

Pomene Association: Heritage Vision for Pomene

The Tourism Act (Law 4/2004) provides the legal framework within which tourism projects need to be developed in order to ensure the preservation of the forest, fauna, mineral, archaeological and artistic heritage and the historical and cultural values of Mozambique.

In addition, tourism projects must -

- contribute to job creation, economic growth and poverty alleviation;
- establish mechanisms for institutional coordination;
- promote the conservation of biodiversity, marine and land ecosystems;
- improve the standards of living of local communities, and encourage measures for the safety and tranquility of tourists, consumers and suppliers of tourism services.

Zoning of tourist interest areas should take into consideration their natural and cultural resources, historical value and capability to generate flows of national, regional and international tourism.

According to the Environment Policy, Pomene is defined as a strategic tourist zone and therefore is one of the sites eligible to become a tourist interest area.

The designation of a tourist interest zone requires specific norms with respect to geographical coordinates and occupation rules observing the environmental constraints and related legislation.

Tourism suppliers of products and services have, inter alia, the following duties towards the State and their costumers:

- Preserve the environment and comply with the legislation in force;
- Respect cultural expressions, traditions and practices;

These environmental protection measures are only likely to be implemented sustainably at Pomene, if a second World Heritage Site for Mozambique is established here. Pomene is eminently suited to accommodate such status, which would be the first of such sites to focus on aspects unique to the traditional heritage of Mozambique, namely forest, fauna, mineral, archaeological and artistic heritage and historical and cultural values.

Land dwelling, amphibious, fresh water and marine wildlife and their respective habitats, the flora of all these habitats, as well as traditional ethnic culture can be preserved and incorporated into a unique multi-functional, eco-cultural tourism project.

The area can serve as a sanctuary for the endangered dugong which is known to have frequented the Pomene estuary in years gone by. Degradation of their feeding areas by netting and other non-sustainable activities in the estuary has led to them avoiding the area. The situation is aggravated by the fact that these animals have been hunted for their meat.

The Marine and Megafauna Foundation (MMF) has indicated that Pomene is strategically well situated for the establishment of an ecological research and training centre. They are keen to become involved in the running of such a facility. The Association would consider funding such a centre and to partner with MMF, academics, NGO's and the authorities to develop an Eco-cultural Tourism Project, to empower the community and to enhance local capacity towards active and broad participation in community development processes within the context of eco-cultural tourism.

The approach will focus on the peoples' assets rather than their needs. As such it will enable them to create business opportunities, improve local health and service delivery, improve their infrastructure and incorporate marginalized members into productive community life.

Such a project will have many and varied positive outcomes, provided that it is initiated and coordinated by non-profit entities. If not, the commercial motive will be dominant, almost

inevitably leading to the detriment to the environment and the potential business opportunities for local residents.

Participants should work in groups to design, implement and critically evaluate eco-cultural opportunities in their respective areas, using an asset-based approach for the community. The training should empower the community to be innovative in identifying job opportunities in their community.

The Pomene Association has a long history of involvement at Pomene, where we have hoped to establish a 12 000 hectare game reserve (which could be expanded to link into the Transfrontier Parks), a marine reserve, a dugong sanctuary and small-scale but upmarket eco-cultural tourism facilities as part of the development proposal which we have submitted via CPI some time ago.

The Association's vision, set out below, was compiled more than a decade ago and includes all of these aspirations. It serves as evidence of our commitment to these ideals.

Jan Greeff.
Pomene Association
Tel/Fax +27(0)14 736 6676 Cellular +27(0)8 454 838 90

Pomene Vision

The seventeenth century author Thomas Browne said:

“All things are artificial, for nature is the art of God.”

Pomene is an extraordinary example of this art, a divine gift to be enjoyed and preserved for future generations.

Judging by the global environmental crisis, especially the African experience, where commercial developments are at odds with conservation, there is a great challenge facing the Government of Mozambique, the Association and all other parties interested in preserving Pomene so that our children and their children may continue to enjoy the unique beauty of the bay and its surroundings.

Throughout history pioneers have accepted challenges and set new trends. If enough thought and planning is invested into the development of Pomene it could become a model, not only for Africa, but also for the world.

The advantage for all extends far beyond the present commercial benefits. The participants will be considered as visionaries and trendsetters in the preservation of Africa's abundant natural resources and the empowerment of its people, a prerequisite for a stable and prosperous continent.

As the continent emerges from a crisis of confidence the opportunities afforded to those with courage will be far greater than for those that follow. The word “crisis”, when written in Chinese is composed of two characters – one represents danger, the other represents opportunity.

The exquisite setting for upmarket resorts, complemented by an adjoining game reserve, unspoilt reefs and an abundance of fish and the multicultural environment of the adjoining rural village offers an opportunity for the development of Pomene as a unique holiday and cultural destination unequalled in the world. This is a place where “haves” and “have-nots” could work together in creating an atmosphere of tranquility through mutual respect and co-operation in education, employment and cross-cultural projects.

If this objective is realized - and publicized - functionaries from Government, conservation and development agencies would be visiting Pomene to study the model which could transform

Africa from a society of despair to a society of hope.

To achieve this aim, several problem areas identified by the Association should be addressed:

- Uncontrolled influx into the area
- Friction between local and non-local Mozambicans
- Law enforcement
- Undesirable commercial activities
- The destruction of indigenous vegetation
- Illegal fishing and hunting practices
- The greatest threat: The greed of man manifesting in massive commercial development which pays lip service to conservation but will do everything in its power to make money by exploiting the environment, just to create another playground for the rich and famous. There are many examples of this folly worldwide, examples that are likely to wither and die as the fossil fuel reserves of the world become depleted, but which have deprived the world of irreplaceable heritage sites.

Local leaders are eager to co-operate with the Association to resolve these issues. Measures which could be implemented immediately upon the Government granting the Association security of tenancy and agreement on security and access control are:

1. Revamping of the existing control point to allow access only to locals and authorized personnel and co-ordinated enforcement by utilising existing plot guards and involving local leadership.
2. Identifying existing skills among the local population, which may be utilised when development and conservation of the area takes place.
3. Establishing a training centre to meet further skill requirements.
4. Compiling an environmental protection plan: game park, peninsula and marine environment and initiating the re-location of persons who occupy areas in a non-sustainable manner.

The Association is willing – and able – to contribute not only to the development of the Pomene infrastructure and conservation of the area, but to the creation and development of a social model of which both the Government of Mozambique, the shareholders of the Association, the local population and conservation organizations would be proud, and which could become a model for African Renaissance.

The implementation of this vision will create a win-win situation where considerable income will be generated via small numbers of tourists eager to experience something different and unique which reconnects them to nature. At the same time the local population will be empowered to retain their identity and to protect a rehabilitated environment rich in wildlife and other natural resources, many of which are currently no longer found there, with pride.

We are confident that with co-operation between the government of Mozambique, the developers, local leadership, conservation bodies and Pomene Association this vision can become a reality.

"Let us be the change we seek in the world." Ghandi