

# Building an African collaborative platform for resilience in tourism-dependent conservation

## The issue

The Covid-19 pandemic has created enormous disruptions to the way society works. The suspension of most global travel is one of these.

Global tourism revenues have been helping simultaneously to deliver biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods. The revenues from wildlife-based tourism create financial incentives to conserve important wildlife populations and the 'wild lands' where they live – particularly where these

financial incentives are shared and conspicuous at the local community level. The pandemic has dramatically altered the trajectory of this relationship. When tourism stops, so too do the benefits of conservation. Coexisting with wildlife has significant costs and the erosion of direct financial incentives arising from the business of wildlife tourism will often sharply tip the balance away from conservation.

In the short-term, marginalized communities living side by side with nature, along with laid-off workers in lodges, safari camps and wildlife reserves, may have little alternative but to turn to the unregulated and unsustainable extraction of wild resources to sustain life. In the long run it is also more likely that wildlife-rich lands will be commandeered for farming and other economic purposes.

It is clear that the economic activity associated with tourism at the national, regional and local levels is critical for the maintenance of protected areas, and the conservation of wildlife both inside and outside of these. There is increasing concern that without immediate and coordinated action the collapse of wildlife tourism threatens to compromise decades of development and conservation work in nature-rich and emblematic parts of Africa.

## The response

There is an urgent need to ensure a facilitated transition through the COVID-19 pandemic for the nature-based tourism sector in Africa to support the system on which marginalized rural community



stakeholders who are the custodians of the landscapes and wildlife depend on. Allowing for enough short-term stability while building enhanced capacity for reimagining the role of this industry for conservation and communities in the longer-term is key.

There are numerous energetic and important initiatives to raise grants and loans for well-known wildlife areas and their associated safari tour operators, but there is much less focus on supporting marginalized rural community stakeholders who are the custodians of the landscapes and wildlife on which tourism depends. The Luc Hoffmann Institute aims to incubate a new Collaborative Platform that can address this shortcoming while helping to amplify existing fundraising efforts. An African community with one united voice stands a far greater chance of pushing this issue up the global agenda, where it is currently competing with literally thousands of other impacts ranging from health to employment, than do myriad individual exhortations.

The Collaborative Platform that we envisage would not interfere with any present or future initiatives and would be broad enough to encompass all those actors in the wildlife tourism sector who need support to survive the current disruption, whether they are private sector or community-based. The platform would focus on three streams:

- a) Deploy emergency relief funds to support local communities, civil society, and small-scale enterprises as compensation for lost jobs and revenue, in order to prevent a rush to the unsustainable harvesting of natural resources.
- b) Develop a 24-month stimulus package to support the physical and social infrastructure that makes wildlife tourism possible so that it can quickly resume once the pandemic is alleviated.
- c) Research longer-term measures to improve the resilience of African conservation strategies.

If you would like to contribute to the further development of the response or for more information, **please contact:** Jon Hutton, Luc Hoffmann Institute: [jhutton@wwfint.org](mailto:jhutton@wwfint.org)

