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Against odds,
blazing a trail for
young rangers



A crosssection of delegates at the opening ceremony of the World Parks Congress 2014.
Credit: Marshall Patsanza/IPS

Let us make Mandela's dream for protected areas a reality

By Uusumuzi Sifile

Participants at the ongoing Sixth World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia, have been challenged to fulfill the dream of anti-apartheid icon and former South African President Nelson Mandela who called for partnerships and youth participation in natural resources management 10 years ago.

Mandela who died on 5th December 2013 aged 93 – once served as the patron of the World Parks Congress. At the last conference held in Durban in 2003, he spoke strongly on the need for partnerships in conservation of protected areas, and also encouraged participation of young people in conservation.

Speaking at the official opening ceremony of the Sixth World Parks Congress, South Africa's Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs Barbara Thomson said a number of current conservation interventions in Southern Africa were inspired by Mandela's calls for people to exist in harmony with nature.

These include the establishment of six transfrontier parks which South Africa shares with neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland.

The transfrontier parks include the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) which South Africa shares with Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park which it shares with Namibia and Botswana, the Limpopo/Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area shared between Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe and the Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Area (Lesotho and South Africa).

"The establishment of these parks brings to mind the words of our late former President Nelson Mandela who called for man and nature living in harmony, and Africa living at peace with itself," said Ms. Thomson.

"Management of natural resources is a tremendous and huge responsibility, requires innovative solutions... sustainable financing as well as strategic partnership," she said.

Thomson, however, was quick to point out that while the establishment of these parks was a great step towards sustainable conservation, it had some negative effects especially on the poor.

"The establishment of protected areas came at

a great cost to our indigenous people," said Ms. Thomson. "We are working towards partnership with local communities to ensure that they participate and benefit from protected areas... Let us not leave them behind." Successful conservation, she said, would only be achieved if we let the people to be part of the solution in conservation

And the new patron of the World Parks Congress, Gabon President Ali Bongo Ondimba said it was a challenge for him to hold a position previously held by Mandela, and called for concerted efforts.

Mr. Ondimba said the fight against wildlife crime was "a fight for peace, stability and economic development", and called for concerted international efforts. He said this is what Mandela wanted.

Mandela's great grandson, Luvuyo Hlanganani Mandela said there was need to empower youths to play a leading role in conservation.

"Nelson Mandela believed that education was the most powerful weapon with which to change the world," said Luvuyo, who is also the World Parks Congress ambassador.



Showcasing
SADC-TFCAs at
the IUCN World
Parks Congress



PICTURES:
SADC Meet and
Greet Session

The SADC TFCAs Exhibition Stand is located at stand no.s 71-73 in the Exhibition Hall.

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Blazing a Trail for Young Rangers, Against the odds



Tshegofatso Monama (far left) and Boitumelo Rampeng (far right) pose with two Australian rangers at the opening ceremony of the World Parks Congress 2014. Credit: Marshall Patsanza/IPS

By Vusumuzi Sifile

For Boitumelo Rampeng, working in conservation is more of a calling than a job. By the time she turned 13, Boitumelo defied a number of odds to become a ranger.

Being black, female and young were some of the barriers she faced.

But despite all that, Boitumelo went ahead and ventured into a field that has become one of southern Africa's most dangerous careers — fighting well trained and equipped poachers.

“Growing up, we were not so privileged as people of colour to visit national parks because they are far away from where we stay and they were also expensive to get into,” she told IPS.

However, driven by passion, Boitumelo decided to participate in a conservation boot camp and this marked the beginning of her exciting career. She was inspired and decided to focus more on conservation.

In 2003, Boitumelo was one of the youngest delegates at the 5th World Parks Congress held in Durban, South Africa.

The more she was involved in conservation, the more encouraged she became. The exposure she got at the boot camp and at the Durban congress encouraged her even more, and spurred her into pursuing studies

in conservation. Today Boitumelo is happily employed by the South Africa National Parks and has received a number of accolades for her role as a young conservationist.

“It (conservation) is now not just my profession but it is also my passion. It feels more like a calling than a job. I decided to study conservation when I was at a boot camp,” she said.

She believes the young people of today can make a big difference in conserving natural resources and create a better future.

“The future is in our hands. Only we can make a difference and shape better things for the future generations to come. Being in this congress shows that people can rise beyond their situations and be the best they can be,” she added.

In every situation I find myself in, I spread the word about conservation. All my conversations always touch on conservation. Boitumelo is not the only young ranger with passion out there.

“Our role was two-fold, the first one was to recruit as many rangers as possible, the other part was to learn about conservation and nature, to learn the skills of being a ranger”

Tshegofatso Monama became a ranger at the age of 12 year. She believes with support, young people could do a lot in conservation.

“Our role was two-fold, the first one was to recruit as many rangers as possible, the other part was to learn about conservation and nature, to learn the skills of being a ranger.

“The first time I decided what I would study after high school was at a boot camp. I met someone who was an environmental scientist, and I also decided to do environmental science,” Monama told IPS.

However, the going has not been so easy for the young rangers. “The biggest challenge has been finance, most of the time we had to finance ourselves,” said Monama.

Boitumelo and Monama are some of the young rangers participating at the Sixth World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia, from 12 to 19 November 2014.

TERRAVIVA

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Delegates at the World Parks Congress visiting the SADC TFCAs stand situated in the exhibition hall. Credit: Marshall Patsanza/IPS

Showcasing SADC-TFCAs at the IUCN World Parks Congress

By Uusumuzi Sifile

The Southern Africa Development Community Transfrontier Conservation Areas (SADC-TFCAs) project is exhibiting some of the region's innovations to foster conservation at the World Parks Congress.

A member of the SADC TFCAs programme exhibition team, Roland Vorwerk told IPS that their stand would provide information about the various TFCAs across SADC.

"We have a large stand that is providing an opportunity to give visitors and the congress delegates information about the 18 TFCAs that fall within SADC. Not all of these are already established. Some of them are established, some of them are conceptual, some of them are at different stages of development," said Vorwerk.

Among other things, the SADC-TFCAs programme will share fact sheets about all the TFCAs in the region.

"The fact sheets provide information about where each of

them is, and it just shows the diversity of the different transfrontier conservation experiences that we have in SADC," added Vorwerk. "What we have also done is prepare a document that shows all the SADC delegates that are participating at this conference. We have also prepared a summary of the SADC journey, providing key highlights of what SADC is doing."

For Southern Africa delegates at the World Parks Congress, the stand would also be "a home away from home". The delegates include ministers, heads of national parks and wildlife authorities, senior civil servants, academics, civil society representatives, cooperating partners and media from SADC member states.

"We are hoping for our stand over the week that we are here to become the home away from home for SADC delegates, a meeting for people from home" he added.

Visitors to the SADC TFCAs stand will not just receive in-

formation about conservation, but will also get a chance to taste some delicacies from Southern Africa, including sweets produced by community members from forest products such as marula (*Sclerocarya birrea*) fruits.

"We have also got a few giveaways for people to take something to remember getting the information from SADC. These include some marula sweets that have been packaged specifically for us, that gives a taste of one of the products from SADC," said Vorwerk.

The SADC TFCAs programme seeks to be "a model of community centred, regionally integrated and sustainably managed network of world class transfrontier conservation areas". A number of the SADC TFCAs are located in internationally renowned tourist destinations.

The SADC TFCAs stand is located in the Exhibition Hall complex, near the Dome. The exhibition will be open from 13th November until the 20th November.

Chimanimani TFCA

Brief Profile

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PARK

The Chimanimani TFCA is one of Africa's least-known nature reserves, and is made up of Chimanimani Nature Reserve in Mozambique (2,368 km² of which approximately 645 km² conservation area represent the full and 1,723 km² buffer zone); and Chimanimani National park in Zimbabwe (200 km²) and Eland Sanctuary (15 km²) in Zimbabwe. It encompasses a number of mountain ranges with high peaks rising to 2,436m.

Development in this park gem has been intentionally limited to preserve the pristine natural beauty of the area. The park boasts the inclusion of spectacular mountains, virgin forests and world-renowned cave systems, and has minimal infrastructure.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This TFCA was established to conserve the biodiversity of the highlands ecosystem, as well conserve the local wildlife, promote tourism and work with communities to develop eco-tourism and sustainable resource harvesting practices.

A strategically designed buffer zone supports the multiple use options of natural resources in the park.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Countries	Mozambique, Zimbabwe
Area	4,091 km ²
Status	Category B: Memorandum of Understanding signed

Credit: SADC TFCA

What are your expectations from this year's congress?



Lana Sari,
Republic of Indonesia

My expectation about this conference is that all the parks in Indonesia are conserved, not for nature only, but also for the development of the country. Technology and science must be used for sustainable conservations.



Andrew Spalton,
Oman

I am interested to learn new things on protected area management, especially on cross-border and socio-economic aspect. I am particularly in the socio-economic aspects, issues relating to the benefits for communities.



Sonali Ghosh, Government
of Assam, India

My expectation is that there would be some tough decisions on stopping wildlife poaching, especially wildlife conservation in protected areas.

Credit: Marshall Patsanza/IPS

SADC Meet and Greet Session

Ahead of the official opening of the Sixth World Parks Congress on 12 November, delegates from across Southern Africa came together in an informal networking session. This was to help the delegates get an idea of who is attending the congress from the SADC region.



Credit: Marshall Patsanza/IPS

