A Preliminary Evaluation of the Ecotourism Potential in the Mwinilunga District of Northwestern Zambia

Prepared by:
Brent Liddle
St Elias Interpretive Planning & Consulting
Yukon, Canada

For:
The Kesho Trust (Canada)

In co-operation with:
The West Lunga Trust (Zambia)
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The Kesho Trust: Ecotourism Potential - Mwinilunga District, Zambia
Understanding ‘Ecotourism’

Many rivalling definitions and misunderstandings surround the generic term ‘ecotourism’. An ecotour in the truest sense of the word is based upon the sub-components: ‘eco’ (from ecology, the study of interrelationships between all living and non-living things) and ‘tour’, a journey from place to place. It is essentially a nature based learning activity meant to be respectful of the people and places visited, while contributing in a practical way to the local economy. The natural and cultural history of the region is the key feature attracting ecotourists. They want to experience ‘the genuine article’ without all the trappings and glitz of tourist commercial facilities. Knowing the proper meaning of the word, one can determine what the appropriate level of ecotourism to maintain local lifestyles, create employment and help protect natural and cultural sites. Exploitation of resources is counter to any attempt to encourage ecotourism. Planning and careful development which enhances the environment and the visitor experience are paramount.

Key Characteristics of Ecotourism

- Involves first hand experience with the natural and cultural environment
- Involves experiencing nature on its own terms, not the traveller’s terms
- Recognizes that the natural and cultural resources are essential to the travel experience and, therefore there are limits to their usage
- Promotes positive environmental ethics
- Provides benefit to visitors through interpretation and education
- Provides economic benefits to the local community
- Includes local involvement from planning through to delivery and directs a portion of the economic benefits towards the enhancement of the resources fostering protection and preservation
Goal and Objectives

Goal

“To promote ecotourism of North Western Zambia through careful planning and development of natural and cultural sites which maximizes economic benefits to the region while helping conserve the environment”

Objectives

The following are long term goals for a successful ecotourism industry in North West Zambia. While many of the ideal scenarios are beyond the current capability of the region they should nonetheless be identified. The goals have been separated out into various requirements, as follows:

1. Education

- Develop educational materials & lesson plans for primary and secondary school on the importance of biodiversity and conservation
- Distribute materials to the community and host a “train the trainers” workshop for local school teachers
- Advertise the program through education/outreach to rural communities

2. Training

- Select potential candidates as guides/interpreters
- Prepare a program of guide training to eventually certify individuals as Heritage Interpreters and Outdoor Adventure Guides
- Train entrepreneurs in business planning techniques & methods
- On site visits to successful ecotourism lodges and heritage sites

3. Protection and Preservation

- Protect riparian habitat for 1 km on either side of rivers & streams
- Support current efforts to establish the necessary ecological corridors for wildlife to repopulate key areas such as Game Management Areas and West Lunga National Park
- Pursue protected area status for key cultural sites in co-operation with Lunda Chiefs and Land Managers
- Encourage stewardship of resources by local communities and leaders
4. Product Development

- Improve facilities and services to encourage ecotourism
- Directional signage with a consistent style of design
- Road and trail access improvements, particularly concerning liability issues
- Adequate parking areas to minimize disturbance
- Picnic shelters or huts
- Sanitary toilets
- Waste disposal & recycling
- On-site signage
- Code of ethics for responsible behaviour in villages & sacred sites

5. Marketing and Promotion

- Develop a resource compendium of heritage resources for travel agents and operators
- Compile feasible ecotour itineraries for special interest groups, particularly targeting pre and post conference meetings held in Lusaka and/or Livingstone
- Establish a website for the area promoting the tourism opportunities and linking to cooperating travel agencies
General Interpretive Outline of Natural and Cultural Sites

The storylines of North West Zambia are categorized into specific subject areas that have a common thread or theme. In this way ecotourism products can be marketed as a learning experience teaching the visitor more about particular subject areas. It also creates a niche marketing approach for special interest groups who may visit based on their field of study, hobby or type of activity such as birding or river canoeing.

Main Interpretive Theme: Yambezhi

All of the themes relate to one major feature that dominates the region and is the ecotourism hook for the Mwinilunga area, namely the Zambezi River. It is known both nationally and internationally as a significant feature of the African continent. The name originates from the Lunda language of the area, appropriately called ‘Yambezhi’, meaning ‘The Heart of Everything’. This is the very essence of the district, all life forms and landforms can be traced to a common bond with the river. It is the main interpretive theme that captures the most important elements of all the storylines that follow.

Sub-theme A: Lunga

Lunga’ is translated by local people to mean ‘A Joyous Place’. Therefore this celebration of place that is so central to the culture and traditions of the Lunda is paramount. Cultural events and ceremonies that mark special events in the yearly round, such as the Rain Festival, have significant potential to entice tourists interested in cultural activities. The degree of pride exhibiting by the local people and their sheer enjoyment of life is a wonderful spectacle to experience.

Sub-theme B: Lunda

Visiting the people and places is as noted in the definition of ecotourism a prime motivation for travel to unknown areas. The Lunda people, with their unique system of Headmen, Chiefdoms and Kingdoms are a new and unexpected attraction for most foreign visitors. Fostering a better understanding of how this hierarchy works is a fascinating insight to regional history. It also pro-
vides an important framework for visitors to understand the meaning and significance of sacred cultural sites that are under the care of the Lunda people. Visits to traditional villages to experience their lifestyles, food, arts and crafts represent a major drawing card to North West Zambia.

**Sub-theme C: Zambezi**

As noted, no other feature is of such prime importance to the district as the source of the Zambezi River. In September, 2008, the new ‘Zambezi Source’ visitor centre was unveiled giving focus to a site that is deserving of world heritage status. It is not only the source of a river, but also a source of pride to the Zambian people whom erected a National Independence Monument near the entry point of the interpretive trail leading to the river’s origin.

“This place is the source not only of our beautiful river but also of our inspiration and national identity.” [Hon. Peter W. Matoka, M.P]

**Sub-theme D: Miombo**

The dryland evergreen forest called ‘christosepalum’ is a unique feature of this area of the country and hosts some unique flora and fauna including many bird species which attracts keen birdwatchers from around the globe.

The Miombo landscape is common in the country but is in its pristine state over most of the district except around towns and villages and along the roads where cultivation has been carried out by subsistence farmers. It surrounds the Zambezi Source — a site specially protected by the Zambian government as a National Monument and registered under the International Biological Programme due to its rare and endemic plants. This serves as a good model of an ecological reserve that preserves plant and animal habitat of the miombo woodland, riparian forest and swamp vegetation. The Miombo forest provides many other interpretive opportunities, e.g. to discuss the past present and future importance of the woodland as a carbon sink to reduce the effect of greenhouse gases.

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Sub-theme E: Colonization

The pre-colonial Arab slavery to the east over many centuries and the Portuguese slavery to the west in the period 1500–1900 had a devastating effect on society. Very few sites offer an opportunity to interpret this influential aspect and period of history, however a reported ‘Free House’ to hide from slave traders was finally pinpointed near one of the villages thanks to local traditional knowledge and is very accessible.

One of the more positive effects of colonization, the establishment of missions brought not only religion, but also education and health care to the remote corners of the region. Several pioneer mission complexes throughout the region are recognized as Historic Sites such as Kalene Hill. Their impact and effect on African society is still very prominent and provide excellent opportunities to demonstrate on-going humanitarian efforts.
Description and Assessment of Natural and Cultural Sites

Ecotour #1  Mwinilunga / Zambezi Source National Monument

Mwinilunga

Mwinilunga, meaning ‘Owners of a Joyous Place’, is the administrative centre of the district tucked away in a very remote corner of Zambia, only 50 kilometres from both the Congolese and Angolan borders, near the source of the famous Zambezi River. It is in all aspects a frontier town with minimal community planning. While this may deter conventional tourism it is an unspoil part of the world that has an appeal to those wanting to seek out the new and undiscovered. In fact the lack of infrastructure and tourism development is more of a positive than a negative as planning can take a slow and deliberate approach promoting the Africa that people have come to experience.

A variety of day or overnight trips are possible from this location making it an ideal operational base for ecotourism. While food and accommodations are limited, it does have the basic amenities. New product developments, such as ecolodges, would be very well suited to the town as it is strategically located on the West Lunga River providing a staging area for downstream explorations. Transforming the services and facilities into an ecotourism product must be realized through a series of small discreet steps that builds the mind set, appropriate style of infrastructure and natural product that would appeal to the nature traveller.

Excursions beyond the community to experience natural and cultural sites must be fully self-contained with transportation, food and guide services as rural facilities are basically non-existent in most areas. This is, as noted, is a plus to visitors who feel they are first time explorers experiencing something very few have ever seen before.

Zambezi Source National Monument

“It is almost as if the map has been drawn specifically to allow the country of Zambia to be the cradle of the mighty river that gives the nation its name. ..Within the forest a soft mat of damp, decaying leaves surrounds sturdy moss-covered tree stumps which support the lofty canopy. For a few hundred metres below the clearing a small stream gurgles just beneath the small pools on the surface. Ultimately, it emerges through the roots of one of the giant evergreens to continue its journey above ground. The Zambezi is born. ...

When we drove north from Mwinilunga Boma towards the source of the great river ...we felt as if we were experiencing a taste of Africa as it was in dec-
ades gone by. A sandy pot holed dirt track guided us between tall, proud Brachystegia trees which formed an almost continuous canopy high above our heads. We passed neat, colourfully plastered groups of African huts and crossed numerous fast-flowing bouncing streams. This felt like a part of Africa where nature had not been subdued by technology.” Mike Coppinger, author of the book, The Zambezi.

The newly established Visitor Centre is the first key facility that visitors should experience. It provides an excellent starting point for an introduction to North West Zambia, with information/orientation, and basic interpretation of the flora, fauna, hydrology and geology.

Existing temporary displays can be augmented by personal interpretation giving people their first learning experience before further on-site exploration. Good potential exists to collaborate with Zambian authorities to develop permanent exhibits and displays that would serve as an introduction/orientation to the district and promote appropriate ecotourism activities. In addition cooperative marketing efforts to cross reference Zambezi Source at the famous Victoria Falls should be installed with a map and orientation exhibit to trace its origin.
Lake Chibesha, a day trip from Mwinilunga, offers an excellent introduction to the area. Colourful villages with happily waving children line the road. Should this be pursued as an ecotour a village visit is a must where people could demonstrate making of local foods, brick making in the kilns, handicrafts or any number of other ways to get visitors involved first hand with the villagers. A mode of transport on at least a section of this road could be by bicycle with a support vehicle, or walking village to village on foot. A significant interpretive opportunity is near the village of Kawila, about 12 km from the main road. A reported ‘safe house’ used to hide from slave traders in the 1800’s is located five minutes from the community. It is a natural cavern carved from water erosion that drops 3 metres from the surface, and then branches in three directions. Apparently the entire village would retreat into this shaft when attacked.

Lake Chibesha, a further 2 hours down the road from Kawila, is more of a pan than a lake, covering an area of perhaps a square kilometre. Tradition says that Lake Chibesha is a sunken lake with a village in the middle that got inundated when the sink occurred and that for many years the natives would not go anywhere near it or swim in it for fear of getting pulled down by the spirits of the drowned people. That is why there are no villages nearby and no local sleeps there. The lake is only 7 meters deep in the middle.

It is surrounded by grasses and reeds with the miombo forest on the higher banks. The sandy light soil is criss-crossed with footpaths from villagers collecting the small fish in the lake with large dip nets, while others use gill nets strung from dug-out canoes. The birding opportunities here are exceptional and one could easily circumnavigate the lake in a day’s trip.

Many potential campsites are near the lake, however currently no facilities are in place. Perhaps keeping it as a wilderness camp with minimal amenities is the best way to experience the area. Low impact camping and environmental ethics would help preserve the area. The usual slash and burn technique of controlling the forest undergrowth has badly damaged the riparian habitat and hence reduced feed and nesting places for birds.
Kabombo Gorge during the rainy season is no doubt impressive, however at the end of the dry season the river is reduced to a few pools and a jumble of fragmented boulders. It is accessed on a 4 X 4 dirt track about 3 hours from Mwinilunga. Upgrading of this road is now underway. Directional signs are in very bad condition with no directional or on site signage. A small trail leads to the gorge where one then scrambles down the bank and along the riverbed.

A branch trail over a small foot-bridge leads to Nyambeweza Falls beside which is located the rock carvings. Same problems exist here with complete lack of any signs. They are hidden beneath a small cliff overhang in a rocky niche overgrown with vegetation, completely obscure to anyone, except those with a guide. The falls are very picturesque, and again in the rainy season must be much more impressive.

While an interesting day outing, more opportunities would have to be built into the program such as an elder explaining the rock carvings, a village tour, handicrafts demo, bird watching or studying the miombo forest ecology with a naturalist guide.

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Another excellent day trip from Mwinilunga takes one deep into the forest to a sacred cultural site known as Nyawunda, a high rock promontory above the Mujimbeji River spared from the erosive forces of nature. It is located across from a Cultural Camp where the Lunda chiefs gather each year—an annual celebration of Chief Sailunga, who invites the other chiefs along for the ceremony. Each Chief or Headman constructs a temporary shelter for the duration of the celebration. Nyawunda is best described as a natural rock outcrop, honeycombed with caves and hiding places, which served as a sanctuary or ‘Place of Peace’ during times of tribal warfare. Artefacts still in situ include a stone maize grinder and almost intact items of pottery. It is highly recommended that before any attempt is made at tourism the site must be recognized as a protected area with a strict code of ethics by the Lunda community. Archaeological items need to be removed for protection and preservation or stored on-site in a safe place. The labyrinth of hollows and caverns are also inhabited by bats, owls and honeybees, a literal swarm of activity.

Mr David Sakafumba Luapula, respected Headman of the Lunda, who was born nearby at Mujimbeji Mission [now abandoned], adds a special dimension to the visit as an elder and knowledgeable guide. The Mission site is on a high ridge overlooking the valley and would serve as an excellent base camp for area exploration.

Several underground river channels have carved a system of caves explored only by a hardy few. One such cave, where the Mujimbeji River goes completely underground, extends for two kilometres. Unfortunately however the entrances to the caves are spoiled by graffiti and broken cave formations.
Chief Chibwika, one of the nine Lunda chiefs, facilitates visits to another sacred site known as Chumba. As with other cave sites, this was a hiding place for local tribes during times of warfare with rival groups. Apparently the Lunda were the invading tribe forcing the local tribe to seek shelter. Eroded earthen mounds surround a cave entrance that were once defence walls. Nearby a small river flows where the Lunda washed off the blood of their enemies, known as Ikosayimbana.

Having Chief Chibwika, or other local figures of significance, as personal guides is a privilege that adds so much more value to the experience. Their in depth understanding and connection to the site makes preparation for and understanding of the experience that much more insightful. More specifics on the history of the site will be gathered by Chief Chibwika.

Small groups visiting the site with a qualified designate was approved in principle as an appropriate ecotourism activity.
Kalene Hill is the furthest point of North West Zambia that rises above a plain extending into adjacent Congo and Angola. It is a historic site established by pioneer missionaries Dr & Mrs Fisher in the early 1900’s. As with other missionaries of the era who worked closely with the locals, health care and education were welcome contributions to society. Gravesites of these missionaries, and others who followed, are located here on a high hill overlooking their adopted country where they dedicated their lives to the betterment of the local people.

Zambezi Rapids is almost at the border point where a small hydro electric dam and generating station are located. Below the dam is a rest area where one can appreciate the falls. Effort was taken to preserve the original rapids in their natural state. A small information kiosk could also house additional exhibits on the area’s natural and cultural history.
One of the upper tributaries of the Zambezi is the little known and seldom travelled West Lunga River. It may be accessed near the town of Mwinilunga and provides an exceptional opportunity to explore downriver for several hours or several days. The riparian vegetation is mostly intact providing prime bird habitat for many species. On a 4 night 5 day journey on the river a birder recorded over one hundred species, including several that are highly sought after by serious ornithologists such as half-collared kingfisher. The river traverses a fascinating geologic area of parallel rock ridges of sedimentary rock looking like vertical pages of a book, with oddly carved escarpments, and cave formations as it meanders its way along. Of particular interest is a section of river known as ‘Painted Rocks’ where a high cliff face rises above the river stained with ochre, rust, grey and yellow colourations as minerals leach out of the bedrock. Here caverns formed from water erosion create weird crystal formations and stalactites hanging from the ceiling of the rock niches. Underground streams that come to the surface along the cliff edge provide nutrients for fig trees clinging to the rock. Both bats and barn owls occupy the same habitat in these rock niches, probably a predator and prey relationship. The Painted Rocks are no doubt of regional if not national significance as a unique landscape feature.

The river’s geology also creates challenging rapids within stone fences that often run across the water flow requiring quick manoeuvring and in some cases portages to avoid dangerous rapids. Many obstacles, including illegal fish weirs (since removed) can surprise the canoeist resulting in problems. It offers considerable excitement for even the expert canoeist with many class 3 – 4 rapids, interspersed with slow meandering sections of river. Of particular concern to the novice are crocodiles menacingly waiting downstream for an accident to happen. Therefore, even intermediate paddlers should have an experienced guide. Several take out points are possible at Charlie Moses Camp and a 4X4 dirt track leading through the Game Management Area. Some signs of antelope and other game animals are making a comeback to the region thanks to the conservation efforts and patrols of the Game Management Area.

As an adventure trip well off the beaten track offering ‘rocks ‘n crocs’ or perhaps more appropriately ‘rocks, rapids and riparian habitat’, the West Lunga is of prime potential for those seeking a real backcountry experience.
West Lunga National Park is another potential attraction, though its remote location with 4 X 4 access and complete lack of signage make it a minor player at present. The turnoff to the park through the game management area is unmarked. After a few kilometres one arrives at a small village, and ferry crossing into the park across the Kabompo River. A small tent camp has been established on the river bank with cooking shelters, tents, toilets and showers. Game animals are slowly becoming re-established in the region thanks to the efforts of anti-poaching patrols by volunteers and park staff. A short boat trip on the river was rewarded with several bird sightings, not to mention crocodiles and evidence of hippos. As wildlife cautiously becomes more plentiful, the park it will grow in importance. To date a few bird watching and canoeing expeditions have taken place on the Kabompo River but there is much more that could be offered in years to come. A protected zone along the river corridor allowing for wildlife to re-populate the riparian habitat is a concept which could realistically become the real future of these areas, not as hunting reserves for the well-to-do. Flying over the park area, it is truly an impressive land of river estuaries and miombo forest, however without obvious signs of large game animals.

Currently management responsibility for the area will have the mandate is to control illegal hunting and restore biodiversity to the area. Towards these long term goals an education/outreach program is recommended for the local people demonstrating the values of conservation to the environment and economic well-being of residents as ecotourism grows.
Ecotourism Planning and Development

Ecotourism Development Plans

Prior to promoting an ecotourism product many factors must be taken into consideration. Some of the key considerations are:

1. **Focus on authenticity and quality:**

   The story of an area is built on its unique natural environment, history and culture. By combining these elements through thematic interpretation you can make a truly unique destination that will attract visitors. Learning vacations with personalized guided trips is the best option at present as infrastructure, transportation and accommodation are not yet established in rural areas.

2. **Conserve and protect resources:**

   When natural, historic and cultural assets are the heart of your ecotourism plan, you must preserve them in order to present them for generations to come. Degradation of the sites in any way will weaken the key attractions that are the very essence of why people come to visit. The destructive slash and burn agricultural practise must be controlled, particularly at heritage sites where visitors want to experience undisturbed environments.

3. **Build partnerships**

   No single organization can supply all the resources that tourism demands. The success of ecotourism will depend on the active participation of villagers, businesses, and other public and private partners to get the most of local resources and opportunities. Two key players in Mwinilunga area who are community minded and proactive in developing tourism potential are Mr Roma Nyakombomba, owner/operator of Kwakuwahi Lodge, and Mr Julius (Jules) Muyinda of Chibwika. Both gentlemen have aspirations to establish ecotourism businesses with properties bordering the West Lunga River.

   West Lunga Trust could facilitate a training program for these and other individuals on ecotourism planning and development, perhaps in partnership with established ecolodges in Zambia that demonstrate successful business practises. Pursuing seed funding for training and eventual capital development would
be an important first step to steer Mwinilunga towards a new ecotourism market segment.

Government tourism offices in Lusaka do not highlight North Western Zambia as a proposed travel destination. Once services and facilities are established hopefully such newly established destinations can be included in country wide marketing.

The Zambezi Source National Monument and the birding opportunities along the West Lunga River are two outstanding resources that require better promotion and awareness. Cultural sites and villages, as noted in the interpretive inventory, are also of great interest to foreign visitors.

West Lunga Trust could provide an important link between government and non government agencies such as the Zambian Ornithological Association and the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Society of Zambia, along with residents and business operators to develop ecotourism products.

4. Make sites come alive through interpretation

To effectively interpret an area it is important to make the experience creative and exciting. Demonstrations, storytelling by elders, well informed and knowledgeable tour guides and other methods of interpretation gets visitors involved and helps them appreciate the significance of natural and cultural heritage. Training and development of selected individuals with the interest and ability to become interpretive guides would be an excellent initiative for the Kesho Trust and the West Lunga Trust to pursue and which can be coordinated through the development of a training plan.
Packaging the Product

North West Zambia is remote, even by local standards. Therefore in order to entice ecotourists from Lusaka or Livingstone a number of products or services need to be packaged as a single package at a single price. Travel packages make it easier for visitors and tour operators. The package should take the guesswork out of visitor’s questions, such as:

- How do I get there?
- Where will I stay?
- Who will I meet?
- What attractions will I experience & how?
- What will I eat?

Answering these questions will help identify possible partnerships between businesses, individuals and the community.

Identifying Markets

One of the essential first steps in planning your ecotourism product is to know your market. Who would be interested in visiting North Western Zambia and why?

Basic market descriptions include:
- geographic origin
- socio-economic characteristics such as age, occupation, income etc
- travel as groups, individuals or families
- mode of transportation
- purpose of the trip, motivation and benefits

Key market groups may include:
- special interest groups, such as birders
- independent travellers
- school groups
- meetings, conventions
- local regional and national visitors

Presently experiencing the Zambezi Source and Independence Monument seems to be a major motivation for fellow Zambian travellers, while birding is a drawing card for international travellers.

Training and Development

Once some thought has gone into potential ecotourism products the next step is to develop qualified individuals who can plan, develop and deliver the program to visitors. Each entrepreneur should develop their own business plan that articulates their vision in a 5 to 10 year period, with a measure of market potential, projected revenues and expenditures. For front line staff such as tour guides, the occupational guidelines for an Outdoor Adventure Guide and Heritage Inter-
preter available through the Canadian Tourism Commission represents the collective expertise of operators and sets standards for knowledge, experience and skill development. This can be used as a core training program to give promising entrepreneurs the background they need to be successful.

**Facility Development**

Until such time as market research and planning is complete, large scale capital development is not recommended. A go slow approach that tests the feasibility of ecotourism is probably the best option. Deciding up front what level of tourism is appropriate for the area will dictate the size of facilities needed and the capacity of local communities to deliver the product. At present there are no facilities within Mwinilunga that could be described as an ecolodge. Most accommodations are road based with restaurants that offer very basic menus. While several operators have good potential sites for such a new facility, they require detailed site plans to preserve habitat with well designed buildings that reflect the character and personality of the region. An ecolodge needn’t be a high end costly endeavour. Often a central lodge is an open air rest area with a thatch roof, tastefully decorated with viewing decks and lounge areas. Accommodations can range from canvas shelters on an aluminium frame to portable safari style tents and hammocks. Using creativity and imagination to maximize the benefits of their environment, ecolodges seem to naturally fit the contours of the land taking into consideration viewscapes, vegetation and wildlife habitat.
It is important to consider the character of the experience. Typically local area service providers do not take sufficient advantage of the natural character of the area to present a high quality experience in appropriate facilities. Many facilities tend not to be rustic and natural perhaps through the misunderstanding of the needs and desires of visitors to the area. Maintaining natural vegetation and the quiet character of area without disturbances such as radio or television can be preferable to guests.

It would be very worthwhile for people considering ecotourism to visit successful nature based lodges that respect the environment and use their experience and expertise to build similar types of operations in Mwinilunga area.

Tent camps in more remote locations that adhere to a strict code of low impact use may be a feasible approach for small groups to experience the backcountry. Such ventures would have to be fully self-contained as beyond the municipality no tourist facilities exist, with the exception of Zambezi Source.

Potential locations for such tent camps are Lake Chibesha, Mujimbeji Mission Site, Charlie Moses Camp or near Nyawunda.

**Testing the Ecotourism Market**

Considerable detailed planning and developing partnerships could be done which would greatly assist the development of the tourism potential of the area. The Kesho Trust and West Lunga Trust could be a great help in this. Training and development for key individuals will build the capacity of the communities to consider ecotourism. Besides entrepreneurs with the property and financial resources, skilled tour guides with a strong background in natural and cultural history will be required. Beginning a training plan for these individuals is an immediate requirement.

To test the market readiness of ecotourism, a package could be developed for a 2-3 day stay that includes some of the ecotours described earlier. The best niche market for this is pre and post conferences that are looking for a different product to offer their clients. Planning out a full itinerary would give potential operators a good trial run on exactly what is entailed to establish an ecotourism business.

Another avenue worth exploring is the niche market for bird watching. North West Zambia is already known as a birding hotspot for several rare species. Knowing where these birds can be found with a knowledgeable guide, coupled with an activity such as canoeing, may be an attractive lure for ornithologists. Establishing a tent camp at or near the preferred habitat of these birds would be ideal.
Next Steps

Short Term Actions

What is fundamental to the process of developing the ecotourism potential of the Mwinilunga area in each of the tasks described above is the support and guidance provided to a cadre of local entrepreneurs who would be the main actors in the tourism planning and development process. While the local people may not have the skills and knowledge presently to undertake the planning and development of tourism locally, they have the potential to achieve much with some intensive support and training.

The following allocation of time and resources is proposed to provide training in the fundamentals of planning and development for ecotourism in Mwinilunga:

**Business planning**
- 2 week intensive course
- leadership provided by technical expert through the Kesho Trust

**Facility Development**
- 2 week intensive course
- leadership provided by technical expert through the Kesho Trust

**Service Delivery**
- 1 week intensive course
- leadership provided by technical expert through the Kesho Trust

**Budget [Phase 1]**

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>participant expenses</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workshop expenses</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local facilitation and support</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration [10%]</td>
<td>$2,560</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Phase 1 Expenditure:** $33,160.

These activities should begin as soon as possible to take advantage of the interest generated through the preliminary assessment carried out in the area in late 2008.

Submitted by:

Brent Liddle, Yukon, Canada

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The Kesho Trust: Ecotourism Potential - Mwinilunga District, Zambia