



MAKULEKE ECOTOURISM PROJECT - PAFURI CAMP

South Africa



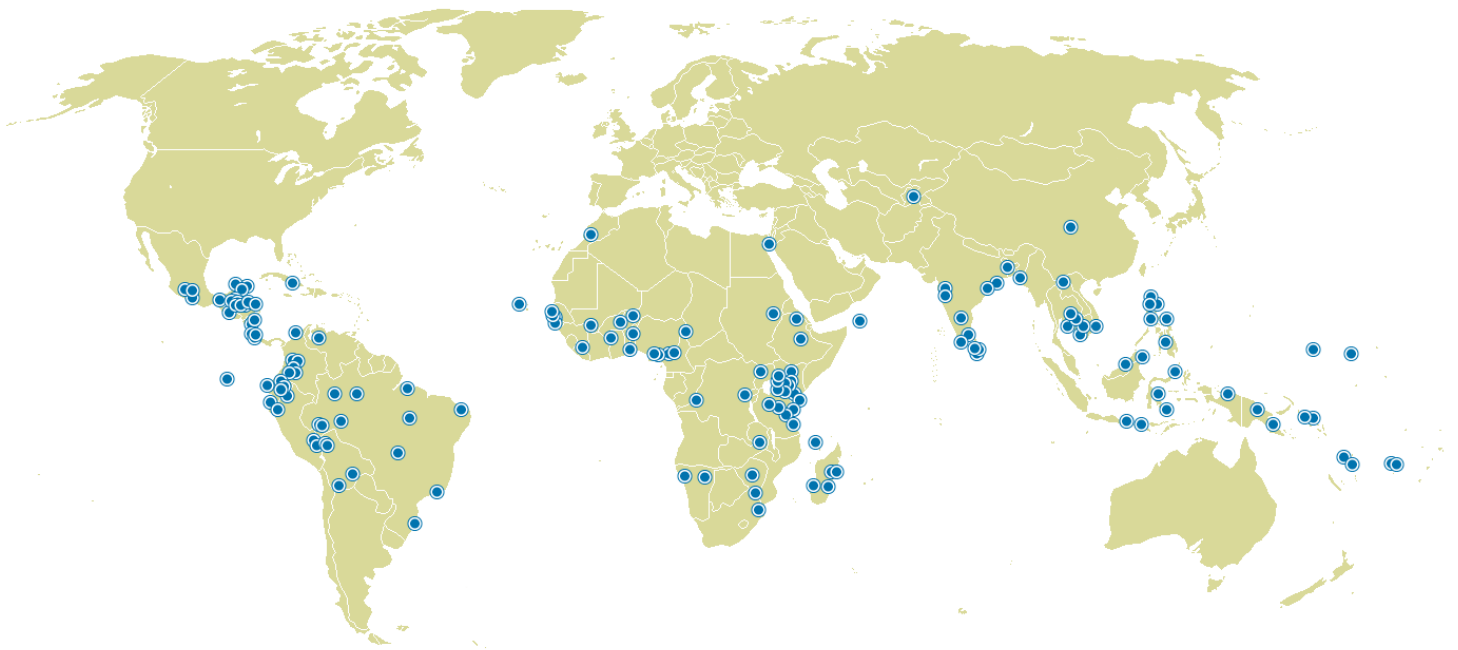
Equator Initiative Case Studies

Local sustainable development solutions for people, nature, and resilient communities

UNDP EQUATOR INITIATIVE CASE STUDY SERIES

Local and indigenous communities across the world are advancing innovative sustainable development solutions that work for people and for nature. Few publications or case studies tell the full story of how such initiatives evolve, the breadth of their impacts, or how they change over time. Fewer still have undertaken to tell these stories with community practitioners themselves guiding the narrative.

To mark its 10-year anniversary, the Equator Initiative aims to fill this gap. The following case study is one in a growing series that details the work of Equator Prize winners – vetted and peer-reviewed best practices in community-based environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods. These cases are intended to inspire the policy dialogue needed to take local success to scale, to improve the global knowledge base on local environment and development solutions, and to serve as models for replication. Case studies are best viewed and understood with reference to [‘The Power of Local Action: Lessons from 10 Years of the Equator Prize’](#), a compendium of lessons learned and policy guidance that draws from the case material.



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PROJECT SUMMARY

Pafuri Camp is a community-led ecotourism initiative in the northern part of the Kruger National Park that provides a wide range of activities, including game drives, night drives, walks and wildlife hides. Revenues from Pafuri Camp are used in both community development projects, as well as biodiversity conservation initiatives.

Pafuri Camp takes a participatory approach to ecotourism, based on the idea that community-based action is often the most effective approach to biodiversity protection and sustainable development. Activities are designed not only to generate income for the local community, but also to raise awareness among the local population of the value of protecting biodiversity in the region. Anti-poaching teams have been established to identify and eliminate illegal poaching.

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KEY FACTS

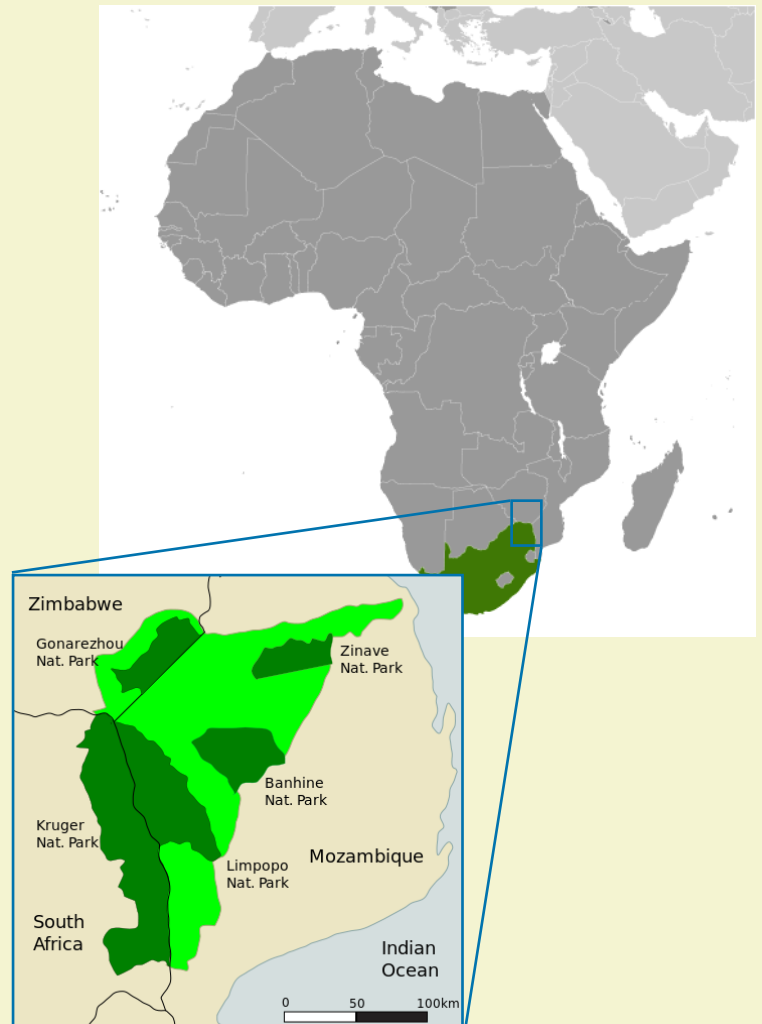
EQUATOR PRIZE WINNER: 2010

FOUNDED: 1998

LOCATION: Kruger National Park

BENEFICIARIES: 15,000 beneficiaries in three villages

BIODIVERSITY: 24,000-hectare wildlife concession



Background and Context



Pafuri Camp is situated in the 24,000-hectare Makuleke concession in the northernmost section of Kruger National Park in South Africa. The ecotourism site is located on the north bank of the Luvuvhu River, which flows through the Makuleke concession and is bordered by the Limpopo River and Zimbabwe to the north and by Mozambique to the east. The main objectives of the Pafuri Camp are to protect the unique ecosystems and wildlife of the region and sustain a competitive ecotourism enterprise that provides the community with alternative livelihood opportunities and sustainable sources of income.

The region of Kruger National Park where the Makuleke ecotourism project operates is part of the savannah woodland biome of South Africa. Vegetation in the area includes savannah grassland, mopane woodland, mountain and gorge vegetation, and riverine forest. Landmarks within the community concession include Lanner Gorge, one of the largest fever tree forests on the planet, and Crook's Corner, where Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa intersect. In 2007, the area was declared a Ramsar Site in acknowledgement of its importance as a wetland. The area is also significant for its palaeo-anthropological history. The land surrounding Pafuri Camp contains an abundance of archaeological evidence of early human settlements – rock paintings and artefacts such as Stone Age hand axes – from approximately two million years ago through to the Iron Age.

Annexation and regaining community land title

The origins of the Makuleke community, in a region formerly known as the Pafuri Triangle, can be traced to the land dispossession and forced removal of the group in the 1960s. Residents of the community were forcibly removed from their lands in 1969. The land was incorporated into Kruger National Park and a small portion was incorporated into Madimbo Corridor, a military cordon sanitaire. The Makuleke community was resettled at Ntlhaveni, a newly established reserve for Tsonga speaking people located 70 kilometers from their original territory.

In a widely-publicized campaign, the community won back legal title over their lands in 1998 after a restitution of land rights process. The community decided to retain the conservation status and to establish a Joint Management Board comprised of members from the community and representatives from the Kruger National Park. The community devised a strategy that would provide a sustainable source of economic development and income for the community and, at the same time, ensure the ecological integrity of the land and protection of endemic wildlife species.

The agreement which was eventually signed, and which returned land title back to the community, envisaged two areas where strategic partners could be involved: conservation management and commercial development. South Africa National Parks was identified in the agreement as the strategic partner for conservation activities (though Makuleke maintains autonomy in choosing strategic partners for its commercial activities) while Wilderness Safaris was awarded the contract to partner in construction of the luxury eco-lodge that would become Pafuri Camp.



What emerged then was a unique partnership between a community, a private sector partner and the state. Ownership of the Makuleke community land was returned to the Communal Property Association (CPA), who held responsibility for the land on behalf of community members. The land itself remains part of Kruger National Park for a period of 50 years, subject to review in 25 years. A joint management board was established for the day-to-day management of conservation activities in the territory. All commercial benefits arising from the land would be accrued by the community, while South Africa National Park remains responsible for conservation matters subject to directives from the joint management board.

A community ecotourism venture

Today, Pafuri Camp provides visitors with access to what is considered one of Kruger National Park's most biodiverse regions; a landscape that is home to some of the largest elephant and buffalo herds on the planet, as well as leopards, lions, and a remarkable diversity of

bird species. Rhino and wildebeest have also been reintroduced into the area after being locally extinct for more than a century. The ecotourism site is comprised of 20 luxury tents, which are divided into Pafuri East and Pafuri West. A central area contains a lounge, bar and dining area, as well as two swimming pools which look out over the river. Tents and the central amenities are all on raised platforms and connected via elevated walkways so that wildlife can move undisturbed to and from the river.

One of the fundamental objectives of Makuleke CPA (as stipulated in its constitution) is to manage and administer the restored land for the benefit of all community members in a participatory and non-discriminatory way. The community contains more than 15,000 beneficiaries in three villages. All income-generating activities pursued by the group aim to benefit this constituency. Pafuri Camp has a preferential policy in place for its members such that only when a particular skill set is not available in the community are external consultants sought.



“The community must see tangible benefits from biodiversity conservation. Without these benefits, people that are economically marginalized see little incentive to preserve large tracts of land.”

Masingita Mavis Hatlane, Makuleke

Key Activities and Innovations



Kruger National Park is South Africa's premier game destination, stretching down from the country's northwestern border with Zimbabwe along the western border with Mozambique. In recent years, progress has been made in the opening up of national borders to allow the free movement of wildlife between Limpopo National Park in Mozambique, Gona-Re-Zhou National Park in Zimbabwe and Kruger National Park in South Africa. The three now form the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. Together with Kruger National Park and Wilderness Safaris, the Makuleke community is now actively involved in the environmental management of the area including prohibiting all poaching and the re-introduction of a number of species.

Ecotourism

The community-run enterprise offers visitors game drives, walks, cultural tours, bird watching, and hospitality services. Morning, afternoon and evening guided game drives in open 4x4 vehicles allow access to the farthest reaches of the private Makuleke concession. Guided walks also allow guests to explore the riverine forests that run along the Luvuvhu and Limpopo rivers and the more rugged kopjes (small, rocky hills) which contain hidden springs and gorges. Visitors are offered outings to the Makuleke village – where they can experience a local meal, dancing and a visit with a traditional healer – and excursions to the archaeological site of Thulamela.

Pafuri Camp is operated in an environmentally friendly manner. Guest rooms are powered by solar energy, which reduces dependence on carbon-based fuels. The camp recycles all plastic, paper, glass, and aluminium – a practice which is being promoted in communities in the concession area through recycling education, marked bins, and waste removal services.

Environmental education

Another key activity area for the Makuleke community and Pafuri Camp is environment education. In addition to hosting seminars on wildlife management and the creation of education centres on waste

management, water preservation and ecological conservation, the group runs a highly successful environmental education program targeted at youth called Children in the Wilderness (CITW). The initiative involves annual programs run out of Pafuri camp for local Makuleke school children. CITW uses environmental education, recreation, and exposure visits to foster a sense of community pride and awareness of the importance of the environment to human wellbeing. The program provides children with a chance to experience local and traditional knowledge of land management techniques. Environmental clubs have been launched in follow-up sessions at all five schools in Makuleke village. These clubs provide a platform for children to engage with the issues of environmental conservation, HIV/AIDS, water conservation, wildlife management, human-animal conflict, agriculture and local development. The clubs aim to inspire the next generation of rural decision-makers and raise their awareness of the issues confronting the region, including climate change. Club activities culminate in a children's camp which is hosted by CITW and Pafuri Camp. The five-day camp focuses on team building, leadership development, environmental conservation activities and game drive excursions.

CITW is complemented by an Elderly in the Wilderness (EITW) program that focuses on transferring indigenous knowledge about the importance of wetlands management to a new generation of leaders and thinkers in the community.

Hydroponic tunnel farming

Pafuri Camp now runs a Makuleke Hydroponics Tunnel Farming Project, which produces fresh vegetables – tomatoes, spinach and three kinds of lettuce – that are used for Pafuri Camp food preparation needs or sold to other ecotourism operations in the region. The group installed a 'hydroponic tunnel' in the community to strengthen local resilience to seasonal weather variations, reduce dependence on fluctuating water supplies, and to vary seasonal crops.

Impacts



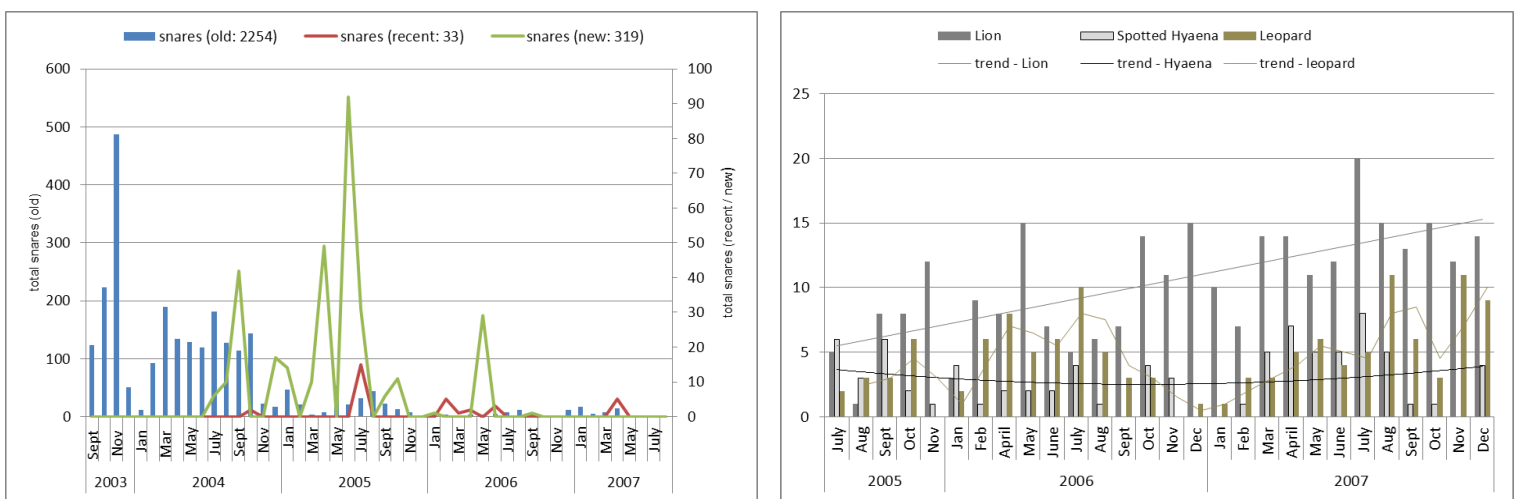
BIODIVERSITY IMPACTS

Pafuri Camp boasts the highest density of nyala in or around Kruger National Park. Other game includes impala, greater kudu, Burchell's zebra, the chacma baboon, waterbuck, warthog and bushbuck. More elusive species that can be spotted include the Sharpe's grysbok, the yellow spotted rock dassie, eland and sable. Herds of elephants move into the concession area during drier months. The area is home to healthy populations of lions, leopards and hyenas. The confluence of the Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers also supports large hippo and crocodile populations. Rhino and wildebeest have been relocated in the area after being extinct for nearly a century. Pafuri is also renowned as amongst South Africa's top birding destinations with resident populations of Bohm's Spinetails, Racket-tailed Rollers, the three-banded Courser, Pel's Fishing Owl, Wattle-Eyed Flycatcher and the Tropical Boubou.

Anti-poaching units and wildlife monitoring

The community has mobilized an anti-poaching force to protect wildlife in the territory. The group has removed a large number of snares from the concession areas, which injure or kill endemic wildlife. The monitoring and surveillance activities of the anti-poaching units have led to the recovery of both herbivore and predator populations. These conservation efforts in turn improve game viewing, which translates to better business for the ecotourism venture. The graphs below demonstrate the drop in snares found in the Makuleke concession area between 2003 and 2007, and the rising number of predator sightings between 2005 and 2007. Wildlife populations in the territory are estimated based on sighting records kept by guides and anti-poaching units. The group has also developed 'identity kits' that are used to identify individual predator animals, such as lions and wild dogs. Similar kits are being developed to identify migrating elephant herds.

Fig. 1: Impacts of conservation, Makuleke Contractual Park (2003-2007)



In 2005, Wilderness Safaris and Kruger National Park worked with the community on an initiative called the Makuleke Large Mammal Reintroduction Project. The initiative involved the (re)introduction of supplementary populations of zebra and impala, as well as founder populations for species that had become locally extinct like white rhino, giraffe, and blue wildebeest. The aim of the project was to create a 'breeding nucleus' of species that were historically present in the region but which were hunted to extinction. This project has been complemented by a number of research and monitoring efforts to ensure healthy populations and habitats for white rhino, elephant, yellow-billed oxpeckers, hippos, racket-tailed roller, Pel's fishing owl, wild dogs, and a number of reptile species.

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

The Makuleke community is composed of approximately 15,000 residents. The population suffers from a lack of economic opportunity and has an unemployment rate of 80%. The target beneficiaries of Pafuri Camp work and reside in three villages located on the border of Kruger National Park.

Employment, income and revenue-sharing benefits

Pafuri Camp is the largest single employer of residents of the Makuleke community. A central component of the partnership agreement negotiated with Wilderness Safaris on construction and operation of Pafuri Camp was the stipulation that at least 90% of those employed by the ecotourism enterprise would be drawn from the local community. There are currently 45 community members employed in operating the eco-lodge, eight employed as part of anti-poaching efforts, and more than 20 undergoing technical

training, skills development and vocational training for employment elsewhere. During the construction phase of Pafuri Camp, more than 100 community members received temporary employment. For 74% of Pafuri Camp staff, the job represents their first permanent position of employment. Job security and a steady source of income have stimulated investments in education, housing and community infrastructure. Gender equality has also been made a priority, with roughly 58% of staff positions going to local women. To date, a total of USD 538,732 has been paid out in salaries to permanent employees of Pafuri Camp, and a further USD 461,782 to community members employed as part of anti-poaching efforts.

The Makuleke community has also collectively benefited from the revenue sharing agreement negotiated as part of the Wilderness Safaris partnership. An 8% share of lodge revenues is paid into the Makuleke CPA. These funds are made available for community works and development projects, and have helped launch bed and breakfast businesses and the hydroponic vegetable growing business, all of which employ and provide incomes for community members. To date, a total of USD 179,651 has been channeled through the Makuleke CPA into community projects.

There has also been a multiplier effect of the benefits accrued through operation of the Pafuri Camp and resource channeled through the Makuleke CPA. A survey of Pafuri Camp staff shows an average 6.16 dependents per employee. These numbers suggest that a further 246 community members directly benefit from the job creation and income generation associated with the ecotourism enterprise. Wages have also been invested into social and community infrastructure in schools, businesses, bursaries, women's self-help groups, and youth development.



Sustainability and Replication



SUSTAINABILITY

A number of factors determine the long-term sustainability of Pafuri Camp. The social dimension of the work, and close ties with resident communities, has been crucial thus far. Employment, on-the-job training, bursaries for higher education and vocational training, loans for small business development, and investments into community infrastructure and social services (health clinics, schools, etc.) all help to foster social capital and community cohesion. Ensuring that benefits continue to flow directly to the community is essential to ensuring the long-term viability of the Pafuri Camp model. Institutionally, the group needs to maintain close ties and healthy working relationships with national government authorities and bodies. This support has been and will remain critical. Financially, the initiative is proving sustainable with revenues on the rise and high rates of reinvestment into the community. After a slow start in 2005, occupancy rates at Pafuri Camp have increased and allowed the business to pass the break-even point. The business has been operating at a profit since 2008.

In terms of ecological sustainability, the group has supported independent environmental impact assessments for all of its development projects. Much will depend on continued collaboration between the managers of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park to ensure protection of important wildlife corridors. The project's capacity to sustain, enhance, and expand environmental benefits also depends largely on the commercial viability of the ecotourism operation. As revenues increase from Pafuri Camp, the environmental protection afforded through the Makuleke concession will be more secure. Should the ecotourism business begin to struggle, the Makuleke people, as land owners, will look for alternative ways of making the land pay off.

REPLICATION

Pafuri Camp has shared its model with other communities. Wilderness Safaris has been an effective conduit for the sharing of

best practices; it employs similar models in many of its other camps such as Damaraland Camp and Doro Nawas Camp in Namibia, Rocktail Beach Camp in South Africa, and five camps associated with the Okavango Community Trust in Botswana.

The experiences of the community – both in operating Pafuri Camp and in navigating the governance and decision-making growing pains of Makuleke CPA – have been documented by the group in an attempt to engage in successful knowledge exchange.

PARTNERS

Pafuri Camp is a three-way partnership between community landowners (the Makuleke community), a private enterprise (Wilderness Safaris), and the state (South Africa National Parks - Kruger National Park). The organization has also worked since its inception with a number of non-governmental organization partners on community development projects.

Makuleke community: The community – through the Makuleke CPA – are official owners of the land, after 30 years of government annexation. They made a decision to maintain the conservation status of the land after regaining legal title, so the partnership originates from and rests with the community.

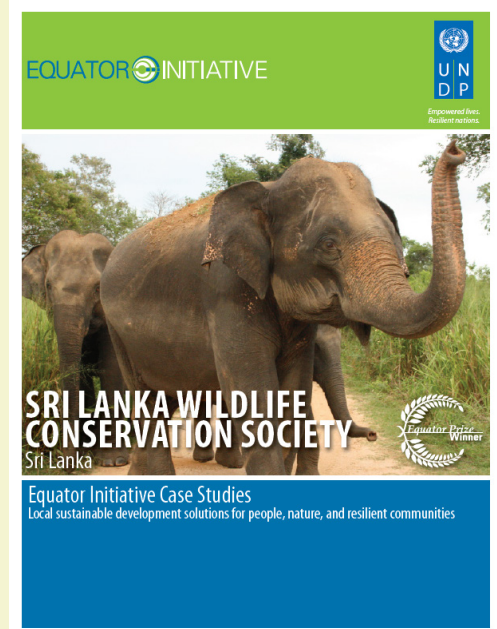
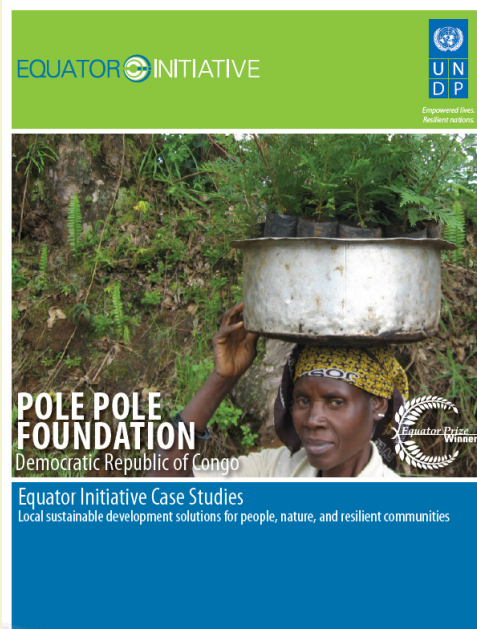
Wilderness Safaris: This independent private enterprise has a contractual agreement in place with the Makuleke community to develop a viable ecotourism lodge in a mutually beneficial 45-year lease. The group is responsible for branding, marketing and public relations.

South Africa National (SAN) Parks: This government authority is in a 50-year contractual agreement with the Makuleke community. It contributes conservation management expertise and biodiversity conservation strategies.

FURTHER REFERENCE

- Makuleke Ecotourism Project - Pafuri Camp Photo Story (Vimeo) <http://vimeo.com/15782847>
- Presentation on Makuleke Ecotourism Project (PowerPoint) [Download here.](#)
- Mahony, K., and Van Zyl, J. 2001. *Practical strategies for pro-poor tourism. Case studies of Makuleke and Manyeleti tourism initiatives.* [Download here.](#)

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