



Responsible development of community-based tourism in The Gambia:

What can we learn from the Ninki Nanka Trail?

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THE CENTRE FOR
**TOURISM &
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Overview

- Set the scene: CBT in The Gambia
- Story of the Ninki Nanka Trail
- Key lessons & responsible tourism practices
- Future opportunities & challenges



The Gambia



Tourism in The Gambia



- Population c. 2 million
- Tourism contributed c. 20% GDP
- Prior to COVID 19, aiming to welcome 500,000 international tourists by 2020
- 2019: c.200,000 visitor arrivals
- Top markets: British 44%, Dutch 26%, Swedish 8%, Spanish 6%, Belgian 5%, German 4%, Norwegian 4%, Finnish 4%, Danish 1%.
- Motivations: climate, sea & beach (61%), people & culture (29%);
- C. 73% of visitors over 40 years old... but growth in student travel.
- Urgently needs to develop new markets, products and distribution channels, to reduce dependency on mass tour operators, enabling broader investments, maintenance and innovation...

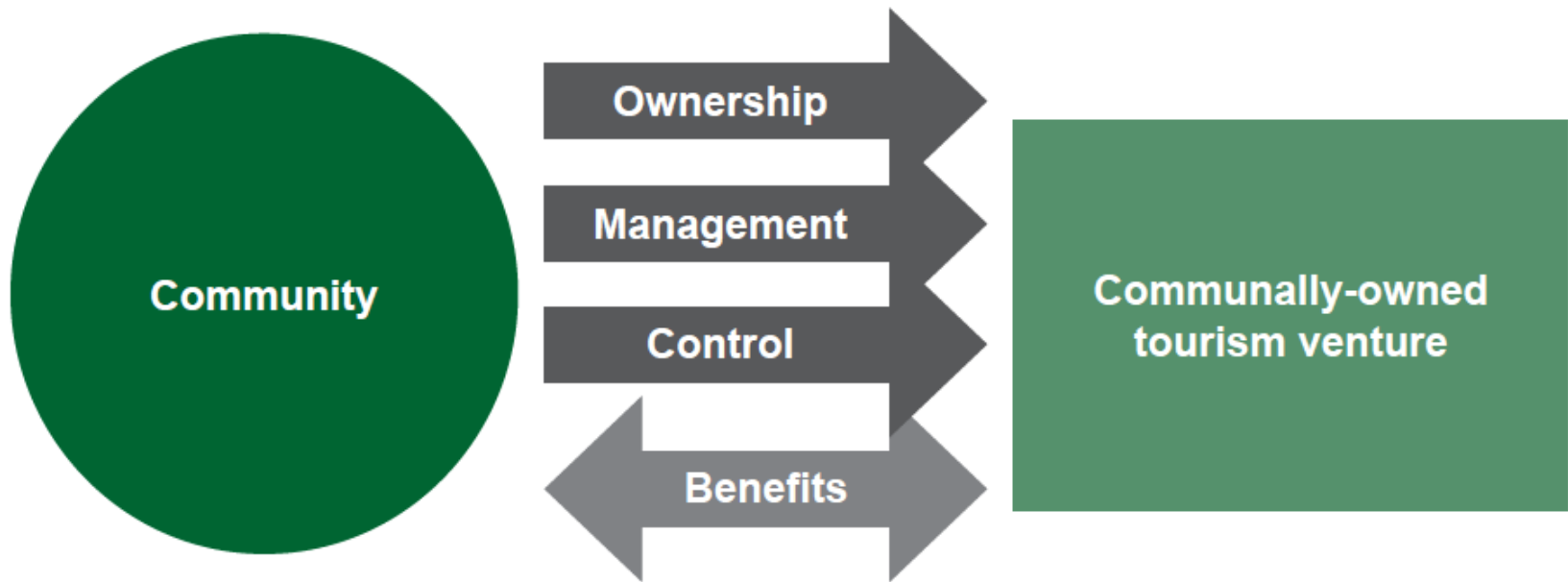


Community-based tourism

- Ideology is about achieving local community development through tourism
- Numerous definitions...
- Two common characteristics:
 - i. Level of community involvement
 - ii. Level of community benefits
- Different levels of community involvement and benefits depending on the approach/ CBT model used
- Four common models of CBT ventures c/o 2016 Operational Guidelines for CBT in South Africa (Tourism Department, Republic of South Africa and ILO)

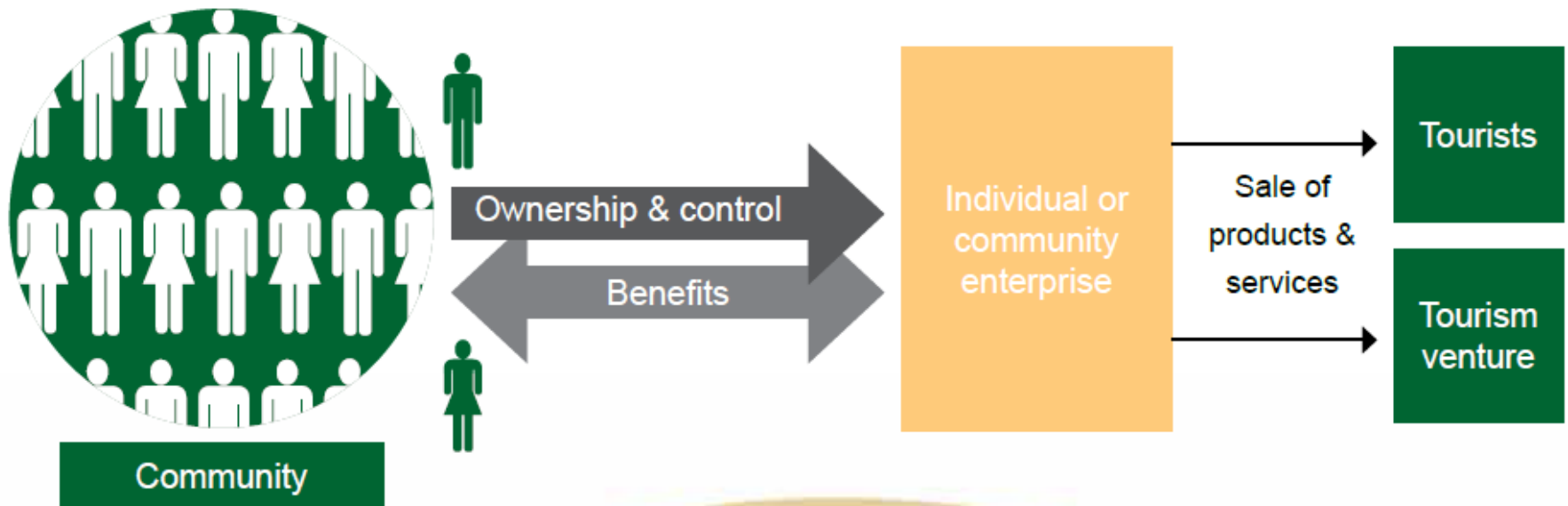


Communally owned tourism venture



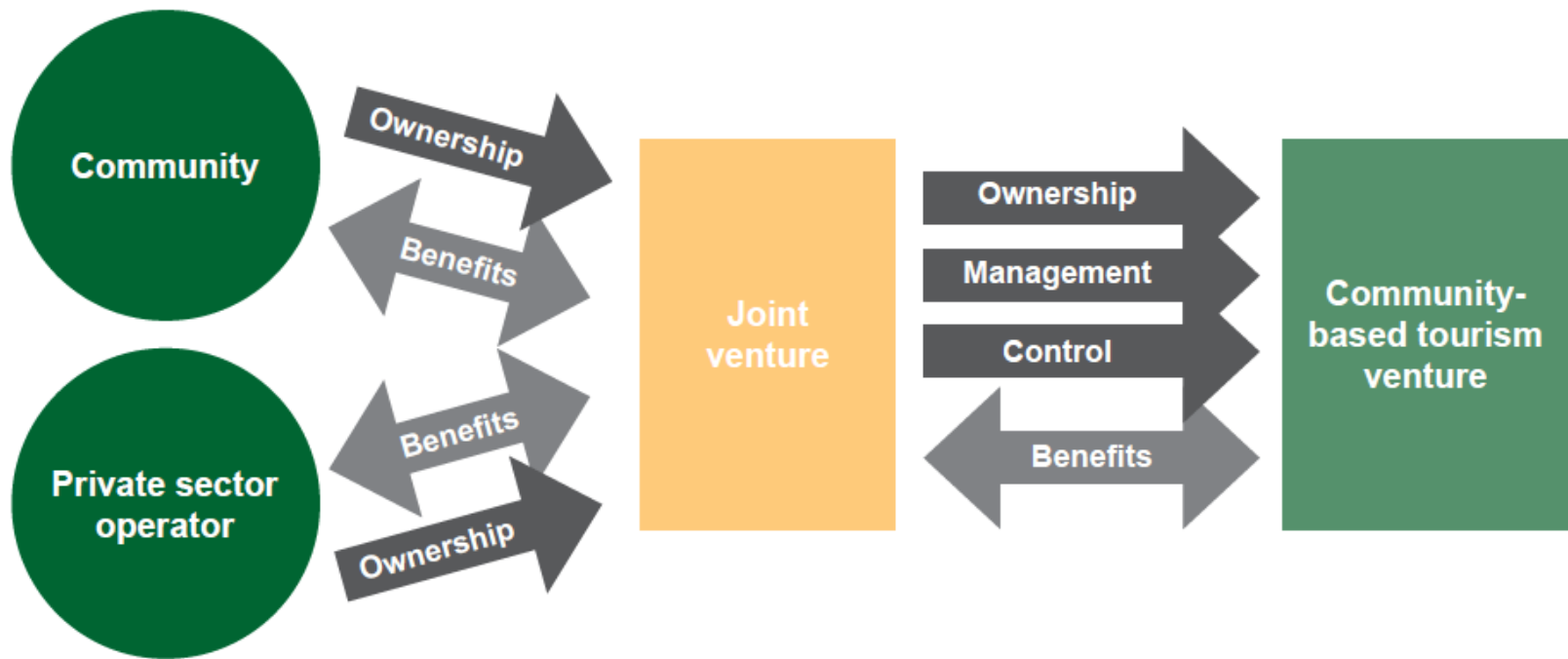
Source: Tourism Department, Republic of South Africa and ILO, 2016, p9

Community enterprise linkages with private sector-owned tourism businesses

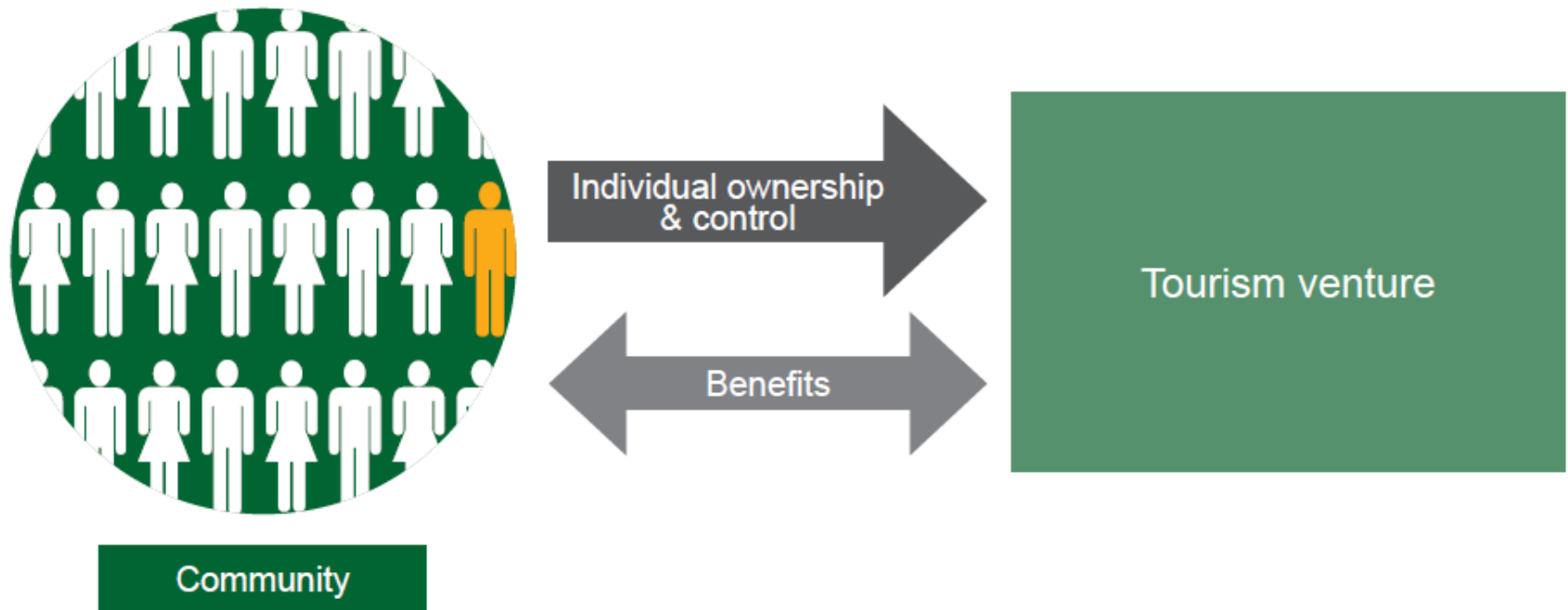


Source: Tourism Department, Republic of South Africa and ILO, 2016, p11

Community tourism initiative in partnership with a private sector operator



Community-based tourism entrepreneurship (CBTE)



*“CBT refers to any tourism business or activity that is located within a community, it may either be privately owned or managed or operated with the involvement of the local community members. It should be able to create community linkages and adhere to **responsible tourism practices** that take environmental, social and cultural sustainability into account.”*

Tourism Department, Republic of South Africa and ILO, 2016, p.5



Market Opportunities for CBT

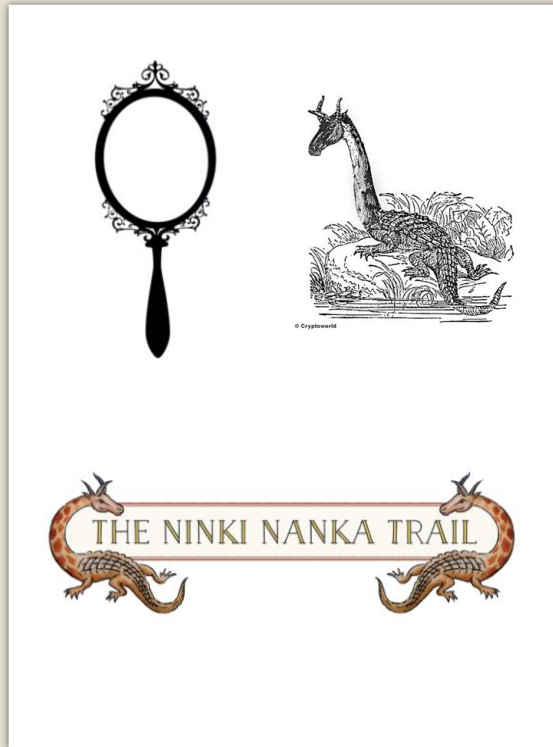
- 1. Increasing importance of (quality) tours / activities as a motivator for destination choices**
- 2. Continuing /increasing demand for local, authentic, experiences and interaction with local community members**
- 3. Increasing importance of sustainability and having a positive impact**
- 4. Demand for 'blended experiences', E.g. Bleisure (Business plus leisure) & MICE mixing business, wellness, local experiences**
- 5. The rise of the millennials as a target market (people born between 1980 and 2000)**
- 6. Rise in demand for study tours; adventure, CBT, cultural, culinary & nature tourism**





NINKI
NANKA
TRAIL

Ninki Nanka Oral Legend



- Mysterious dragon who lives in The River Gambia (West Africa) with supernatural powers
- Various interpretations, stories & descriptions – good and bad
- Integrated into local culture and traditions
- Theme for NNT

NNT Concept

- **Responsible CBT river-based & overland trail** linking up selection of touristic villages & natural & cultural heritage sites along the River Gambia
- **Target markets:** existing package market, small group and independent, special interest, cultural & adventure

Objectives:

- diversify Gambian tourism product from SSS(S)
- poverty reduction
- empowerment of host communities
- create livelihood opportunities
- skills training
- increase foreign exchange from tourism
- meaningful tourist-host cultural interaction



PHASE 1 LESSONS: CONCEPT & PILOT

Building momentum

Feasibility study to explore impacts, product & stakeholder perspectives

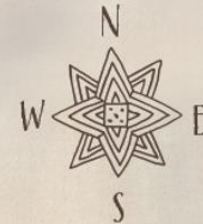
- World Bank/ASSET funded LBU study
- Early community engagement
- Identify potential impacts
- Identify local & tourist perspective on NNT
- Test water with industry
- Opportunities & challenges for implementation
- Develop route and product c/o LBU university fieldtrips to pilot trail

**NINKI NANKA TRAIL EXCURSION FEASIBILITY STUDY
REPORT (Final)**
For Association of Small-Scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET)
May 2013



International Centre for Events, Tourism and Hospitality

THE NINKI NANKA TRAIL



Market research to inform product development

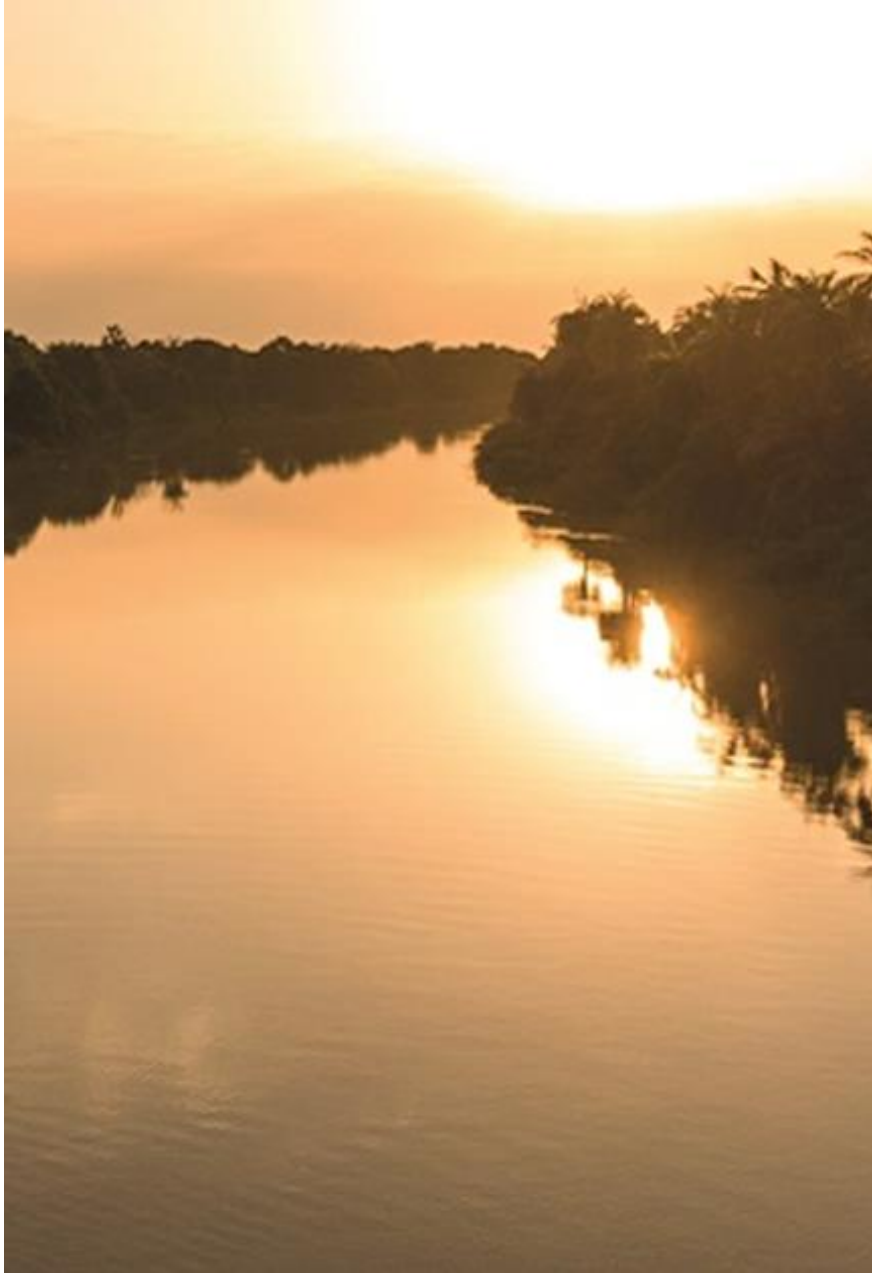
- Common mistake in CBT is 'build it and they will come' approach versus market-led
- ITC/YEP Research on product & market potential (Richards & Suansri, 2018)
- Identified market trends and opportunities re nature of tourist demand e.g. sustainability, authentic experiences, cultural routes, good value
- 4 specific market segments for NNT
- Suggests new brand needed to attract younger markets
- Existing industry perspective on NNT product



River experience at the heart of the NNT product

- Central importance of 'the journey' and river as part of tourist experience
- NNT boats key infrastructure challenge
- Risk management: Existing versus new boats
- YEP Boat Technical Study (de Vito, Captain MacAry & Cestari, 2018)
- Commercial perspective on NNT river trips/safaris based on chartering & improving existing boats
- Guidance re pricing, positioning, strengths and weaknesses of existing product from technical & consumer perspective
- Recommendations re improvements to existing boat, health and safety, crew training



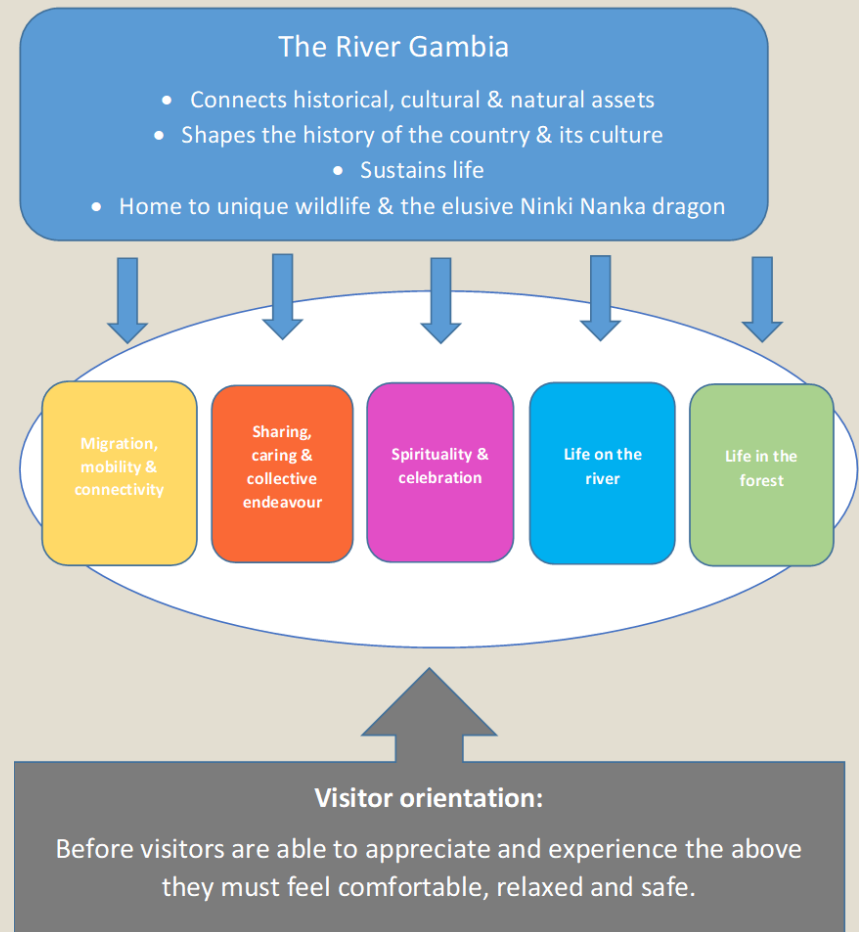


Responsible use of Ninki Nanka theme

- Not just a funny name
- Real part of intangible heritage and important meaning for many
- Need to consider how to capture and preserve Ninki Nanka stories and legends in partnership with local people & stakeholders
- Add value to tourist experience and Gambian cultural offer

Importance of NNT stories & interpretation

- NNT Interpretation Plan (YEP & LBU)
- Help provide better guiding & interpretation to tell stories along NNT
- Link experiences together
- Facilitate local involvement in delivery & content
- Differentiate visitor experience from one place to another along NNT
- Communicate responsible tourist behaviours needed
- Enhance NNT product
- Pilot trips – more work needs to be done





Opportunities to link NNT with existing local events

- Events add great value to NNT cultural heritage and experiential offer
- Link Kankurang, Roots, Mboka & Bird Festivals with scheduled river trips and other CBT products
- Attract special interest markets to the NNT
- Potential of further developing links with WHS and other cultural interest groups



PHASE 2 LESSONS: FORMALISATION & DELIVERY

Future Aspirations



Multi-stakeholder responsibility for the NNT

- Formalisation of the NNT raised complicated issue of who owns/is responsible for the NNT?:
 - GTB/MoTC responsibility/ownership for Gambia as a tourist destination
 - NCAC responsible World Heritage Sites
 - Community ownership of experiences, activities & local culture
 - Ownership of NNT brand funded by ITC
 - Ports Authority and Dep. Parks & Wildlife Management responsible for management of The River Gambia & protected areas

NNT destination/product development group led by GTB

- Gambian home to lead development of the NNT CBT destination/product development
- Facilitate coordination and partnership working by wide range of stakeholders
- Team – GTB, ITC, NCAC, tour operators, VDCs, communities, private investors, Leeds Beckett University responsible tourism team, accommodation providers, Ports Authority etc



10 key areas NNT Implementation Plan

1

- **Responsible management of interaction between tourists & local people:** codes of conduct, child protection, awareness-raising, responsible giving, product design

2

- **Responsible standards for tour operators & ground handlers:** NNT code of conduct, terms of trade, sustainability certification & capacity building

3

- **Quality (classification/standards & 'sense of place') of CBT infrastructure:** toilets/showers, accommodation, bars/restaurants, jetties, visitor information

4

- **Health, safety, licensing & emergency planning:** on the river and all CBT products along the NNT

5

- **Marketing & sales:** in-country and internationally

6

• **Communication and transparency:** communicating NNT objectives and business model to all stakeholders

7

• **Community capacity building:** building on ITC/YEP CBT training and development, interpretation & guide training, tourism business & skills training (GTHI, ITTOG etc)

8

• **New SME income generation opportunities:** NNT merchandising and crafts, sale of local produce, guiding, services/activities delivered by local people/SMEs

9

• **Environmental management:** water, waste, recycling, sustainable technologies, river pollution

10

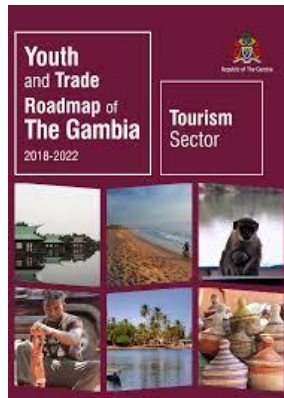
• **Monitoring and evaluation of impacts of NNT:** nature & distribution of local benefit

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT



Support from international development agencies

- Product development
- Marketing
- Community capacity building
- Institutional capacity building
- CBT destination development
- Research and planning
- Strategy



fresh from
the field



CBT community capacity building

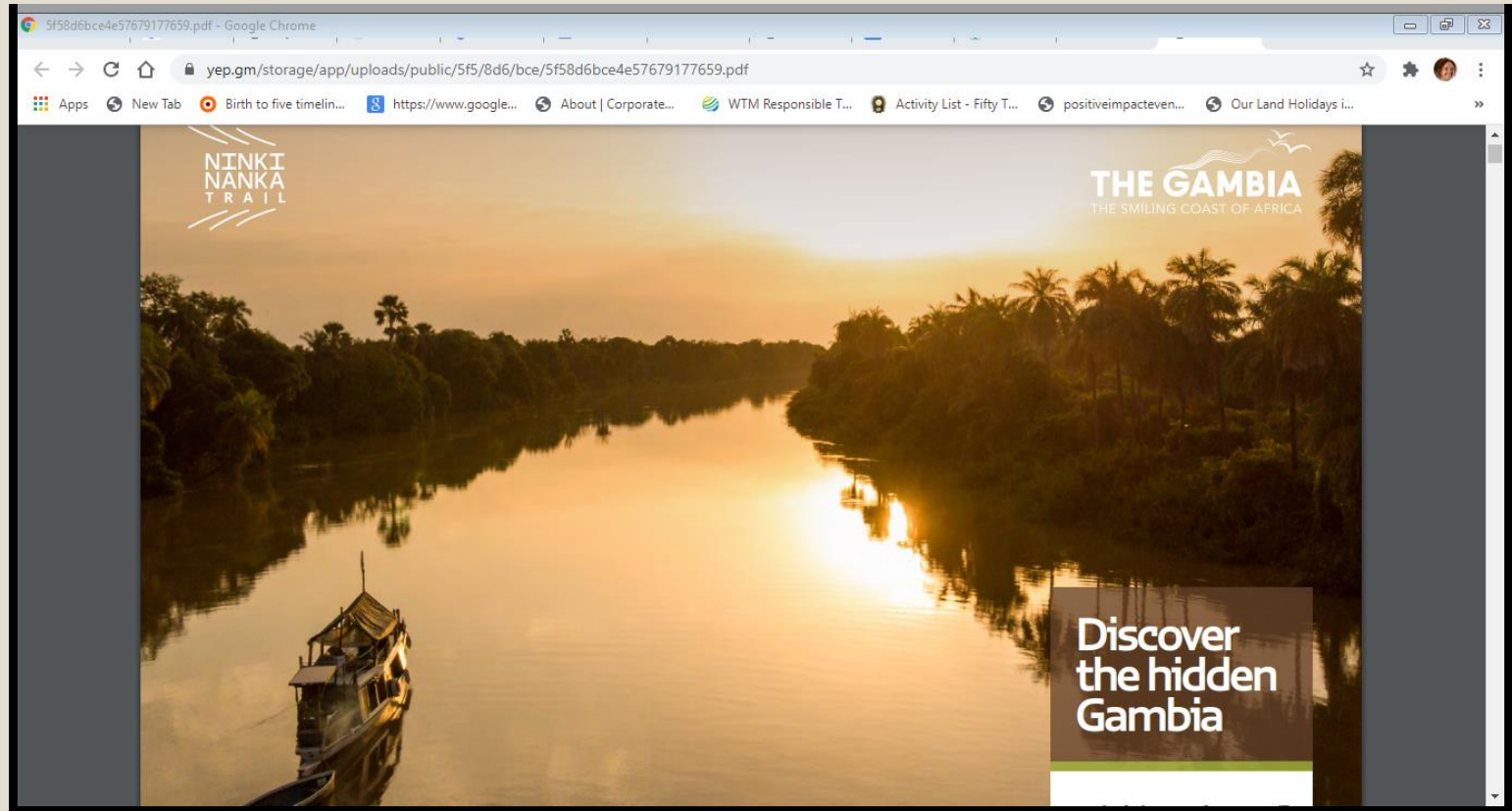
- Product development at village level
- Guide training
- CBT training of trainers – Fresh from the Field supply-chain approach [here](#)
- Food hygiene
- Health & safety
- Basic accounting
- Village tourism committees

Responsible engagement local tour operators & guides

- Responsible tourism training
- NNT product & interpretation
- FAM trip local ground tour operators
- NNT Responsible tour operators code of conduct in line with GTB licensing requirements
- Responsible pricing
- Community %
- Local suppliers & accommodation
- 4 NNT packages overland & river-based



NNT responsible tour operators product guide [here](#)



Marketing support

- FAM trip international tour operators
- ITB Berlin
- World Travel Market, London
- Collaborative branding of NNT
- Product manual
- Virtual reality film
- Website





Responsible management of tourist-host interaction

- Need to actively manage interaction between tourists and local people in CBT communities to try and ensure it is mutually beneficial
- NNT cultural guidelines: Guest Way, Tourist Way, Ndemban Way
- Product design
- Interpretation messages
- Guide training
- Responsible giving
- Codes of conduct

The Future of NNT.....

Challenges

- Fit with donor processes & priorities
- Marketing vs development of product
- Capital investment
- Infrastructure: boats, accommodation
- Capacity issues: GTB, tour operators, communities
- Greening/environmental management of NNT
- Health, safety & emergency planning
- COVID 19 Recovery

Opportunities

- Product: Natural beauty & cultural experiences on offer very special
- Market demand IF NNT good value & quality
- Local ownership & enthusiasm for NNT
- Festivals: Kankurang, Mboka, Roots, Birds
- New GTB responsible/ecotourism accommodation
- Partner support
- Develop link with NCAC & World Heritage Sites

Ninki Nanka Encounters Foundation



1. Support the **delivery of the Ninki Nanka Trail** as a new, responsible, high quality community- based tourism (CBT) product rooted in The Gambia
2. Work in partnership with key stakeholders to **pioneer a responsible management approach to developing new CBT** markets and products along the NNT
3. Build **capacity of small businesses and communities along the NNT** to access tourists and develop responsible tourism products which improve local livelihoods
4. Create **extraordinary, mutually beneficial interaction and cultural encounters** between tourists, local people and industry stakeholders along the NNT
5. Use tourism activities to **protect and raise awareness about The Gambia's natural and cultural heritage**

www.ninkinanka.travel



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Thank you

Any questions?

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