

ABOUT MENO A KWENA TENTED CAMP

 Camp



BACKGROUND

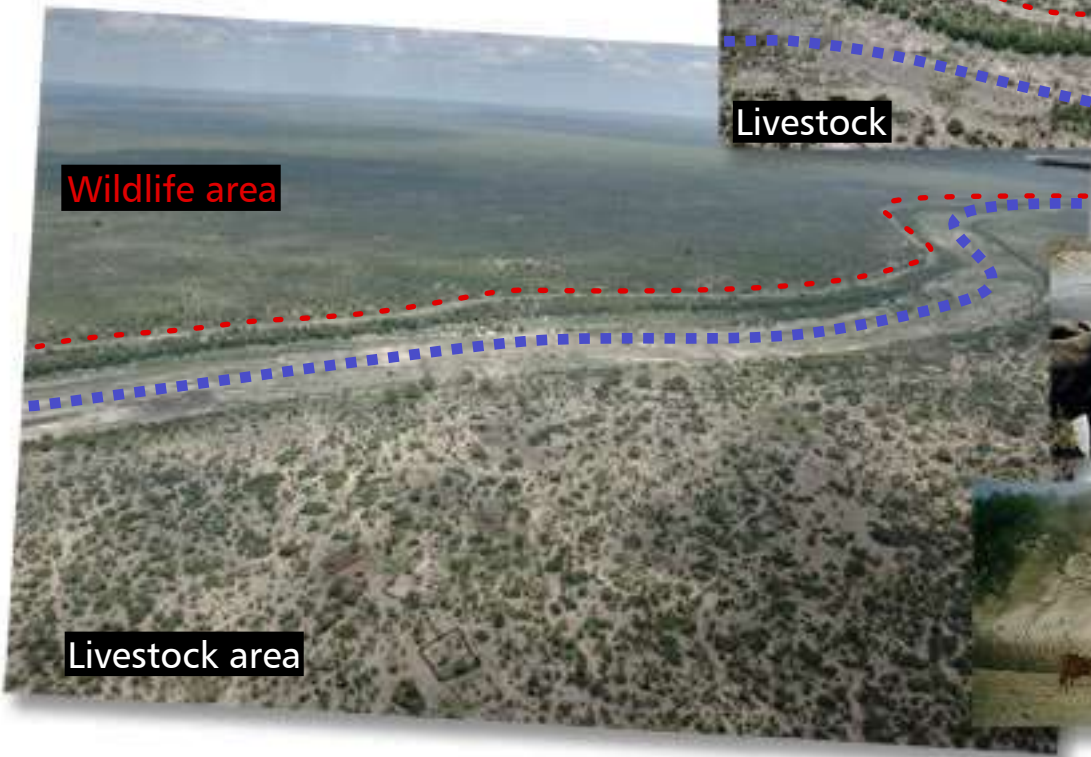
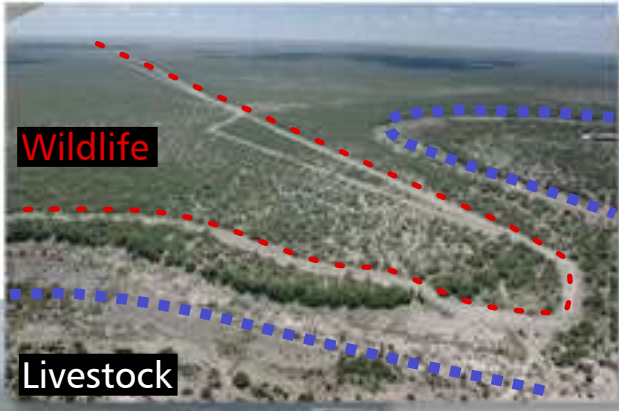
Meno A Kwena Tented camp is located on the Boteti River, the north-western part of Botswana's Makgadikgadi Pans National Park that has single-handedly been pumping water for up to 5 000 zebra for nearly three years. Run by safari guide/operator, David Dugmore, it was established as a for-profit tourism venture by the company Kalahari Kavango safari Co, which currently holds a fifty-year lease to the tribal land on which the camp is situated. However, since inception in 2003, the camp has played a critical role in the management of the park and the conservation of its wildlife species. Hence the inception of The Water For Life Project. The Boteti River flows when higher than average water levels in the Okavango Delta spill over geological fault lines. The last time it flowed through Meno A Kwena was in 1995.

The western border of the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park (MPNP) has had a long-standing history of conflict between livestock and wildlife. Before drought set in

twelve years ago, the Boteti River provided a natural boundary between these two adversaries. But in the years since the river ceased to flow a war raged on in which livestock encroached into the park, predators raided cattle posts, decimated villagers' livestock herds, and provoked community retaliation in the form of poisoning, shooting and trapping of wildlife. The situation as it stood was unsustainable from both sides, and all parties involved (communities, wildlife researchers, safari operators) demanded that the government find a solution.

In 2003, the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) erected a predator-proof wildlife fence along the park boundary (the Boteti riverbed) to reduce the conflict. While it has generally been agreed that a fence posed the best solution to the problem—and indeed, predation and crop raiding, illegal hunting and poaching, and encroachment by livestock into the park have all decreased—its construction has unfortunately been marred by the fact that preliminary measures were not taken to keep the ecological disturbance of the fence to a minimum.

Fence line - - - - -
 Boteti River ■■■■■



Most seriously, the fence was erected in such a way as to cut off wildlife access to water in the riverbed in all but two locations. This has created tremendous pressure on the park's resident zebra and wildebeest populations. Doctoral-level research has shown that high distances between water sources and grazing result in high mortalities among the younger generation of zebra. The fence alignment has also created artificial "traps" in which wildlife can become disorientated, and predators can trap prey up against the fence in unacceptable high numbers.

Essentially, with the construction of the fence, MPNP became an artificially manmade closed system, creating the need to manage it properly in order to maintain a functioning ecosystem of some sort. While theoretically it falls to Botswana's Department of Wildlife and National Parks to ensure that the park's resources are protected, and that the potential held by these resources is realized. DWNP is a relatively new department within a young emerging country with numerous other pressing priorities, and thus their resources are severely limited.

OUR PROGRESS TO DATE

WATER SUPPLIES TO WILDLIFE

In light of the above background, Meno a Kwena Tented Camp has been supplying water to the wildlife in the Meno a Kwena area in order to supplement the water supplied by DWNP at Khumaga (30 km south of Meno a Kwena). Meno a Kwena is the only other place where water is available for wildlife in their dry season range within the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park.

We have built strong relationships with the local community to have our camp included in the fence line and to initially secure the only water hole within a 30-kilometre radius for the area's wildlife. Given the park authorities' lack of resources, we at Meno a Kwena have made it our personal mission to ensure that water is pumped daily for the wildlife, using only basic equipment bought with minimal funds and at the expense of the growth of our safari operation, and community involvement projects. Thus we have more recently been directing efforts at sourcing funding through guest donations and contributions in kind. We are driven to supply water both by a desire to increase the tourism potential of the area for maximised employment and other opportunities

within the rural communities, and by a vision to conserve the Kalahari wilderness and its wildlife for its raw, intrinsic value.

The waterhole at Meno a Kwena supplies up to 100,000 litres of water daily during the dry season for up to 5000 zebra, and a number of other species visiting the waterhole, including elephant. At the end of last year, we gained enough funding to complete a more efficient water reticulation system for this waterhole (see section below for more details). And more recently, we completed construction of a second waterhole 400 meters into the national park, thanks to privately generated contributions from individual donors. After gaining permission from DWNP in mid 2005 to finance, develop and manage this second water supply, we are thrilled to see this second waterhole up and running, and greatly reducing stress, and unacceptably high mortalities on the zebra. Not only does this second waterhole reduce fence-related wildlife conflict, by concentrating wildlife further into the park away from the fence, but it also provides zebra with alternative water available when predators are in the area, allowing them to access water more freely, and when elephants are drinking.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

There is vast potential for more developments in the tourism sector for the communities along the boundaries of MPNP, and it is our commitment to maximize education and development projects through involvement that will increase benefits to the community from wildlife and safari tourism.

Our employees are hired from the Boteti area in the vicinity of camp, and trained as they work. We contract local skilled craftspeople, builders, carpenters, and source building materials locally as much as possible, thus maximizing benefits to the region's rural populace.

Apart from the bed night levy that the local Village Development Committee (VDC) receives for each guest accommodated at the camp, we are dedicated to developing a working relationship between the village and our camp that benefits the community on multiple levels. We assist the primary school with fundraising, school and art materials, and provide art classes at the camp for students to work with experienced artists. By providing the school with computer training,

we have made it possible for teachers to now type all letters and correspondence, rather than hand-write. We help the school traditional dance group with transportation to the camp to perform for our guests who contribute funds for their performances. And most recently, we have helped the primary school establish Botswana's first-ever chapter of Roots and Shoots, the youth environmental organization started by Dr. Jane Goodall.

We hope that with our efforts, we are instilling a new awareness of the wildlife resources that are right on the doorstep of this village community and of how such resources can be utilized in a sustainable way.

This is a great step for the area already since the history of the pastoralist rural dwellers, and the wildlife of MPNP, has been one of negativity since its inception.

THE WATER FOR LIFE VISION

The Water for Life Project has grown from an understanding of the unique situation that has evolved here along the Boteti since the building of the Makgadikgadi wildlife fence, a manmade development that has opened up both new problems and opportunities for the area. Guided by a long-term overarching vision, and a clear sense of the steps we must take to get there, we hope to effectively minimize these problems and maximize the available opportunities.

We believe that utilization of the wildlife by local peoples through tourism is the best, and most necessary process for conserving this country's wildlife, and simultaneously generating maximum benefits to the people living in the area. This project has the potential for adoption along all wildlife sanctuary boundaries in the Kalahari, which is why, while we are starting small, we are thinking big. We hope that when you make a contribution to the Water For Life Project, you keep in mind, not only the difference your donation will make to building our next waterhole, but also to establishing a long-term plan for conservation and development in one of our planet's last truly wild places.

Our next step is to develop a new tourism venture based on the process that we have experienced at Meno A Kwena Tented Camp over the last few years.

The proposed self drive campsite to be located near Moreomaoto Village, on the MPNP boundary will help us reduce the pressure on water at Meno A Kwena, thus improving grazing conditions for the wildlife. This in turn will create a new destination for tourists that will create employment and other opportunities locally, and increased revenue to the government through operating and park fees.



STEP BY STEP: THE MENO A KWENA MODEL

STEP 1: INCREASED WATER SUPPLY LOCATIONS FOR MIGRATORY WILDLIFE AND OTHER SPECIES

WATER SOURCE

To secure reliable and sufficient water supplies using a trench system sunk into the water table in the riverbed. A high concentration of clay in the soil in the riverbed leads to a slow recharge of water from the area into the trench. This is the limiting factor determining the volumes of water we can pump to wildlife. (See diagram/image)

It is suggested by experts that the water in the riverbed is limited and so immediate water conservation methods are required to minimise depletion of the potable water should the Boteti River not flow. This requires a 'collector' system that allows us to collect water from a large area in the riverbed to be pumped from an underground holding tank. (See diagram/images).

It is also recommended that we consider sourcing water with boreholes away from the riverbed even if we can only locate saline water. This can be diluted with the potable riverbed water supplies, the wildlife tolerates relatively saline water without any impact on their condition. This will reduce the riverbed water demands by 50% or more.

WATER SOURCE MAINTENANCE

Once the system is established, water levels will need to be carried out at intervals during the changing seasons, and varying demands on water.

PUMPS (SOLAR/DIESEL POWERED)

Solar power is the most obvious option as Botswana experiences 80% sunshine per annum. The higher initial procurement cost of this system will be more beneficial over the long term than any other option.

Diesel power is the ideal option as a back up to the solar system allowing us to continue water supplies into the night, and when increased water volume supplies are deemed necessary as has been the case in the past at the height of the dry season. Lister LT1 engines are the most reliable and suitable for the environment we operate in. These diesel engines are coupled to horizontal positive displacement pumps. A simple bleeder system allows us to regulate the volumes of water pumped according to varying seasonal demands by wildlife.

PUMPS MAINTENANCE

It is crucial to maintain the pump system as they are expensive, and to minimise service costs, and

lengthening the life of the equipment.

WATER PIPES

Low density polyethylene 50mm pipe is used to transport the water from the trenches (source) to the wildlife (waterholes). These pipes are buried at least 1 metre deep to stop elephants digging them up.

WATER PIPE MAINTENANCE

Regular checks for leaks are necessary, as they are for elephant, and other damage. The connections are the weakness in the system and require constant monitoring.

WATERHOLES

Two or more waterholes, at least 400 metres apart, are required to give wildlife alternative supplies should predators and elephants be in the area.

Shallow scrapes in the ground are lined with Perma-Zyme. This biological chemical seals the soil to minimise seepage. Perma-Zyme is non toxic and the most recommended method of sealing waterholes utilised by wildlife, according to ranchers and wildlife managers.

WATERHOLE MAINTENANCE

Constant maintenance is required to minimise damage by wildlife of the waterholes. The numbers of zebra coming to drink are a major influence on the condition of the waterhole and this must be monitored daily. Elephant damage must also be controlled through weekly refilling in of the mud wallows. These wallows eventually trap wildlife that get stuck in them, particularly young zebra.

STEP 2: POTENTIAL CREATED FOR SAFARI CAMPSITES IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO WATERHOLES THAT WILL BENEFIT THE COMMUNITIES LIVING ALONG THE NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARIES.

CAMPSITE LAND ALLOCATION AND LOCATION

The suggestion is for the Moreomaoto Village Development Committee (VDC) to apply for leasehold land adjacent to the MPNP from the Ngwato Tribal Land Board. Meno A Kwena Tented Camp will assist with developments and management of the campsite as the community has no experience of the industry.

CAMPSITE BUILDING

The campsite construction phase will begin as soon as the lease is approved.



The camp will be designed to initially cater to the self drive tourism market as a simple, low overheads, operation that will give the local community maximised employment and training opportunities, as well as creating numerous business opportunities in the village and its environs.

Individual exclusive campsites will be located and cleared in optimal situations, each with its own bathroom. The construction will be made using local materials collected from the area. Local craftspeople will be employed for the construction of the structures. The bathrooms will have flush toilets, and bucket showers, water jugs and basins will be provided for the guests whenever they require them.

The entrance office will be a traditional thatched hut where guests can check into the campsite, and to purchase firewood, crafts and other supplies.

As income increases from visitors, new developments to the campsite will be made.

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
Staff will be recruited, trained and employed locally to operate and develop the campsite.

Use of local building materials, craftspeople, etc
As said before, building materials will be sourced locally to maximise local benefits, including the transportation of the materials, and local craftspeople to be involved in the construction.

**”TRICKLE-DOWN” BENEFITS TO
ADDITIONAL RURAL PEOPLE**

Emphasis will be put on the creation of small industries and businesses that will be required to support the campsite, other tourism ventures in the area, and beyond. For example – firewood, puncture and mechanical repairs, food and beverage supplies, arts and crafts, traditional entertainment, guided cultural tours, etc.



MARKETING

The campsite will be located between two major roads to the Okavango Delta. Road signs along these roads will attract visitors. It is going to be the policy of the campsite to create a new standard with a reputation for a high level of operations for the self drive safari guests.

Word of mouth advertising is perhaps the best form of marketing in the service industry and so the visitor numbers are expected to grow very quickly due to the location of these major roads, reputation, and the proximity to MPNP and NPNP, and CKGR.

STEP 3: EDUCATION AND TRAINING THROUGH TOURISM AND WILDLIFE OPERATIONS IS AS IMPORTANT AS DIRECT BENEFITS AND FROM EMPLOYMENT.

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING/CAPACITY BUILDING

Staff is trained while employed and so benefits are instantaneous. This is important as income is a necessity.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECTS (I.E. ROOTS AND SHOOTS)

We have encouraged the nearby village primary school to get involved at Meno A Kwena Tented Camp & Safaris and have realised that there are several other institutions where tourism can be beneficial. We believe it is important for the local rural peoples to realise the full impact of wildlife and tourism potential if we are to secure a safe future for the wildlife and their habitats.

STEP 4: FENCE RE-ALIGNMENT TO INCLUDE COMMUNITY-OWNED CAMPSITES INSIDE PARK

It will then be possible to encourage and create incentive for the community to request the government to realign the fence to include more properties within the fence to maximise tourism potential benefits, reducing ecological stress on wildlife, and working towards a diversity of industries in the area.

STEP 5: FENCE RE-ALIGNMENT TO CREATE WILDLIFE CORRIDORS BETWEEN PARKS

Direct benefits from above steps will help garner local support for wildlife corridors for government consideration. It is a well known fact that the larger the wildlife sanctuary, the easier it is to manage. Wildlife will manage itself as it does naturally. With the necessary support, it will be possible to design a wildlife corridor between MPNP and CKGR. This would improve conditions for the wildlife and thus allow the populations to increase and move between favoured wet season grazing, and natural dry season water resources. This would alleviate the need for wildlife management and increase tourism potential for the people through direct benefits, and the country from foreign income revenues.



THE RESULTS

EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER BENEFITS

EDUCATION & TRAINING

ECONOMIC DIVERSITY - *livestock and tourism without conflict.*

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS – *power, roads, communications, education, health, stability, security, voters.*

RURAL INCOME DEVELOPMENT – *local supporting industries.*

ALLEVIATE URBAN STRESS – *decrease rural emigration*

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION – *awareness of environmental values*

ALLEVIATE ELEPHANT POPULATION STRESS – *increase elephant range*

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT – *increase visitor potential within policy parameters*

IMPROVE WILDLIFE POPULATION DENSITY AND GENE POOL. – *particularly animals that have large ranges, Wild dogs, cheetah, etc*

MAXIMISE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POTENTIAL FROM MAJOR ROAD DEVELOPMENT NETWORK – *South Africa to Okavango.*

Botswana has the political and economic potential to lead as a model for environmental awareness and sustainable utilisation for the country, region, and the world.



INVEST IN BOTSWANA, WHY?

Botswana is frequently touted as a model country for wildlife conservation on the continent of Africa. This is undoubtedly true—over 20% of Botswana’s land is devoted to wildlife-related purposes, and wildlife-based tourism is currently the second biggest contributor to the national economy, after diamonds. However, Botswana is still a young country, having gained independence only forty years ago, and in an effort to fast track its development, local and foreign unsustainable decisions have sometimes been taken that discount social and environmental impacts. It is thus the responsibility for us all to assist Botswana in recognizing the value that wildlife, as an engine of progress, that can sustainably drive the country’s development towards an even brighter future.

Despite the country’s short history as an independent state it has already earned a good record for political stability, making it a country worth investing in. In fact, with a certain level of external assistance, Botswana stands to make great strides in the realm of sustainable land use. With relatively low population pressure, Botswana is in a unique position, among its African counterparts, with significant wildlife populations in expansive natural habitats. The dilemma of balancing environmental conservation and an exploding already overcrowded population that characterizes most of Africa is less of an issue here, making conservation a very real and viable possibility.

Unlike many other regions of the world, in which sustainable land usage, (i.e. ecotourism) is not a viable option, because alternative land and resource uses win out for financial reasons (i.e. logging, intensive agricultural farming), the majority of Botswana’s land—and the Boteti region in particular—is a prime location for achieving the much desired outcome of

both environmental conservation, and local community development. This is because, simply put, there are few, if any, livelihoods that Botswana is as well suited towards as the wildlife tourism industry. The Kalahari Desert is an unforgiving environment that allows little life to thrive, apart from the species of wildlife that have adapted to its harsh conditions over millennia. Cattle ranching is difficult, and farming seasonal and unreliable, yet these activities are still the primary form of livelihood for the people of the Boteti district, Botswana’s poorest region by a significant margin. Young people searching for alternatives flock to the cities, where they encounter the reality of a country in which over half of the population is under the age of 21 and almost half of the population lives in the country’s cities. These demographics can be spelled out in two simple words—no employment.

Thus, encouraging communities in the Boteti region to become involved in all aspects of the tourism industry is essential for solving both local and regional problems, and for developing a better way of life in these changing times. As previous conservation and development endeavours in Botswana and Africa, as a whole have shown, it is not as simple as giving local communities employment and financial rewards. It is crucial that they gain a meaningful understanding of the inner workings of the industry, beyond training workshops and project manuals. Their own experiences with a committed grassroots project such as Water for Life will help educate them in understanding the importance of securing a future for their wildlife in order to then support themselves in a sustainable way.

OUR NEXT STEPS

We have not yet fully completed the second water hole system at Meno a Kwena, and hope to do so now that we are in agreement to the best possible design for the environment we are in. (See diagram).

Funds are needed to secure the materials and transportation to the site so we may complete this system.

Having completed the system at Meno A Kwena, we will be in a position to start working on additional water supplies for wildlife in other locations along the Boteti riverbed. It is imperative that additional water supplies be implemented in order to reduce pressure on wildlife that presently only has available water at Meno a Kwena. The most logical site for the

next waterhole is near the far north-western corner of MPNP, approximately 10 kilometres from Meno a Kwena, close to the late dry season grazing range of zebra. A waterhole in this area will reduce the turnaround time between grazing and drinking by 20 kilometres, thereby dramatically decreasing stress on the population, ending the steady decline of the migration that has taken place over the last few decades.

This proposed waterhole is adjacent to the village of Moreomaoto. The village, comprising approximately 900 people, is ideally located, from a tourism perspective, on the banks of the Boteti River close to MPNP, and between two major northern roads to the Okavango Delta. Coupled with WFL’s plans for a

waterhole in this location is a proposal for a self-drive campsite on the northern bank of the riverbed opposite Moreomaoto, for tourists travelling through and to the area.

This campsite will initially be developed and managed by Meno a Kwena Tented Camp, but ownership will lie in the hands of the Moreomaoto Village Development Committee (VDC). As the site lies on state land, the first necessary step will be for the VDC to apply for this piece of land. Once land has been allocated for the campsite, the VDC can begin to develop the site, under the guidance of David Dugmore, current director of Meno a Kwena Tented Camp. Emphasis will be on simplicity, manageability and keeping development expenditure to a minimum. Six cleared tent sites, each with fire pits, bathroom and shower facilities, and a basic welcome hut will constitute the initial establishment. Funds raised by The Water For Life Fund from donors will be used to develop the waterhole and campsite. These contributions will assist with marketing and promotional costs.

Income generated from visitors to the campsite will be directed back into the campsite to cover salaries, maintenance, and other developmental costs. Profits from income will then be utilised by VDC in necessary

developments to the Moreomaoto community.

The campsite location within walking distance from the village proper will be beneficial to the village community on multiple levels. First and foremost, the campsite will provide much needed employment and employment benefits for a number of community members. Even the modest increases in village employment that the campsite will directly create will make an appreciable difference, as explained by the section above. And additionally, indirect employment will be created during the construction of the campsite, as local building materials, local skilled craftspeople and labour are sourced.

A "trickle-down" effect will gradually be established as tourists create demand for small businesses, services and local industries. Arts and crafts, grocery and agricultural goods supplies, firewood supplies, puncture and light mechanical repairs, cafes, traditional entertainment, cultural trips, historical and cultural stories, horseback safaris, and guides. These are just some of the examples of the development opportunities this initial community tourism venture will catalyze. And as mentioned, profits from the campsite establishment will be used for community development projects.

FUNDING

Meno A Kwena Tented Camp initiated the funding and supply of water to wildlife in 2002. National Park managers authorised our assistance to construct an additional waterhole in the national park. The condition was that we would finance, manage and maintain the supplies to the wildlife. Our minimal resources limited the security and supply of water to growing demands when fence construction was completed in 2004.

The growing desperate situation encouraged us to seek funding from our guests and the Water For Life Volunteer Scheme. We offer the necessary information to help potential volunteers raise sponsorship for their assistance in the field based out of the safari camp. The volunteer scheme creates employment, generates funding for developments and maintenance of the water supply to wildlife, and supports our education projects in the nearby primary school.

We are currently seeking further funding for the completion and ongoing developments and maintenance of the Water For Life Projects. These will lead us to developing an additional water supply to wildlife near Moreomaoto, which will create increased potential for another tourism venture in the area.

We have spent the last three years providing wildlife with desperately needed water with minimal resources. We have designed the most cost effective sustainable

plan for wildlife conservation and rural community developments supported by water supplied from the Boteti Riverbed. It is also considered to be the best possible water conservation system required within the constraints, of the worst case scenario, that the river may not flow for many years to come.

(See accompanying designs and costs.)



Banking Details:

Kalahari Kavango Safari Co.
First National Bank Of Botswana
Maun, Botswana. Tel: (267) 686 0981
Account No. 57200006932
Bank Code: 28-23-67
Telegraphic Transfer - Swift Code: 720
Swift Address: FIRNBWGX - 720

NOTE:

First National Bank of Botswana operates through:
Standard Chartered Bank - London, UK or
Standard Chartered Bank - New York, USA
Cheque's are also accepted



- WATER FOR LIFE PROJECT -

MENO KWENA
- TOOTH OF THE CROCODILE -

Layout - Kalahari Images Maun Botswana