



2022 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story:

FOREST OF FACES – Tree sculptures celebrating traditional Zambian culture

Destination Name: Destination Livingstone

Country: Zambia

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Position: Business Development Manager

Submission category: *(Please check one of the boxes that indicates the focus of your story)*

Please find detailed information for the categories below in the Top 100 training module 'Good Practice Story'.

- Governance, Reset & Recovery
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices in the Top 100 training module "Good Practice Story".

Should you have any questions on your submission please refer to our FAQ page or contact top100@greendestinations.org





DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

What was the problem/issue solved with the good practice?

Sculpture forest created in Livingstone, Zambia, with local artists: Destination Livingstone (DL) has established 'Forest of Faces' public art installation. It has created a visitor hub, an iconic feature in the Livingstone City Council Park that attracts more visitors and tourism to the city. This initiative offered local artists an opportunity to be innovative and create the only sculpture park in Zambia. The initiative boasts 21 wooden sculptures that are 3-4 metres high, hand carved by local artists to resemble a forest landscape, with each art piece telling a story. Every sculpture is a masterpiece in itself, an amazing spectacle when seen as a whole. As part of the project, 25 indigenous trees were planted at the homes of the artists. The Forest of Faces Sculpture Park narrates the stories of Livingstone's cultural heritage, our ancestors and history, our wildlife as well as the talents of our people. Sculptures include African woman, 'Nyami-Nyami' mystical water god, The Hunter, The Brave Man, and The Great Wise Thinker.

Livingstone is the heart of tourism in Zambia and is home to one of the seven natural wonders of world - the Victoria Falls (Mosi-Oa-Tunya). The town's main economic activity is tourism, and it supports many workers including 500 artisans. However, despite being just 10km from a world-renown attraction, Livingstone suffers from being uncompetitive in comparison to neighbouring Victoria Falls town in Zimbabwe.

In 2019, a Destination Management Plan (DMP) was commissioned to identify opportunities to improve Livingstone's competitiveness and support the creation of a new multi-stakeholder destination management organisation, Destination Livingstone. Extensive engagement created a Plan by the people for the people. It highlighted the need to celebrate the undervalued talent of local people, particularly the curio-makers, and tap into the growing trend for local experiential tourism. To celebrate the talent of local sculptors and create an attraction to draw visitors to Livingstone, the DMP's Creative Director Peter Anderson, working with Acorn Tourism Consulting, conceived a unique plan for the artistic development in the city – using story-led design to showcase the talent of local market sellers and craftsmen, to create the first and most appropriate public art installation, known as 'Forest of Faces'.

With the onset of Covid-19 and the lack of tourists, the artisans' income was drastically reduced. Decisive action was needed to address Livingstone's existing problems and to support these curio-makers and their families. The 'Forest of Faces' concept provided a solution. The rationale for addressing the city's issues was threefold:

- 1) Learn from international best practice to create a new attraction based on traditional stories, culture, and local talent
- 2) Upskill traditional crafts people and showcase often under represented talent of our people, by giving more respect to the makers/ sellers of curios/souvenirs and enabling them access a wider audiences and new opportunities
- 3) Create an authentic attraction that could promote Livingstone, draw visitors from the upmarket riverside hotels into the city, to spend more locally and share content of Livingstone's Forest of Faces on their social media.





Methods, steps and tools applied

To create and promote a new attraction for Livingstone and provide an income for local craftsmen and their families during Covid, the Manager of the newly formed Destination Livingstone (DL) started by using the DMPs strategic recommendations and the Forest of Faces concept. They sought a small amount of funding (USD15k) from UK funder, Prospero Zambia Ltd, and additional strategic advice from international designer Peter Anderson and Acorn Tourism, and then embarked on their unique competition for the artistic development of the city:

- Step 1. Consultative meetings with Livingstone City Council, Chief Mukuni, Livingstone Museum, Visual Arts Council and the arts and crafts markets committees produced a working group. It focused on how to execute the project, the role of each stakeholder, preparing the competition rules and communicating with artisans from 3 curio markets.
- Step 2. The open competition required: a drawing of the intended sculpture, submission of a small sample, the story behind it, wood to be used, height and anticipated cost. The working group commissioned and funded 21 sculptures.
- Step 3. The artisans found suitable tree trunks and were encouraged to only use dead trees. The sculptures took between 6-10 weeks and most of their work was completed with basic local hand tools. To create consistency to the overall attraction, the international designer recommended carving a maximum of a third of the trunk. The activity was monitored by the working group and the artisans were given logistical support throughout the project.
- Step 4. Erecting the final sculptures on site was completed over 2 weeks. The Forest of Faces Sculpture Park was opened to the public on 23rd March 2021 by the British High Commissioner to Zambia, Mr Nicholas Woolley. In addition, ceremonial tree planting was conducted on site, to support the environmental sustainability of the project.
- Step 5. In recognition of World Forestry Day 2021 and to continue with our sustainability agenda, all artists plus some dignitaries from Mukuni Village were given trees to plant in the villages where they lived.
- Step 6. A family event was held in May 2021 to allow the artists to show their wives and children their work. It was a happy and proud moment for all involved and it was rounded off with a meal together.
- Step 7. The Forest of Faces has started to be promoted through DL's social media channels.

How was the good practice implemented?

Key success factors *What helped you tackle the issues?*

The artisans took complete ownership of the project by actively engaging in the decision-making process guided by DL's Manager. The artisans mostly used fallen and dry wood for their sculptures. It provided an opportunity to discuss issues such as deforestation, loss of biodiversity and climate change and how our community needs to modify its behaviour to reduce greenhouse gases.

The working group showed great zeal in the initiative and representatives made themselves readily available to complete the tasks listed above.

Chief Mukuni awarded the necessary permits that enabled the artists to remove trees from traditional land.

The willingness and availability of the artists to participate in the project was key to the success of the project. Many said that they had never been awarded such trust before to complete these huge sculptures for the benefit of the city. Their teamwork and willingness to help each other was commendable.

Furthermore, funding which Destination Livingstone was awarded by Prospero Zambia Ltd, meant no artist was disadvantaged as all project costs were covered. Livingstone City Council provided a prime site to erect the 21 sculptures that make up the Forest of Faces Sculpture Park.





Lessons learned

While implementing the Good Practice what challenges were faced, and how were they overcome?

- **Adapt traditional methods to sustainable practices:** The high level of demand for tree species such as teak and ebony needed by the artists, was a challenge due to their scarcity in local areas. Consequently, the artists opted to use wood that was easier to find and had similar qualities to the wood they prefer to work with. This created an opportunity to make the artisans understand the importance of harvesting trees sustainably and replanting in order to maintain biodiversity.
- **Utilise international best practice:** shared experience of an international designer to only carve a third of each trunk helped to give cohesion to the installation
- **Get started - adapt scale of project to match budget:** the original scheme was to have 40 sculptures. Budget limitations allowed for Phase 1 to deliver 21 sculptures. Phase 2 with 20 more sculptures would significantly increase the concept's potential to deliver its objectives as an international attraction for Livingstone.
- **Adapt budgets to actual costs:** Transportation costs were substantially higher than we had budgeted for. However, the working group expenses were low and compensated for the higher transport costs.
- **Adapt promotional opportunities due to impact of Covid:** Since the project was completed at the time of the Covid pandemic, a public opening event was not possible. As a result, there was a small official opening by the British High Commissioner to Zambia Nicholas Woolley. The people in attendance included the artists, Destination Livingstone staff as well as officials representing various stakeholders. The event was shared on social media.
- **Adapt marketing plans to reflect budget:** Marketing Forest of Faces Sculpture Park was also a challenge as Destination Livingstone is a small organisation and lacks dedicated communication staff. This greatly limited our market outreach, but we are planning to promote it now that tourism is restarting.





Results, achievements and recognitions

What were the qualitative and quantitative results of the good practice?

The project achieved cultural, social, environmental, and financial benefits for Livingstone:

- 21 sculptures showcasing traditional craft and local stories were erected on a prime site for attracting tourists.
- Traditional curio makers learned the importance of creating their sculptures by using more sustainable wood
- The 21 artisans were financially empowered by their work and dedication to the project. They received a fee which helped to pay school fees, complete building homes, and buy farm animals.
- It was truly an exciting experience for the artists to be able to make upsized sculptures that showed their creative skills, are very visible and can be appreciated by tourists and residents alike.
- The Forest of Faces Sculpture Park gave the artists a huge sense of pride in their work. One of the artisans said, "I am proud of my work, I will be able to see it publicly displayed and so will my grandchildren." Another artisan's wife said "I am honoured that my husband was part of such a great project. The money we received helped us greatly to take one of our children to school."
- Information boards were placed at the site with details of the artists and the stories behind each sculpture.
- Two artists have been commissioned to make other large-scale sculptures for individuals and businesses in other areas of Zambia. One artist made a life-size sculpture of a bride and groom, and this was taken to Europe.
- A wedding ceremony has also been held amongst the sculptures. Several schools have visited the site for educational tours and the artisans have acted as guides.
- The Forest of Faces sculpture park is free, open to the public and attracts both domestic and international tourists.
- Visitors can interact and talk with sculptors who work at the Forest of Faces Sculpture Park, developing greater respect for their artistic talent and sharing their stories on social media.

Additional references

Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from YouTube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL (not WeTransfer).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNK6C0ONWrA&t=332s>

