

THE GAEREZI ECO-TOURISM ENTERPRISE (GETE)

Presented By G. M Kundhlande, Director, Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources(SAFIRE), gladmank@safire.co.zw, +263 4 795461, fax 790470.

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The Gaerezi Eco-Tourism Enterprise (GETE) is located in Tangwena Ward 21 of Nyanga District in Manicaland Province in eastern Zimbabwe. The GETE lies 38 km east of Nyanga town and covers a 12 km stretch of the Gaerezi River and environs, whose flora and fauna and aquatic resources are the enterprise's conservation focus. The development of the GETE started in the year 2002 out of an opportunity that presented itself to the community. The Nyanga Downs Fly Fishing Club (NDFFC) had since 1994 been breeding trout and fishing trout on the Gaerezi River. This section of the Gaerezi River is pristine, clean, clear and ideal for the breeding of trout. The members of the club visit the area annually for the fishing tournaments. The club members were predominantly visitors who came to take part in their sport by day and spent the night in the hotels in Nyanga town that is 38 km away.

The NDFFC is a club of anglers who catch trout for sport. The club has a membership of more than 200. The club members pay a membership fee that is transferred to the enterprise. The club introduced trout into the Gaerezi in 1994. The club members fish from a series of pools over a 12 km stretch of the river. Most of the fish caught are thrown back into the river. Only trophy size fish are retained. The anglers pay for all the fish they catch and keep. The fishing season runs from August to April. The river is restocked in May to maintain high populations of fish in the river. The fish are known to breed naturally in the river but predators keep the fish populations low. Fishing is the main tourism product and the club the major customer for the enterprise.

A few members of the community were deriving benefits from this arrangement whereby they would provide services to the club members on an ad hoc basis. No benefits accrued to the wider community at all. After consultations with a wide range of stakeholders that included, community leaders, Traditional chiefs, the Nyanga Rural District Council (NRDC), the NDFFC, other Private Sector entities, the Nyanga Tourism Association (NTA), the CAMPFIRE Association and NGOs working in the area, the decision to establish a community operated tourism enterprise at Gaerezi was reached in 1998. The process of establishing the enterprise involved the following:

- The establishment/strengthening of local institutions,
- The development of infrastructure,
- The employment and training of workers, and
- The establishment of formal linkages with the private sector partners.

After consultations with the stakeholders, it was decided that a separate entity, that ensured the full participation of the community, be established. This decision saw the formation and registration of the Gaerezi Development Trust. The Trust draws its membership from two villages, Dazi and Nyamutsapa, that are involved in the enterprise. The villages are composed of 102 households with a total population of 1500 persons. The Trust has 209 members. The Trust is headed by an elected Board of Trustees. The Trust is a legal entity which can sue and be sued in a court of law

and has the power to operate the business enterprise and enter into business contracts on behalf of the community. The Trust also holds the title to property and enters into contracts for land and resource use.

The development of infrastructure was done with the financial support from the CAMPFIRE Development Fund. This was a special fund established with the support of USAID to develop community run enterprises based on the sustainable use natural resources. The Trust used the funds to develop the tourism product that include:

- the chalets, picnic site and the campsite,
- the trout breeding ponds next to the river
- walking trails
- white water rafting launch sites
- interpretive centre, and

A total of USD 83 600.00 (ZW\$ 4180 000 (2001) and USD5 500 (ZW\$ 26 400 000 (2004) was used in the project with community contributing USD10 000.00 in kind. The local authority the Nyanga RDC facilitated the construction process to the tune of USD8 000.00. All the infrastructural developments were preceded by an Environmental Impact Assessment. The construction started in 2001 and the first phase was completed in 2004. A new camp site was developed in 2006.

In the period the enterprise has been operating the enterprise has received the following numbers of visitors:

YEAR	2004	2005	2006
Picnic (vehicles)	247	244	124
Fishing	105	184	104
Accommodation	144	257	264
Camping	4	48	109

The enterprise generated USD10 000.00 (ZWD59 935 249.00) and USD8 000.00 (ZWD239 752 249.00) during 2004 and 2005 respectively against operation costs of USD 8 300 (ZWD51 755 552.00) and USD 3 600 (ZWD214 162 199.00). The figures for 2006 have not been released. The trust has included the payments of dividends made to its members in the compilation of the costs.

The enterprise has encountered a number of challenges that include the following:

- The annual stocking of the river with fish is a major cost to the enterprise. The enterprise has not been able to breed the fish at the site because of several problems which include the pollution of rivers by community members who do laundry in the tributaries of the Gaerezi and bush fires that result in the release of salts into the streams. The trust is working with the community leaders inform the community members stop the harmful practices.
- Some members of the community poach fish from the river. The trust has designated areas from which the community can fish.
- The enterprise had some of the equipment such as solar panels stolen from the lodges. The camp is now guarded 24 hours par day.
- The enterprise is located in a remote area with no access to telephones. It has been very difficult to market the business and to make bookings for the site. The enterprise will publicise its activities through the partners such as the Nyanga Tourism Association and NDFFC.

