

Launch of
Pro poor tourism: pilots in Southern Africa
19 September 2002



Media release

Cheryl Carolus, CEO of South African Tourism, launched a new programme on 19th September 2002 to increase the impact of tourism development on poverty reduction in Southern Africa.

The programme will work with private tourism operators, to assist in applying ‘pro poor tourism strategies.’ These strategies are designed to influence tourism development to unlock opportunities for the poor. PPT measures aimed at reducing poverty are many and varied– relating to employment, local purchasing, shared resources and a range of other livelihood benefits – that are able to sustain benefits to the poor and to business. Pro Poor Tourism Pilots in Southern Africa is a three-year programme, run by Clive Poultney of Mboza Tourism Projects and Caroline Ashley of the UK-based Overseas Development Institute, with backing from leading industry and governmental tourism organisations.

Launching the programme, Cheryl Carolus emphasised the importance of tourism, which has been identified as one of the five leading economic sectors for South Africa. She emphasised that this new programme fits into the strategic objectives for tourism, which are sustainable growth, job creation and redistribution.

‘Economic growth per se is not enough. The government is also focusing on choices that address poverty and inequality. We can make choices. Are we going to interact with the same old players? Or we can choose to develop new partnerships with old players’.

‘What is fantastic about pro poor tourism is that people here are the central element, and that this can take place at all levels, from small scale to very large business. PPT is an approach which is very much in line with the government’s approach to economic growth, to reduce poverty, and to reduce inequalities.’

She emphasised that pro poor tourism measures make good business sense by enhancing the South African product:

‘One of our weaknesses is that we are not seen as African enough. We need to offer a broader range of products, with African experience built into it... New product development is crucial and here I think approaches such as pro poor tourism are extremely important’

South African Tourism is already pursuing pro poor tourism measures, with a good response from industry. SAT is trying to build partnerships with industry to ensure that 40% of all tourism spending benefits previously disadvantaged groups, particularly women:

‘The reaction to these policies so far have been overwhelmingly positive... Everyone who took part in these deals has acknowledged that it was a fantastic experience.’

She welcomed the programme, saying:

‘We put our weight fully behind this initiative. This can provide genuine growth – growth that makes a difference to the people. It is a great initiative. We all can make choices and we do – it makes business sense to take a PPT approach.’

Hosting the launch at Leriba Lodge, on behalf of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA), Dr Tanya Abrahamse, Executive Director of TBCSA, said:

‘After ten years of nice sounding policies, it is now a great pleasure to be able to launch this very hands-on, and hands-dirty, approach – an approach that focuses firmly on the ground after all these nice policies we’ve had.’

Outlining the reason for the programme, Clive and Caroline explained:

‘Many in the private sector already see the need for, and benefits of, pro poor approaches. But more concentrated advice, more focused facilitation, and more policy support is often needed. This is the premise of our new programme, which aims to provide on-site focused support to six pilot partners over the next 2 to 3 years. At the same time, we will work with the wider industry by providing information, ideas and feedback through electronic networks and industry associations. We will also draw on international experience in pro poor tourism and build on the substantial progress already made in South Africa in implementing PPT.’

‘Widespread implementation of PPT also needs policy support. The programme will be highlighting the constraints that face operators and the further policy incentives that are needed, while helping operators access those that are already available. PPT is not about a small charitable donation, but about adapting core business practice to expand opportunities for the poor – so it must make business sense to the operator.’

The programme has high level backing in South Africa, with representation on the Advisory Board including South Africa Tourism, the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, the South African Chamber of Business, the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce, and the Department of Environment and Tourism. It is funded by the Business Linkages Challenge Fund of the UK Government’s Department for International Development. BLCF aims to increase the poverty impacts of business development. Welcoming the programme on behalf of DFID and BLCF, Tom Barrett of the DFID Pretoria Office highlighted the need to help poor producers in Southern Africa to enter globalised markets. Pro poor tourism is one important means to do so.

Deputy President Jacob Zuma, facilitating peace efforts around Burundi at the time of the launch, sent a message of support for the programme, welcoming it as a partnership between government and the private sector in attacking poverty. Nxamalala, as Zuma is fondly known in Maputaland, went to Mboza to encourage tourism development as one of the economic drivers of the new South Africa soon after its inception. Recounting his visit, Clive described his participation in designing cultural and heritage dimensions to developing a tourist destination like Maputaland. After hours of animated deliberation and design, some of the more seasoned tour operators were sceptical, to say the least, of some of the saleability of some of the ideas, but most impressed with the enthusiasm.

This, observed Clive, is indicative of the frustration felt at local level by, in particular, poor people, who want to grasp tourism related opportunities that are increasingly being promoted. They are however so far removed from the industry, that they need partners to help plug them in. The premise of the PPT Programme, is thus to establish partnerships with the private sector to plug them in to both their own and their private sector partner’s benefit. This type of partnership, is happening at the Programme’s first pilot site at Rocktail Bay (Maputaland) with Wilderness Safaris. Returns to Wilderness’ investment in community partnership are generating returns, as evidenced in Rocktail Bay recently winning the WSSD/FEDHASA Imvelo Award for best community programme. Five further pilot site partnerships are now being negotiated. Discussions are being held with Sun City, and a range of other interested South African and Southern African operators.

Having worked on pro-poor tourism internationally for some years, Caroline commented:

‘I have seen pro poor tourism work. Pro poor strategies are highly varied, and can include a commitment to employing and training local staff, sourcing more supplies locally, supporting local tourism ventures, sharing infrastructure, water or natural resources, and setting up regular fora for consultation or partnership. There are always problems and sometimes failures, but there are already examples where it has made a clear difference to the livelihoods of the poor. Pro poor tourism is not entirely new – many businesses are already doing many positive things. But taking an explicitly poverty-focused approach can help reveal a wider range of pro-poor initiatives that are possible.’

Additional information

The launch was held at 11am at the Tourism Business Council, Leriba Lodge Centurion, on Thursday 19th September.

Programme

- 11.00 Registration, start
- 11.15 Welcome by Dr **Tanya Abrahamse** (Executive Director of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa)
- 11.20 Keynote address by **Cheryl Carolus** (Chief Executive Officer of South African Tourism)
- 11.35 **Tom Barrett** (Department for International Development, Southern Africa Office)
- 11.40 **Caroline Ashley** (Overseas Development Institute, UK)
- 11.45 Message from Dr **Jacob Zuma**, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa (read by Clive Poultney)
Clive Poultney (Mboza Tourism Projects)

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For background material on the programme, see www.pftpilot.org.za

For general background on pro poor tourism, see www.propoortourism.org.uk