism products.

Major highlights of tourism products	Rating of product in percentage (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
The cultural and eco-tourists are strong joiners that is with special interest groups, clubs and other organizations.	0.00	0.00	0.15	0.25	0.60
The scenery and nature experiences are of paramount importance such as the unspoiled and undisturbed natural environment.	0.10	0.05	0.40	0.20	0.25
The age groups are broad based ranging from 24 to 60.	0.00	0.15	0.05	0.60	0.20
Eco-travelers are well read and well educated regarding the outdoor life and national geographic scenes.	0.00	0.00	0.15	0.10	0.75
Walking trails and particularly hiking are the highest anticipated activities.	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.45	0.30
There is a sturdy growth in awareness and education on eco-traveling.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.70
Environmental concerns are particularly important to eco-tourists' destination selection.	0.05	0.15	0.05	0.50	0.25
It has been noted that eco-vacations constitute the significant growth in the travel trade worldwide.	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.15	0.65
Soft adventures continue to increase in demand.	0.00	0.10	0.05	0.55	0.30

**Table 2.** Possible tourism activities.

Potential tourism product	Rating of product in percentage (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Establishment of tented sites at Homeb, Ururas, Scheppmansdorp and nursery site.	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.35	0.15
Provide Topnaar cultural performances at Topnaar settlements.	0.00	0.15	0.20	0.25	0.40
Viewing of Kuiseb Canyons.	0.05	0.15	0.25	0.30	0.25
Conduct of guided walks to monument sites at Ururas.	0.10	0.10	0.25	0.35	0.20
Donkey cart rides.	0.05	0.10	0.25	0.15	0.45
Management plans and mitigative measures regarding the environment.	0.05	0.10	0.20	0.25	0.40
Provide walking trails for bird enthusiasts including nara harvesting, etc.	0.00	0.15	0.25	0.20	0.40
Undertake educational/historical tour.	0.20	0.20	0.25	0.15	0.20

management strategy for drive/hiking trails. Therefore, the committee should provide regular plans and reports on the activities and intended tourism plans in the area.

Due to the sensitivity of the place, the study notes the need to develop a process for mitigating conflicts where public and private property rights may be violated and explore liability issues where there is no formal land tenure agreement in place. Other activities identified were the provision of walking trails for bird enthusiasts including nara harvesting, etc (40%) and undertaking of educational/historical tours (25%) in the KD community.

Such eco-friendly activities will reduce the pressure on

the environment.

### Marketing strategies for Kuiseb Delta

Within the concession itself, there is a 'rest camp'. This 'rest camp' is a joint venture between Topnaar Traditional Authority and Uris Adventure. The facility was viewed as being both complementary and a competitor. This applies also to the Gobabeb concession. Within Erongo itself, there is likely to be direct competition from Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR) camps at the coast, Messum

**Table 3.** Marketing the tourism products.

Marketing strategy	Rating of strategy in percentage (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Developing printed materials.	0.15	0.20	0.25	0.20	0.20
Advertising and promotion.	0.10	0.20	0.15	35	0.20
Attract media attention through eco-friendly activities.	0.05	0.15	0.30	0.25	0.25
Developing a positioning strategy for Kuiseb Delta.	0.15	0.10	0.10	0.20	0.45
Develop a multi trail strategy (develop distinct trails such as scenic drives, cultural tourism, Nara harvest for particular markets).	0.05	0.15	0.10	0.30	0.40
Develop a basic website to other operators including NTB.	0.15	0.20	0.15	0.35	0.15
Use of public relations.	0.10	0.05	0.15	0.40	0.30
Use of personalities and endorsement.	0.05	0.05	0.25	0.35	0.30
Develop literature based on the history of the area.	0.15	0.20	0.25	0.20	0.20
Host work parties and events.	0.00	0.10	0.20	0.25	0.45
Proclaim heritage sights in the area.	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.40	0.55
Joint marketing for all regional hiking/drive trails.	0.05	0.10	0.30	0.50	0.05
Use of locals and tourists as ambassadors.	0.10	0.05	0.15	0.30	0.40

Crater Conservancy and Spitzkoppe camp site. To ensure that the KD tourism products remain competitive, the following marketing techniques should be applied (Table 3). Outdoor recreation was rated as the major activity preferred by local and international eco-tourists. Dune activities were categorized to include recreational trips to areas without roads, undeveloped natural areas that can be reached only through trails, air balloon, and/or sand boating. The study revealed that there is need to provide accurate information and more so disseminate this information through the 'Internet' and word of mouth and other useful referral sources. The following table highlights the key findings regarding tourism activities identified by respondents. The attractiveness of the aforementioned tourism products by KDDT implies that tourists place great emphasis on the quality of walking trails and scenic drives. This implies that varying activities, multiple uses, interpretive or guiding are a strong selling point. Based on the extensive visitor profiling (that is eco-tourists, hikers, adventure tourists etc) at the Kuiseb delta, the study shows that the Kuiseb delta development project appeals to a broad based, economically comfortable, somewhat adventurous

group who prefer hiking, dune driving, nature appreciation and soft adventures.

Based on the envisaged activities which are environmentally sensitive in the Kuiseb Delta, the study recommends training of local guides to undertake professional environmental and cultural heritage interpretation exercises.

### **Benefits of community based tourism in the Kuiseb Delta**

The study has identified that by re-defining the rural space in the Kuiseb Delta, the Topnaar community can benefit from access to subsistence and commercial opportunities (25%) and share revenues from the concession activities (30%). Amongst the benefits identified were the employment opportunities (32%) and support to alternative livelihoods activities (45%) and infrastructural development (37%). These were seen as the direct benefits. Using tourism as a strategy for community upliftment was also seen as a way of strengthening organizational development (40%) which

**Table 4.** Benefits of community based tourism in the Kuiseb Delta.

Direct benefits	Rating in percentage (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Access to subsistence and commercial opportunities.	0.18	0.15	0.20	0.25	0.22
Sharing of revenues from the concession activities.	0.12	0.18	0.20	30	0.20
Employment.	0.08	0.12	0.32	0.23	0.25
Support from alternative livelihood activities.	0.11	0.14	0.12	0.18	0.45
Infrastructural development (schools, clinics, roads, etc.).	0.05	0.11	0.10	0.30	0.37
<b>Indirect benefits</b>	0.10	0.20	0.18	0.22	0.30
Organizational development and strengthening.	0.04	0.07	0.15	0.40	0.32
New alliances (for example with NGOs, Tour Operators, etc).	0.08	0.05	0.22	0.30	0.35
New channels of communication with government.	0.10	0.25	0.27	0.18	0.20
Technical and managerial capacity building.	0.00	0.10	0.20	0.30	0.40
Diversification of livelihoods/income.	0.07	0.08	0.10	0.35	0.40
Political empowerment.	0.05	0.10	0.30	0.50	0.05
Greater visibility, pride and identity.	0.05	0.10	0.12	0.33	0.40

could further enhance new strategic alliances (35%). The development of CBTs can also be viewed as an opportunity for opening new channels of communication with government (27%), increase political empowerment (50%) whilst paving way for local technical and capacity building (40%) through skills development. The study shows that the current land use strategies, livelihoods and income can be diversified (40%) which can increase greater visibility, pride and identity for the community (40%). The following table shows the benefits of Community Based Tourism in the KD. Based on the results in Table 4, the benefits that can accrue to the community through community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) can be seen as one of the most important manifestations of true decentralization as it relates to control of rural resources.

Furthermore, CBT programs, if successfully managed can be used as models of local empowerment, imbuing communities with greater authority over the use of natural resources. Under normal circumstances, it can also bring important benefits to poor people and poor communities.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are in-line with the observations made by other researchers (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001; Scheyvens, 2000; Phillips, 2008; Jones and Manyara, 2007) who proclaim that communities can pursue a tourism based development approach due to several compelling reasons such as social and cultural benefits, direct and indirect economic benefits and achievement of environmental objectives. Conversely, community based tourism (CBT) programmes imply that communities who have secure user rights or tenure over land resources

can decide how resources will be used and managed (Novelli and Gebhardt, 2007) can realise the benefits from good natural resources management. Furthermore, the study argues that prudent utilization of resources has to be exercised strictly. Most of the sites that have been identified for tented camps are relatively undeveloped with the exception of an old 'nursery'. Given the nature of tented camps, the state of the sites is pristine. Nevertheless, the envisaged camp sites will have to meet the requirements of the Namibia Tourism Board (NTB) and should be registered with the Board. The trust will be expected to register with the Namibia Tourism Board (NTB) as both an activity provider for walking trails and particularly hiking (45%) and even the use of donkey rides, cultural dances, etc into the Topnaar community and as an accommodation provider. This will avail the trust the opportunity of featuring on the NTB website and possibly participate in national tourism awareness programs. Though the supply of water is easy, the current plumbing facilities need repair. Regarding power, generators can serve a multi-purpose, from pumping water to power generation. However, solar power is strongly recommended so as to lower the initial infrastructural costs.

Local materials such as reed grass and dry 'carmel' thorn trees can be used in the construction of the campsites. Even though the utilization of local products and materials could reduce considerably the initial starting capital for the project and ensure sustainability as well as generate employment opportunities for the community. Attempts should be made to keep maintenance costs of infrastructure at minimum. Failure to maintain infrastructure is a large contributor to failure of some existing communal operations in Namibia. Based on the sensitivity of the area, the study recommends that

a mentorship and training program be set up for the first five years. The findings show that the degree of organization amongst resource users and awareness of their rights are critical factors influencing the evolution of the project outcomes. In cases where local people are well organized and have alliances with Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or other influential groups, they manage to secure greater control and benefits of their natural resources. In this context, the study recommends continuous capacity building which includes governance, accountability and transparency of the KDDP. The study further argues that off-road vehicles damage soils directly through disruption and compaction of the surface soil and subsoil. More so, the most important long term effect that was observed in this respect is the accelerated erosion and the attendant inability of the soil to support natural re-vegetation and gully reclamation effort. Off road vehicles (ORVs) use can also affect wildlife directly by causing loss of plant cover, loss of potential food sources, potential damage to burrows, excessive noise, driving across migration and forging routes, frightening animals enough to abandon their habitats, leading to hearing loss to animals and death.

The study recommends strategies such as removal of vehicles from an area regularly used by ORVs which can result in measurable improvements in vegetation growth and greatly increased wildlife numbers. Whilst ORVs can be a significant source of damage to archaeological sites and other historic properties in the KD, they can enable artifact collectors and pothunters to drive out to remote areas, some of which were formerly difficult to access. The study has shown that cultural features and artifacts lying on the surface can be altered and/or broken due to routine road use and unauthorized off-trail vehicle incursions. Therefore the granting of a concession to the KDDT could minimize the negative environmental impacts of tourism activities. The study argues that even if ORV can damage the environment, one option to minimize this damage is to adopt a site protection strategy of moving roads away from archaeological sites to make such sites more inaccessible or alternatively erect barriers. The different types of tourism products, activities, marketing and the suggested tourism routes show the potential of tourism in the area. The study concludes that indeed the KDDT can re-define its rural space by adopting a tourism based development approach since they do not have many choices for encouraging rural economic development and this could be a useful tool to address their plight.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Since the Topnaars have been marginalized for a long time, they have to be allowed to earn some income from tourism by proclaiming the concession as a conservation

area in terms of the 'heritage act'. Their inclusion in the tourism arena can become a significant part of cultural tourism in Namibia as they are distinctly known for their donkey carts driven to the nara fields. A number of tour operators have already started including Topnaar tours in their itineraries. The recent proclamation of community concessions by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) could enable the Topnaars to earn income from tourism directly so that they can live as a coherent cultural group, thus holding out hope for their future. The various products and anticipated activities exposed in the study show that the Topnaar community can benefit from tourism if it is used as strategy for uplifting their livelihoods. However, the study concludes that the key to success on tapping the tourism benefits will be to master the support, interest and participation of various role players in revenue generation. To ensure sustainable utilization of tourism resources in the Kuiseb Delta, the trust needs to formalize and pursue the following:

- i) Firstly, there should be a transparent development agenda whereby trails are clearly delineated in the Kuiseb Delta area and attract private sector partnerships and providing appropriate training for the tour guides;
- ii) Secondly, there is need for investment in the creation of signage for the trails/drives and the KDDT needs to enter into tenure agreements for the trails/or drives;
- iii) Thirdly, an endeavor has to be made to develop management plans and mitigative measures regarding the environmental sustainability and continued archeological survey and documentation of additional cultural/archeological sites.
- iv) Fourthly, to ensure adherence to the proposed plans, there is need to provide regular updates and reports on the activities and intended plans and environmental impact assessment strategies;
- v) Finally, develop a process for mitigating conflicts where public and private property rights may be violated and explore liability issues where there is no formal land tenure agreement in place amongst all stakeholders.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors acknowledges NACOMA- Namibia Coastal Management, KDDT- Kuiseb Delta Development Trust, Topnaar Traditional Authority, Tour Operators, Walvis Bay Municipality, The Polytechnic of Namibia, Ministry of Environment and Tourism; particularly the Department of National Parks and wild life.

**Abbreviations:** MET: ministry of environment and tourism, CBNRM: community based natural resources management; KDDT: Kuiseb Delta development trust, KDDP: Kuiseb Delta development project; KD: Kuiseb Delta; CBT: community-based tourism; CBTE:



community based tourism enterprise; **ORV**: off road vehicles; **NACSO**: Namibia Association of CBNRM Support organisation; **NWR**: Namibia wild life resorts; **NTB**: Namibia tourism board.

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