



Heritage Hunt campaign



Outapi Military Base © UNESCO

BACKGROUND

A number of significant heritage sites were never known nationally to Namibian citizens, as no baseline national mapping of heritage sites existed. Further, some local communities were not fully aware of the heritage resources found in their own territories.

The challenge over the years has been to designate a national mapping exercise that is inclusive of all sites with heritage significance, particularly the north and north-east of Namibia where heritage resources had largely been overlooked before the independence in 1990.

The Heritage Hunt Campaign was thus implemented by the JP in order to systematically identify and document places of importance to the communities living in each region of Namibia. A national mapping exercise was implemented through surveys and local campaigns.

PROCESS

The national mapping exercise involved all segments of Namibian society including women and other vulnerable groups, such as the San, Himba, disabled people, as well as youth. A specific focus was put on youth with an understanding that they are the future custodians of the country's heritage resources, and must be at the forefront of the effort to preserve and promote Namibia's rich heritage resources.

Being a locally-driven initiative, the Regional Councils and traditional authorities led the identification and documentation process. They were provided with technical and on-the-job training to identify and document all sites with heritage significance in their respective regions. The Councils thus

'owned' the process, but other stakeholders were involved through local development forums which integrated the Heritage Hunt into ongoing regional and national culture programmes. This exemplifies the bottom-up approach that empowered the local actors to influence local development and ensure ownership and sustainability. Further, the use of existing structures and development forums gave this intervention natural support and ownership from all relevant stakeholders.

The success story compliments ongoing government interventions in the area of culture and development. Local communities are now aware of their heritage resources and they are empowered to initiate income-generating projects using their heritage resources in a sustainable manner. The national mapping exercise will help the Namibian culture sector in its efforts to advocate for culture to take a central role in the development agenda of the country. The project is now considered a model for strategic policy changes regarding heritage sites identification, conservation and management.

One of the key design elements of The Heritage Hunt was an awareness-raising campaign about heritage sites, including their specific natural, cultural, geological and historical significance. This helped local communities promote the importance of heritage preservation, and the approach has already been offered as a tool to other local authorities for future assessment and planning in the domain of heritage resource management.

Outcomes

A specific focus was put on youth with an understanding that they are the future custodians of the country's heritage resources.