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Barra Group's Initiatives in Community Development

Case Study

In the Inhambane destination, Mozambique



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Executive Summary

The Tourism National Policy in Mozambique states clearly the responsibility of the private sector in contributing to poverty reduction through the involvement of the host communities in the tourism development, but very few examples exist in the country, especially in the Peninsula of Inhambane – the second most popular destination of the country.

This case study highlights the role of the Barra Resorts Group on community development which matches perfectly with the seven mechanisms for poverty reduction of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), making a good role model for other similar tourism businesses to replicate and make tourism an industry that really benefits the Mozambican people.

The Barra Group currently employs 320 employees of which 9 out of 10 are nationals from the surrounding communities. This represents roughly 21% of the total tourism workforce in the Peninsula of Inhambane.

As a means to connect the tourism business with the locals, the Barra Group supports basically:

- Primary education through the provision of improved classrooms, school materials for school children and sponsoring education costs for orphaned children, benefiting in total 750 - 900 school children;
- Provision of clean potable drinking water to the communities of Conguiana, Manhanza and Nhamua, benefiting 800 households/4 000 people directly;
- Providing space for small business – arts and crafts – to have direct access to sell to tourists, benefiting 14 to 20 craft people (around 100 people);
- Improving infrastructure (yearly repair and maintenance of 15 km of dirt road and building a 200 meter bridge over marshlands) which makes communication and transportation less onerous and saves much time for over 1 000 local families.

In order to mobilize resources for its social programmes, the Barra Group involves the guests, using the principle of the 6th mechanism of the UNWTO/ST-EP which says that “there is a willingness amongst tourists to give something back to the area they are visiting. Many tourism enterprises are also committed to provide sponsorship to development initiative in the areas where they operate”. Therefore, Barra’s guests before living their home countries to spend holidays at its resorts are encouraged to bring any sort of school material to help the local schools.

This case study is an effort elaborated by SNV – The Netherlands Development Organisation, Mozambique in partnership with the Barra Group to show the possible impacts that this kind of initiatives can have in the surrounding communities and it will also form the basis for how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this initiative and how to replicate it and upscale it to many other tourism operators in the whole peninsula of Inhambane.

There are of course many challenges in making the type of initiatives described above to become sustainable, both on the tourism operators’ side and the side of the communities. These issues will be central points in the continuing cooperation between Barra Group and SNV and will constitute the basis for developing practical proposals for how replication and up scaling can be done covering the whole peninsula of Inhambane.

1. Introduction

This case study highlights the efforts put by the Barra Resorts Group in Inhambane, Mozambique, in line with the seven mechanisms of Sustainable Pro-poor Tourism: 1 – employment of the poor in tourism enterprises; 2 – supply of goods and services to tourism enterprises by the poor; 3 – direct sales of goods and services to visitors by the poor; 4 – establishment and running of tourism enterprises by the poor; 5 – tax or levy on tourism

income or profits with proceeds benefiting the poor; 6 – voluntary giving/support by tourism enterprises and tourists; 7 – investment in infrastructure stimulated by tourism also benefiting the poor in the locality.

The data collection was done in conjunction between the Barra Resorts and SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation). The aim of the report is, on one hand, to share with the tourism community and the general public good practices of involvement of the tourism private sector towards the alleviation of poverty of the host communities; on the other hand, to identify areas that the Barra Resorts need to develop in order to streamline its interventions and reach a broader and sustainable impact in the livelihood of the beneficiaries.

2. Background

The hospitality industry, like many other industries, is relatively new in Mozambique. After the civil war that ravaged the country, the tourism industry started to find its new way just after the peace agreements in 1994, but only from 2000 a significant growth can be measured. Although there was a downturn in 2007, foreign investment in tourism tripled from 2005 to 2006 totalling US \$ 407 million. The international arrivals kept a stable increase of 14% per year from 2005 to 2008, shifting from a situation where international arrivals were just non-existent to a total of 1.5 million tourist arrivals in 2008¹.

Much of this progress was made thanks to Inhambane Province which is after the capital Maputo, the most popular destination in the country as well as the destinations that most appeals foreign investment in tourism.

Barra Resorts Group, the object of this case study, is undoubtedly one of the most important players in the tourism business in Inhambane.

Established in 1996, Barra Resorts Group is one of the longest established tourism investments in Inhambane and a major role player within the Inhambane economic and business community. The shareholders are South Africans and Mozambicans. The group includes Barra Lodge (established in 1996), Flamingo Bay (2005), both based at the Barra Pensisula and Pomene Lodge (2006), located at Pomene Reserve in the North of Inhambane Province.

The guiding principle of all Barra's effort to help the community is based on what the Co-owner and founder of the group says: "if you look after the community, the community looks after you".

3. Attitudes towards the Hospitality Industry

Barra Group's involvement in social programmes aims, according to the General Manager of Barra Lodge, not only to make a difference in the physical sense, which would directly affect people's lives in a positive manner, but also by creating awareness and shifting an existing mindset of both similar businesses and local communities.

It is still common for many tourism establishments to run their businesses completely exclusive from the community, for which they only offer opportunities for limited non skilled job positions. Their justification being that "there are no capable people available in the area". Barra Group, on the contrary, focuses on the permanent training of its employees both in-house and in courses organised by training institutions. As a result, Barra Resorts are among few other tourism establishments where almost all employees speak good English² and are capable of offering a good level of guest service.

On one hand, the locals themselves do not choose the hospitality industry as a primary choice of employment, although this is the sole industry in the area. Hospitality jobs are perceived as similar to domestic work. On the other hand, only few women are employed in the tourism establishments of the area, which eventually minimizes the impact of the employment

¹ Statistics presented in a national tourism plan meeting by the Ministry of Tourism. Source INE (National Statistic Bureau).

² The language issue is a major hiccup in the development of tourism in Mozambique.

generated in the living standards of the local families. At Barra Resorts, for example, only 10% of 320 employees are women.

It is, of course, a challenge difficult to overcome, but the management of Barra Group believes that investment in formal education of the community members can help to shift mindsets in a longer term. In the mean time, Barra Group organizes once a week tours for the children of staff to have a look at the resorts and maybe become interested in a career in the hospitality industry in the future.

4. Community Education Projects

The main strategy of Barra Resorts with regard to education falls under mechanism 6 of the UNWTO ST-EP programme (Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty). “Various studies have pointed to a willingness amongst tourists to give something back to the area they are visiting. Many tourism enterprises are also committed to provide sponsorship to development initiative in the areas where they operate”³.

Therefore, apart from its direct support to education programmes, Barra Group counts especially with the goodwill of its guests that before living their home countries to spend holidays at its resorts are encouraged to bring any sort of school material to help the local schools.

Table 1: Impact of Interventions in Education

School	Type of intervention	impact	Other needs ⁴
Conguiana	Help in money	None. The money given to the school principal was used for individual purposes.	Water and toilets
	School fees and school materials	23 orphaned children benefiting from free education	
Manhanza	School bags and t-shirts	220 school kids benefiting from free school materials	Water and toilets; new classrooms.
	Building materials	80 school kids benefit from a classroom with a roof.	
Nhamua	Constructions of two new classrooms	202 school kids benefiting from new and equipped classrooms.	Water and electricity for night lessons.
	Construction of toilets.	405 school kids benefiting from better sanitation.	
	School materials and sport goods.	405 school kids benefiting from one year supply of school materials.	

Source: Interviews with beneficiaries

In 2006, the Barra Group in conjunction with Lufthansa Cargo Services (Africa division) completed the construction of two new classrooms. The new classrooms built of brick and corrugated iron roofs have been fully furnished and a years supply of school materials including , text books, pens, papers, wall charts, microscopes, sports goods and educational games have been supplied. Lufthansa has shown keen interest to continue supporting the school, by placing collection boxes in all its offices throughout Africa.

In September 2006, Group 4 Securicor company (an international security company with offices in Mozambique) visited Flamingo Bay. Following their visit they gave additional support to Nhamua primary school. G4 donated a cheque of 100 000 mtn (+/- US\$4000.00) to the school.

³ UNWTO (2008). Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty: an initiative of the World Tourism Organization.

⁴ The responsible of the targeted schools thanked Barra's help, but they asked for additional support.

A portion of the money has been spent to buy more class benches; the balance was spent on construction of more classrooms and toilets. All the school children were also given a school bag containing stationery and a t-shirt each. There were an additional 220 bags and t-shirts left over which were donated to Manhanza Primary School a subsidiary of Conguiana School.

Barra Group has, since 2001, been sponsoring all education costs for 23 orphaned children in the neighbouring villages of Nhamua and Conguiana. They supply all educational materials needed and school fees. The children live with extended family members and adopted families in the community. Barra Resorts have offered to assist the children until they complete their secondary education, showing a good long term commitment.

Barra Group has been supporting a local traditional band which performs every Wednesday and Saturday evening at Barra Lodge Beach Bar. Band players receive the normal tips from the tourists, while ZAR 10 (US \$1) is saved per dinner guest. The accumulated fund is donated at the end of the month to a local school.

5. Water and Sanitation

The access to safe water is still a major challenge in Mozambique, particularly in the rural areas like the Barra Peninsula. When Barra Lodge was established in 1996, there was absolutely no water source except for one open sky well.

Barra Group has since then built five water points and water pumps, transforming the lives of roughly 800 families.

Some interviewed beneficiaries say that they used to walk from 4 to 15 Km to get water, which was though non safe. On top of that, the nurse responsible for the clinic of Conguiana acknowledges that diarrhoea diseases have dropped drastically since more and more people got access to cleaner water, shifting from 25 cases a week in early 2004 to less than 5 cases a week now.

Up to June 2004 the clinic had no running water, Barra Resorts then installed three water pumps in nearby wells , extended their pipelines to supply the clinic with a 24 hour supply of running water.

A trained teacher who has spent his holidays at Pomene Lodge became interested by Barra Group's social programmes and on his way home made contacts to help. In July 2006 students from Oundle School UK raised in excess of ten thousand pounds to build a new clinic near Pomene Lodge for the village of Mashungo. This clinic is still not operation, because there was a lack of coordination between Barra Resorts and the local authorities who are supposed to appoint personnel to serve in the clinic.

6. Investment in Infrastructure

As stated in the mechanism 7 of the ST-EP programme, "investment in infrastructure stimulated by tourism also benefits the poor in the locality, particularly in a new, remote or rural location".

In 2003, during the construction of Flamingo Bay Water Lodge, Barra Resorts constructed a 200 meter pedestrian bridge in the local village of Ngovene. The bridge was built in collaboration with the local community. The bridge crosses tidal Mangrove and swamp land shortening the distance to the local school and clinic for the community by over three kilometres. In the past many young children were unable to attend school due to the long distances needed to walk. It is now possible for people to get to the clinic all hours of the day in case of emergencies.

The 15 Km dirt road that connects to Barra Lodge, Flamingo Bay Lodge and dozens of other tourism establishments needs regular maintenance, which the City Council fails to accomplish. Without any help of similar businesses, Barra Resorts use their maintenance apparatus and resources to look after the road which benefits hundreds of people per day (other investors included).

Barra Resorts also supports the promotion of sports for more than 200 youth. They are currently the sponsors of a local football team, "a Luta Continua", and have supplied them with new sports equipment and assisted them with the construction of a stage. They have also been sponsors of the Inhambane schools provincial volleyball, football and basketball teams.

7. Human Resource Development

In a destination where several studies reveal that employment⁵ is the most significant economic impact of tourism, the Barra Group maximizes this impact by giving employment for 320 employees of which 9 out of 10 are nationals from the surrounding communities. This represents roughly 21%⁶ of the total tourism workforce in the Peninsula of Inhambane. This figure may become bigger with the expansion envisioned for Barra Lodge in 2010 which will require another 80 employees. Currently Barra Lodge employs 260 people against 200 beds, making an extraordinary ratio of 1.3 employees per bed⁷.

Barra Group is constantly involved in internal training courses related to work and social programs. The majority of the staff have never worked in the tourism industry before and all have attended internal training programs to give them the necessary skills. Since 2006 Barra Group in conjunction with DED (German Aid) and SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) has been putting staff members through an intensive training course in hospitality covering kitchen, restaurant and housekeeping.

There are also programmes targeting the children of Barra Group's staff. Every Saturday they organize tours for 20 children to have a look at the resorts, learning to appreciate the dynamics inside and maybe become interested in a career in the hospitality industry in the future. This also helps to change wrong perceptions that many people have about tourism and tourism jobs.

Barra Lodge is also involved in an AIDS awareness programme. As a disease which is becoming more prominent in Mozambique, Barra has got together with a local NGO to put together a 12 month course related to Aids. The project involves awareness training and prevention as well as assistance to those infected with HIV or affected by it. The voluntary course is given to all staff members and their families. So far 4 infected employees have been active in the programme, benefiting as well from antiretroviral support.

8. Local Linkages

Ashley (2006), reveals that "direct or indirect participation in the tourism value chain is important: supply chains, enterprises linkages and non financial partnerships may reach more people, and be more accessible to the poor".

Barra Group purchases all products locally at the markets of Inhambane and Maxixe, except for specialized vegetables and meat that are procured in the capital Maputo or in the neighbouring South Africa. Nevertheless, regardless of the good intention of Barra Resorts, the goods are not really manufactured locally not even in the country.

Even though the constraints which are hampering the communities of participating actively in the tourism economy, Barra Group has been making some efforts in order to support initiatives of direct sales to tourists from members of the community.

In fact, Barra Group has developed a pilot project with the community of Salela to grow hydroponic gardens that provide abundant and reliable yields to supply its resorts. This solution is based on the fact that soils in the area are poor (little more than beach sand), the rains can be unreliable and temperatures can be scorching in the summer. This fresh products supply

⁵ Employment of the poor in tourism enterprises is the very first mechanism of the UNWTO/ST-EP programme.

⁶ "34 accommodation providers with a capacity of 3544 beds (including camping) employ a total of 1494 people of which 1015 are permanently employed and another 497 are seasonally employed". DPTURI (2006) Training needs assessment for the tourism sector in Inhambane area.

⁷ According to different authors, the number of employees per guest bed is between 0,7 and 1,0 in the high-quality establishments of many developing countries (SLE, 2002).

chain that would benefit roughly 10 families from Salela failed, because the involved people had no ownership of the project and expected to get regular salaries from Barra Resorts.

In the premises of Barra Lodge there is a big craft market that also helps 14 to 20 local families to benefit directly from the tourism business. Barra Resorts also allow the craftsmen to have access to the thousands of tourists that come in cruise ships to the Barra Lodge every Wednesday from November to April each year. This is a huge market for the craft sector and a particular occasion for the craft people to increase their incomes and the living standards of their families.

Another initiative that helps bridging the divide between tourism and local communities is the concept of village walk, in which a trained employee takes guests on a tour in the surrounding communities. The tour includes sampling of local food and learning how the locals live. This tour fails, however, because the communities visited do not benefit economically from the experience as nothing is paid for the delicacies sampled.

9. Challenges

Although there are very good initiatives in Barra's actions, there are some gaps that need to be addressed.

For example, on the one hand, there is no structure that is responsible for the implementation of Barra's corporate social responsibility. As a consequence, the management of Barra Resorts have no track of how much is spent per year for these activities. On the other hand, Barra has not applied yet a system of monitoring of the destinations of the donations. It is, therefore, planned that Barra Resorts will establish a partnership with SNV that will facilitate the efficient and effective implementation of these initiatives and elaborate concrete actions of how to replicate and up scale this promising initiative by the Barra group to the whole peninsula of Inhambane and the other tourism operators. This would be in line with mechanism 6 of the UNWTO/ST-EP programme - "local NGOs or trusts may help develop mechanisms for the collection and dispersal of donations".

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