

The Livingstone Weekly

3 March 2013

Dear All

My header is of the Kavango River from Nunda Lodge.

Livingstone Business Directory

I have had my head into a new edition of the Livingstone Business Directory for the past two weeks. I decided that we had to have a recent update of the information for the UNWTO. Hopefully it will be printed by mid/end March ... and be available for all our visitors during that time and in the run-up.

It is a long job and I have pounded the streets finding out what is actually on the ground now. Much has changed – businesses failed, businesses changed and new ones to add.

As Livingstone's economy is almost completely linked to the tourism industry I have decided to concentrate on businesses which are directly involved in the tourism industry or suppliers to the tourism industry. This means that some businesses have been dumped in this edition. Sorry for that, but space is tight.

As the guest houses are many, I have only included a few. I actually think that the Guest House Association (if it still exists) should produce their own booklet with their information.

Any guest house can let me have their information and I will include it, but I don't have too much space, as I said, and also do not have the time to go round to them all.

Please contact me if you want to make sure your company is included.

Road Signage

As you know I have a bee in my bonnet at the moment about road signage. The road signs in Namibia were so good that I felt embarrassed about ours in Zambia. This week on my tour of offices I met Muswala, the Regional Roads Department boss. We chatted for a while about road signage and he showed me some signs which he had recently had done for the Weigh Bridge. There were 8 signs altogether and they cost K8,000 for all including poles. They were of varying sizes but basically signs will cost about K1,000 each. The Roads Department has 3 companies in Lusaka which produce the signs.

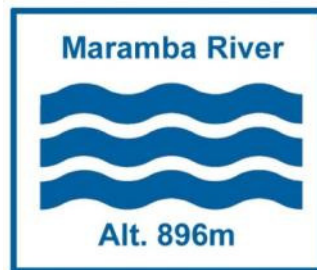
Signs for tourism and historical interest are normally in brown. I feel that as we leave Livingstone we should have a sign telling travellers the distance to Lochinar and Kafue. Leaving on the Sesheke Road we should have a sign stating the distances to the borders and to conservation areas.

Each lodge in Namibia has a sign on the main road pointing to the turnoff. I asked a lodge owner in Namibia who pays for the signs indicating lodges and she told me that the lodge pays. Hers cost around US\$140 each.

Finally in Zimbabwe, which I think is 'nice' is that each river is signposted stating its name and altitude. Couldn't we do the same?

Kafue NP (Dundumwense Gate)	190
Lochinvar NP	320
Lower Zambezi NP	590

Kazungula (Botswana)	70
Chief Sekute Conservation Area	40
Machili IBA	160
Sesheke (Namibia)	200



Shafik's Hospital

Dr Shafik has left us and returned to Egypt. After 25 years of living in Livingstone I know that he will miss us, but, more to the point, we will miss him. The number of babies he has delivered and the number of lives he has saved must be in their hundreds, if not thousands. I know that I will miss him and his expertise as he has been my doctor for all this time and also my friend.

Grace Shafik, previous Mayor of Livingstone, is with him and Mostafa, their son, is attending school there.

I am sure that everyone in town will wish Dr Shafik, Grace and Mostafa the best in their new lives.

In the meantime, the hospital is for sale. Contact shafikhosp@rocketmail.com for details.

Livingstone's By-election

Thursday was expected to be the day for a by-election in Livingstone, but the run-up was marred with violence between excited 'cadres', leading to the death of one of them. The by-election has been postponed for two weeks because of this.

I have never known such political exuberance in all my days in Livingstone. Normally Livingstone is a sleepy town, almost comatose. But during the week we experienced massive political displays from the political parties as they vied for the MP position.

After the violence I am sure many tour operators in town received similar emails to me – emails asking about the security situation in Livingstone: Is it safe to visit Livingstone? We have seen on the news that there is rioting.

I answered my emails as best as I could re-assuring potential visitors that all was well and that it was an isolated incident.

Tourism is a fickle industry and if Zambia is to promote tourism as an economic income and as an employer of the people, it has to understand that this sort of thing cannot happen. Fortunately the President was on the news telling people to calm down and that this is not the way to behave. Let's hope that for the next two weeks, politics will take place on a more sedate level.

ZAMBIA

From BirdWatch Zambia

WATERBIRD COUNT ON THE KAFUE FLATS by Chaona Phiri & Griffin Shanungu

During the last week of January 2013, a combined team of ZAWA and BirdWatch Zambia staff undertook a trip to the Kafue flats to conduct the January waterbird count. During this time of the year, birding and water bird counting in the wetlands is extremely challenging - given the extra wet conditions of the floodplains – but it is also very exciting. We counted in Lochinvar National Park and the Blue Lagoon National Park.

These are the two places where BWZ and ZAWA have established permanent counting transects and counts have been conducted here consistently since 2006. In both these places permanent line transects on the shorelines of major water bodies have been established. In Lochinvar, transects on the shore lines of the



Chunga Lagoon all the way up to the Kafue River have been established. This transect is mainly covered by boat and this gives an exciting twist to bird counting as we not only see many waterbirds on the shoreline, but also get treated to various sightings of hippos and lechwes! Elsewhere, we have also established other counting points along permanent transects.

Back to the waterbird counting - we arrived in Lochinvar NP on the 29th of January late in the afternoon and set up camp at one of the staff houses. Normally we would be camping right at Chunga lagoon but given recent heavy downpours, the prospect of having to stay in a nice cosy home was too good to be overlooked.



Counting of birds started the day following our arrival at Lochinvar. The road leading up to Chunga lagoon we found was a great transect to start out counting. This route was filled with Spur-winged Geese (nesting in the flooded mixture of extensive grass and tall trees), African Rails and the Woolly-necked Storks which seemed to just be enjoying walking along the relatively dry gravel road. The Napongwe floodplain – a small floodplain along the road to the Chunga lagoon - was just starting to flood, and as such, it's a very conducive habitat for several waterbirds ranging from the Cranes, Ducks, Bitterns and several Waders like the Black-tailed Godwit, a variety of Sandpipers and Ruff.

A boat ride on the Chunga Lagoon towards Mulindi tree plane led the team to over 2000 African Skimmers; skimming over the water as the Lechwe feed on quack grass (*Panicum repens*) and run through the water. Quack grass is thriving around this part of the flats; this could be due to the extensive tilling by Lechwe movements and fertilization.

This grass also hosts several Crake species and hundreds of Ruff. In addition to that, there were juveniles of a lot of species among them Fish Eagles, Saddle-billed Storks, Goliath Herons, Yellow-billed Storks, Woollynecked Storks, Black-winged Stilts and Grey-headed Gulls. In general we encountered 87 species of waterbirds with a total number of approximately 24 000 individuals, with the Spur-winged Geese being the most widely distributed species.

The Causeway in Blue Lagoon is much grassier than the route to Chunga and offers a rather different spectrum of species. Hundreds of African Open-bills were found colouring the trees in which they were roosting. In addition to that, Rufous bellied Herons also seemed to be at their peak along the Causeway as almost a hundred were recorded. Like in Lochinvar, the Spur-winged Geese were in great numbers in the flooded grass, most likely nesting there as there are quite a number of tall trees there too; This is a rather risky site to nest in as the snakes are also in there in numbers. Other than the usual Pythons, a number of Boomslangs and Vipers were also recorded just along the Causeway!



Away from the Causeway and down to Shamikobo and Chisenga Plain, we had an uncomfortable three-hour ride in a man-powered banana boat. Several species were recorded but the most breath taking and memorable sighting was that of well over two hundred Wattled Cranes and about fifty Grey-crowned Cranes across a crocodile and hippo infested open water lagoon. This site is also considered part of the Chisenga plain but it's more of an Island well separated from the extensively flooded plain. This is the highest number of Wattled Cranes ever recorded from one site in Blue Lagoon NP. Although, the team couldn't get very close even if an alternative route was used. The patrol scouts informed the team that the cranes actually nest in the small swampy area adjacent to this Island. Namucheche, Musozia, Naminyona and Muswenge, fishing camps on the the western wide of the park, all on the shoreline of the Lubwato stream, are also prime birding sites where more Wattled cranes were recorded and were seen to be flying towards Naminyona fishing camp which is more on the far west of the park. The total number of waterbird species counted in Blue Lagoon was 75 adding up to almost 15000 individuals. The African Openbills and Little Egrets were observed to be the most widely distributed waterbird species in the Blue Lagoon.

In comparison to the July waterbird count, the total numbers of individuals (32 000 in July and 24 000 in January in Lochinvar and 18 000 in July and 15 000 in Blue Lagoon) are not very impressive but in terms of diversity a higher number of species is recorded and this is largely attributed to the presence of migratory waterbird species which winter in the Southern Hemisphere, mostly between October and April, (57 species in July and 87 in January in Lochinvar and 43 in July and 75 in January in Blue Lagoon).

From our field observations during bird counting in these two important sites, we noticed that there seems to be an increase in the rate of spread of *Mimosa pigra* in the areas that were previously cleared. In the areas that were not cleared, *Mimosa* seems to be expanding its range and gaining a lot of ground in the floodplains of Lochinvar and also in the Blue Lagoon National Parks. As if that is not enough, we noticed that water hyacinth and mats of floating vegetation comprising Papyrus and Typha are fast spreading and covering much of the open waters on the shorelines of Chunga lagoon in Lochinvar. The spread of the undesirable species is obviously taking away valuable habitat from waterbirds and also from the Kafue Lechwe that depend on the floodplains for their survival. The diversity and abundance of waterbirds on the Kafue flats are still very impressive but the spread of **undesirable plants currently spreading in the floodplains needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency**. If not we risk losing vast areas of habitat for waterbirds and are faced with the prospect of seeing the disappearance of many important bird species under our watch.



INTERESTING FINDING; Scouts at Chunga in Lochinvar and Mafuta in the Blue Lagoon informed the team that the notorious Army worm had actually reached the Kafue flats area but it was excellent food for the African Open-bills, which feasted on them until they were no more!

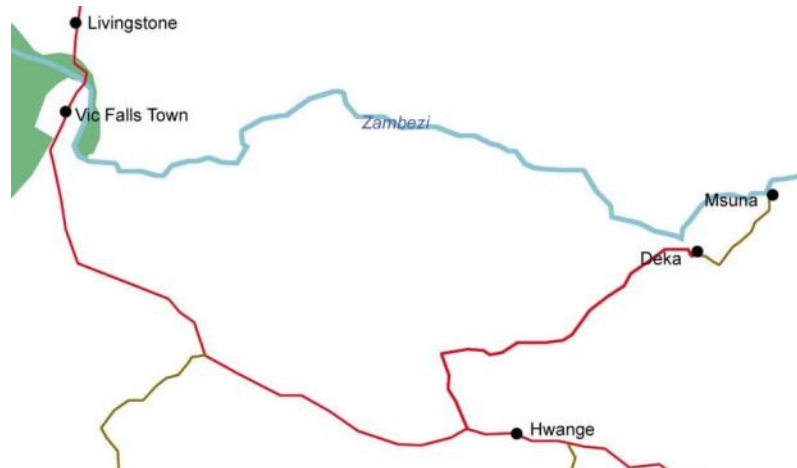
This is the beauty of birds...

Msuna Island Lodge

I gave you a map last week on how to get to Msuna Island Lodge. Sonja emailed me to say that the road via Deka is good and quicker. So here is a bit of a map:

Take a turning just before Hwange and follow it to Deka. Sonja says this is tar and fine, as is the last 15 km on dirt.

Sorry for that.



Vic Falls Helipad

There is a helipad next to Elephant Hills Resort. Helicopters take off and land with regularity and there have been complaints over the years about the noise. Now it seems that this helipad is to be closed and moved to another location.

According to the report, the land is owned by Victoria Falls Town Council who has given the helicopter company until 31 March to vacate the premises.

There are feelings being put forward that the notice to quit has something to do with the UNWTO and that the land will be used for an exhibition park, but no-one is really quite sure.

International Drivers Licence for South Africa

From a Zimbabwe newsletter

It has just been confirmed with the Automobile Association in Harare that it is now a requirement by the South African Authorities, for all foreigners (re: Zimbabweans) to hold a valid International Driver's Licence to drive in South Africa. Failure to produce one if stopped by the Authorities will result in a fine or worse.

You can buy an International drivers' licence from your nearest AA with a current photo of yourself, copy of your original driver's licence.

Victoria Falls – Johannesburg Flights

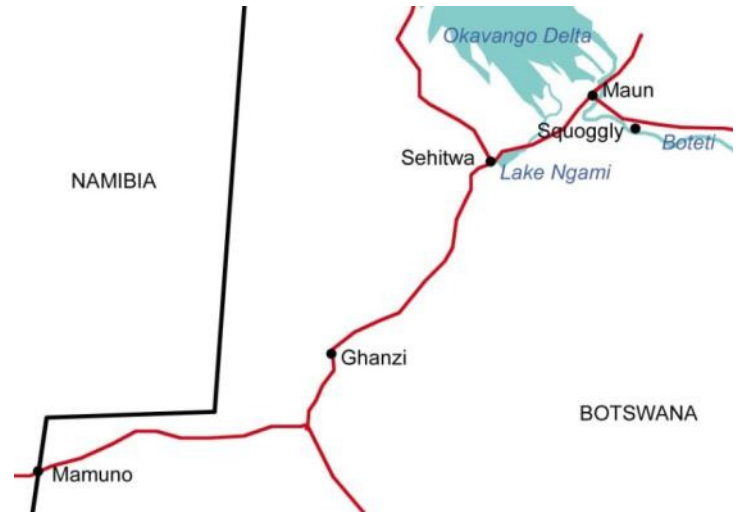
According to a report, Air Zimbabwe will re-introduce the Vic Falls to Johannesburg route in April as part of the preparations for the UNWTO. We were not told how this is to be achieved as Air Zim is in debt to the tune of US\$188million, most of it to creditors in foreign Airports. In December 2011 one plane was seized in London in lieu of the debt by Air Zim. Planes have been held in Johannesburg too because of debt.

We wait for developments ...

Lake Ngami and the Squoggly House

Last week I told you about the end of our travels in Namibia. Now we had crossed over into Botswana on the Trans Kalahari Highway at Mamuno. We joined a procession of trucks as they headed across the desolate landscape of Botswana's arid land, much used as cattle farms. I would like to say that the road was exciting, but it wasn't. After we left the trucks which turned south, we headed north to Maun.

There was one highlight of the trip because we saw a sign for Lake Ngami and took the dirt track to go and have a look. The lake is just north of Sehitwa and flooded in 2008 after being dry for many years. You can see the size of the trees which have grown up during the dry period but are now standing in water.



From Birdlife Botswana:

Lake Ngami is one of Botswana's 12 Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Even when dry, it meets the criteria set by BirdLife International for qualification as an IBA, due to the presence of globally threatened and near-threatened species such as the Lesser Kestrel and Black-winged Pratincole, and numerous range-

restricted and biome-restricted species such as the Kalahari Robin, Hartlaub's Babbler, and Burchell's Sandgrouse, among others.



However, when flooded, the birdlife is exceptionally prolific and varied, with the emphasis on large numbers of congregatory waterbirds (more than 1% of the global populations of many species).

In 1979, when the Lake was at its heyday, Douthwaite counted 27,000 Red-billed Teal and 7,000 Hottentot Teal.

In 1989, 10,000 Black-winged Pratincole and a similar number of Collared Pratincoles were counted, with over 1,000 Whiskered Terns. Birds recorded breeding include Reed Cormorant, African Darter, Rufous-bellied Heron, Green-backed Heron, Goliath Heron, Grey Heron, Sacred Ibis, Fulvous Duck, White-backed Duck and Red-knobbed Coot.

It was interesting to see all the drowned trees but the surrounding area was used as a cattle post and it was not very conducive to 'a sit and watch' – too much cattle poo ...

So we left the flamingos to their brown water and headed back to the road towards Maun. We got lost in Maun ... you would think that, by now, I would be able to find my way around the town ... but, you see, Maun has no road signs ...

Eventually we found the road out to Nata and arrived at the Squoggly House in time for sundowners ... after the sun had gone down.

The Squoggly House is the sandbag house which Josh designed and Gerry and Penny built on the banks of the Boteti River. The two cottages were now complete and Gerry and Penny had taken up residence.



During the night the rain started and continued all day ... we were all confined inside - reading books and chatting. During breaks in the rain, Josh and Gerry did some inspections of the Squoggly House; Josh listening to Gerry's tales of building with sandbags and the problems he had encountered. The overall feeling from both Penny and Gerry, though, was that the cottages were a delight to occupy and they had a real sense of satisfaction to have accomplished something which they thought had never been done in Africa before.

They had also set up a solar panel system to supply them with electricity and found that it was perfectly adequate for their needs. Water came from the river, although for drinking they tended to buy bottled water. Occasionally a cow would die in the river and they did not like the idea of drinking dead cow ...

The following day was much the same as the day before – the rain continued. All our camping equipment and goodies on the back of the car were soaking. Deciding that we really should leave that day I waited for a break in the rain and headed to the car ... ooo ... it was horrid. Everything was sodden. Gritting my teeth I

set to to try and make some order in the chaos of the back, closing my eyes to the first aid box which had opened and was now a puddle; the appliance box was much the same with torches and batteries floating in water ...

I covered it all with a piece of plastic and decided that I would cope with it all when I got home ... but in the meantime we got in the car and headed off towards Elephant Sands ...



TANZANIA-MALAWI

Lake Nyasa Dispute

In 1890 the British and German governments agreed on the border between Malawi and Tanzania – it ran along the Lake Nyasa shoreline, giving Tanzania no access to the lake. Over the years the local Malawi fishermen have crossed and re-crossed the lake in their dugouts fishing – sometime staying in Malawi and sometimes in Tanzania. No-one really minded. Lake Nyasa's fish stocks have been reducing steadily as commercial fishing came into the mix and the Malawi population increased dramatically, as did the food requirement and the number of fishermen.

Tanzania half-heartedly disputed the border, feeling that the border should run through the centre of the lake, but nothing much was done.

But now it has become critical because the Malawi government has awarded licences to companies to explore for oil and gas underneath the lake. The dispute is no longer about the poor people, it is about big money. The Malawi fishermen who are landing on the Tanzanian side of the lake are being arrested and harassed as Tanzania pushes its claim to part of the lake.

Malawi and Tanzania have asked the African Forum – a body made up of previous African presidents - to intervene and decide on the matter.



NAMIBIA

Superspar goes for solar From Informanté

Theo's Superspar is the first Namibian SPAR Supermarket turning solar and following a green strategy.

On Friday, 15 February, Theo Borstlap flipped the main switch and started his 250 kWp grid connected solar power plant at Theo's Superspar in Otjiwarongo.

HopSol Africa Pty Ltd was appointed with the turnkey installation which was realized in co-operation with DIS Engineering. Bjoern Wilschke, CEO of HopSol Africa, explained that, “the Solar Power Plant produces about 516 MWh per year (43 000 kWh/month) and covers more or less the daytime electricity demand of Theo’s Superspar - 1560 solar panels have been installed.”

Borstlap, the owner of the supermarket, is convinced of HopSol’s technical approach. HopSol has specialized on solar power installations in desert regions. Due to the specific climatic conditions in desert regions, the selection of the right technology is decisive in order to ensure an outstanding economic performance of investments in solar power plants.

Therefore, HopSol works with CIS Thinfilm Module Technology. These solar modules have a very low temperature coefficient and can withstand and handle the daily heat and radiation of Africa significantly better than any other solar modules. Compared to mono- and polycrystalline solar modules the HopSol solution provides up to 15% more electricity (kWh) out of the same installed capacity which makes for the customer a significant difference.

After about five years the investment will be paid off by energy cost savings and Theo’s Superspar will have electricity for at least another 20-plus years for free, since there is a 25 years warranty on the solar modules and maintenance costs are absolutely minimal.

The total annual CO² reduction is 290 tonnes – an outstanding result for the environment and a milestone for Namibia’s energy sector.

OTHER STUFF

Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties Bangkok (Thailand), 3-14 March 2013

CITES meets for the next 10 days to look at critical issues on the welfare of our planet and how we can protect its flora and fauna by controlling trade. Foremost in our minds in Africa is the continued existence of our rhino and elephant populations. Poaching for rhino horn and elephant tusks continues to escalate in our countries as the demand in Asia climbs and as more and more Asian people have money for luxuries.

In South Africa already 128 (at the last count) rhinos have been poached this year. South Africa which has about a quarter of the world’s rhinos – 18,700 white rhinos and 1,900 black rhinos – is considering legitimate trade in rhino horn and will have sideline meetings to discuss this. Kenya, on the other hand, has put forward the following proposal:

Amendment of the annotation for Ceratotherium simum simum as follows:

(added text underlined): “Ceratotherium simum simum (Only the populations of South Africa and Swaziland; all other populations are included in Appendix I. For the exclusive purpose of allowing international trade in live animals to appropriate and acceptable destinations and hunting trophies. Hunting trophies from South Africa and Swaziland shall be subject to a zero export quota until at least CoP18. All other specimens shall be deemed to be specimens of species included in Appendix I and the trade in them shall be regulated accordingly.)”

Tanzania has been identified as one of the major transit routes for poached ivory and yet continues to hope that CITES will agree to allow it to sell its ivory stocks, among other things. Here is their proposal to CITES:

Transfer the population of the African elephant, Loxodonta africana of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) from Appendix I to Appendix II in accordance with the precautionary measures specified in Annex 4 A

2b) i), ii) and c) of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) with an annotation to read: for the exclusive purpose of the following:

a) trade in hunting trophies for non-commercial purposes;

b) trade in registered raw ivory (whole tusks and pieces) subject to the following:

i. a one-off sale of 101,005.25 kilograms from registered government-owned stocks, originating in Tanzania (excluding seized ivory and ivory of unknown origin);

ii. only to trading partners that have been already designated by the Standing Committee, as having sufficient national legislation and domestic trade controls to ensure that the imported ivory will not be re-exported and will be managed in accordance with all requirements of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP15) concerning domestic manufacturing and trade. These are Japan designated as a trading partner at the 54th meeting (Geneva, October 2006), and China designated as a trading partner at the 57th meeting (SC57, Geneva, July 2008);

iii. not before the Secretariat has verified the registered government-owned stocks;

iv. the proceeds of the trade are used exclusively for elephant conservation, community conservation and development programmes within or adjacent to the elephant range in Tanzania;

v. Tanzania will not present further proposals to allow trade in elephant ivory from its population in Appendix II to the Conference of the Parties for the period from CoP16 and ending four years from the date of the single sale of ivory that is to take place in accordance with provisions in paragraphs b) i), b) ii), b) iii), b) iv). In addition such further proposal shall be dealt with in accordance with Decisions 14.77 and 14.78.

c) trade in raw hides including foot, ears and tails;

d) trade in live animals to appropriate and acceptable destinations, as defined in Resolution Conf. 11.20; The Standing Committee can decide to cause the trade in a), b), c) and d) above to cease partially or completely in the event of non-compliance by exporting or importing countries, or in the case of proven detrimental impacts of the trade on other elephant populations as may be proposed by the CITES Secretariat. All other specimens shall be deemed to be specimens of species included in Appendix I and the trade in them shall be regulated accordingly.

The enemies of Africa's wildlife are often seen as Chinese people. China has recently been accessible to the outside world so it is only now that we are getting information on how the vast country works and how its people think.

China has an ancient culture and one belief that is still strong is the ability of food to cure or alleviate illness. From a UK Guardian article in 2009 about wildlife meat in China:

Stewed turtle cures cancer, crocodile meat relieves asthma, pangolin scales regulate menstruation and scorpion venom helps stroke victims.

Such is the traditional wisdom in Guangdong province, where animal markets teem with snakes, scorpions, salamander and dozens of different species of birds and turtles, some of which are endangered and all of which are fated to end their lives in restaurants, pharmacies or pet cages. ...

In Africa we know that the belief in witchcraft is still widespread. Even though most people go to church, they still harbour the belief that traditional doctors can provide medicine to stop 'an evil eye'. How long will it take to change our beliefs? A generation, maybe two or three? The Chinese people are stuck in the same time-warp with their medicinal/cultural beliefs. How long will it be before their attitudes to wildlife change? A generation, maybe two or three? The problem is, of course, that the Chinese government is making few moves to change attitudes.

From China Post in December 2012:

BEIJING--From tigers to dolphins, animal populations in many of China's ecosystems have plummeted during decades of development and urbanization, a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) study said Wednesday.

The conservation group highlighted about a dozen species in different natural habitats across the country in its third China Ecological Footprint Report, saying numbers have fallen dramatically over the years.

"The populations of more than 10 flagship and keystone species in China have undergone marked decline that was particularly severe between the 1960s and 1980s," the report said.

According to findings compiled by WWF from various sources, the Yangtze River dolphin population crashed by 99.4 percent from 1980 to 2006, while that of the Chinese alligator fell by 97 percent from 1955 to 2010. Amur tiger numbers slumped by 92 percent from 1975 to 2009 due to hunting, deforestation, habitat loss and intensified human activities, it said....

China has set up conservation areas to protect forests and wildlife but China is a vast country with a high population. From Phys.Org about a WWF report:

In a separate set of indicators updated from its latest report in 2010, the study said China was using resources such as cropland and forests at 2.5 times the rate than they could be regenerated. This imbalance of China's ecological demand versus supply would impact the rest of the world, said Jim Leape, the director-general of WWF International, at a press conference in Beijing.

"That consumption is putting much more pressure on resources here in China than its resources can sustain" and on "resources on other continents than those continents can sustain", he said.

In the meantime our elephants and rhino are disappearing at a phenomenal rate. Can we wait for a generation or three for their cultural values to change? While Chinese people rapidly destroy their own environment and continue to encroach on ours, I think not.

United Nations Environmental Programme

<http://www.unep.org/pdf/aeo3.pdf>

A report – Africa Environment Outlook 3 has just been produced which looks at the health of the people and their environment in Africa. In some ways I do dislike the way African countries are lumped together as one homogenous mass because we are all different, however, here are some of their key messages:

Environmental and health issues deserve priority consideration in national development. Indoor and outdoor air pollution, unhygienic or unsafe food, improper waste disposal, absent or unsafe vector control and exposure to chemicals are major environmental health hazards in most African countries. About 10 per cent of the disease burden in Africa is attributable to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene, with children bearing most of it.

Although indoor air pollution is a profound health problem in Africa, it has been inadequately addressed. Remedial measures that have been instituted have recorded little success. Rural electrification, for example, has mostly met lighting energy needs, and only to a limited extent. Cooking energy needs continue to be met largely from the use of biomass, which is the predominant contributor to indoor air pollution. Addressing this health hazard therefore requires increased uptake of improved technologies such as efficient cook stoves and cleaner sources of energy such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and solar by addressing the constraints that have hitherto impaired their adoption.

Biodiversity provides goods and services such as food and medicinal plants that promote human health in Africa. However, rapid population growth, urbanization, agricultural expansion, invasive alien species, overfishing, overharvesting and destruction of habitats are threatening these services. While command and control measures have ensured sustainable use and management of biodiversity to some extent, there is need to combine these with sustained public awareness campaigns and participatory management approaches such as Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) and Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) that, in addition to these benefits, promote equitable benefit sharing.

Chemical use has both beneficial and negative effects on human health. Actions are needed to eliminate exposure pathways that contribute to ill health. Chemical users are vulnerable to chemical contamination due to ignorance of the associated risks, non-use of protective gear and ineffective implementation of regulations on storage, transportation and disposal. Informal recovery of fractions from e-waste and illegal disposal of toxic wastes also increase exposure to ill health. Actions to minimize the health hazards include: effective education on chemical use and health risks; rigorous enforcement of relevant laws and regulations;

training customs and law enforcement officials; and stepping up border surveillance in order to curb both the importation of obsolete chemicals and the clandestine movement of hazardous chemicals and waste.

Climate change and variability severely impact human health owing to individuals' and communities' limited coping capacities. Strengthening adaptive capacities at the national, sub-national and community levels would better position the region to deal with the vagaries of these changes. Developing multiple crop varieties that can withstand weather variability would enhance food and nutrition security. Effective early warning and disease surveillance systems that alert populations to anticipated disease outbreaks would reduce vulnerability to a number of climate-induced epidemics and facilitate timely and decisive responses.

Access to safe water and adequate sanitation is vital to human health and needs to be scaled up by eliminating impediments such as inadequate infrastructure; pollution of water sources; poor hygiene; retrogressive cultural taboos and gender disparities. Degradation of water resources typically results from untreated municipal wastewater effluents, seepage into natural wells and springs of faecal matter from latrines located in areas with high water tables, nitrate pollution of groundwater by fertilizers, and eutrophication of dam reservoirs as a result of organic pollution. In addition to strengthening enforcement of regulations against pollution, there is need to institute detailed environmental and health assessments of developments that are likely to pollute water. Expanding and protecting networks of safe water supply and carefully siting boreholes would contribute to gradually correcting glaring rural-urban disparities in access to safe water and adequate sanitation.

The magnitude of domestic and global uncertainties that decision makers have to grapple with imply that espousing the business as usual model when dealing with environmental problems does not only result in failure to meet internationally set goals and targets, it also undermines human health. Adequate adaptation to these uncertainties can benefit from scenario analyses that emphasize the various ways in which environmental management may impact human health well into the future and make it possible to make flexible long-term plans. Although scenarios are neither predictions nor forecasts, they are useful in helping decision makers to reflect on and choose among pathways towards achieving environment and health policy goals.

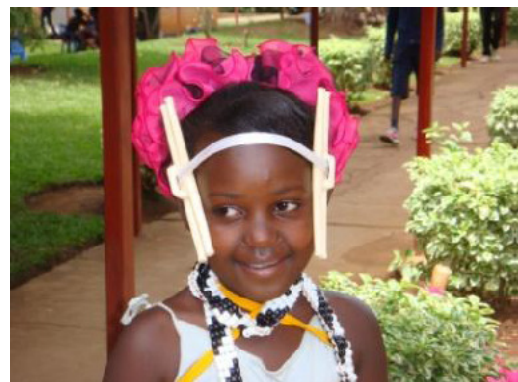
Although a number of good policies for addressing environmental challenges that affect human health exist, their implementation has been weak. Making policies more effective requires elimination of barriers to implementation. Some of the preconditions for successful policy implementation include: adequate data and information systems for decision making; stakeholder engagement and cooperation; clear implementation roadmaps with realistic targets and funding mechanisms; capacity development of all stakeholders; and institutional collaboration to ensure implementation alignment as well as monitoring and review with an emphasis on dissemination of lessons learned.

WOLFGANG'S COLUMN

RWANDA

TAKE A BREAK – DANCE IS THE MOTTO OF FESPAD 2013 AS IT MOVES TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

'When we hosted FESPAD before, all activities were concentrated in Kigali. This time we wanted to have the entire country have a chance to participate. The national competition is now on and we will have a winner when the roadshow comes back to Kigali for the closing days. It also allows our participants from abroad like Egypt and Namibia to show their own heritage of dance to our people in the regions of Rwanda.



Instead of our people travelling to Kigali to see the Pan African Dance Festival, the festival comes to them this time' said one of the RDB staff attached to our media team yesterday as we travelled to the Eastern Region headquarter town of Rwamagana. 6 local groups competed to be regional winner and make it to the national finals where a winner will be selected while the international participants were able to showcase their dance skills to the locals who had overcrowded the meeting hall and occupied all window spaces from the outside to catch a glimpse of the thrill inside.



The roadshow will today continue to make its way to the Northern Region's headquarter town of Huye, aka Butare, before then moving to Karongi, Musanze (previously known as Ruhengeri) and finally Gisenyi where a party is planned at the shores of Lake Kivu in the grounds of the Lake Kivu Serena Hotel. On Saturday then the dance juggernaut will return to the capital Kigali for the announcement of the national dance competition winners and the prize giving ceremony for the participating countries from across Africa. Watch this space for updates and in the meantime enjoy the pictures which document the spirit of the people of Rwanda better than any words could describe.



The African Visitor

An African chieftain flew to the United States to visit the president. When he arrived at the airport, a host of newsmen and television cameramen met him.

One of the reporters asked the chief if he had a comfortable flight.

The chief made a series of weird noises "screech, scratch, honk, buzz, whistle, z-z-z-z" ... and then added in perfect English, "Yes, I had a very nice flight."

Another reporter asked, "Chief, do you plan to visit the Washington Monument while you're in the area?"

The chief made the same noises ... "screech, scratch, honk, buzz, whistle, z-z-z-z" ... and then said, "Yes, and I also plan to visit the White House and the Capitol Building."

"Where did you learn to speak such flawless English?" asked the next reporter.

The chief replied, "Screech, scratch, honk, buzz, whistle, z-z-z-z ... from the short-wave radio."

Have a good week

Gill