

LETTER OF VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE

meaningful expressions and understandings from different cultures on how to deal with the crisis



✉ How the Global Pandemic Covid-19 has impacted the lives of our people and especially the Tourism Industry in Namibia

My name is Timo Behrens, I am a Namibian citizen residing in Swakopmund, Namibia. I am a professional Tour guide and I am going to write you a short paragraph on how this Global pandemic has affected myself, the people and the Economy in Namibia.

It started in Namibia as early as March 2020, when I was on a local Namibian Tour with my guests from Europe, Germany as we departed into the beloved Namibia. At first everything went smoothly, traveling and sightseeing the vast landscapes of Namibia, experiencing the beauty and the different cultures and at every single lodge that we had stopped during the Tour. We had seen the latest news headlines and what this Global Pandemic had caused in other countries around the world. I received a phone call from the company in Windhoek that I was still allowed to finish my Tour and come back to Windhoek as soon as dropped the clients off at the airport.

It was only the beginning of the Global Pandemic. Soon after, the Namibian Government declared a state of Emergency country wide, closing all the borders to the SADC neighboring countries and leaving the Namibian Economy with a drastic downfall in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) from all of our 4 major industries in the country.

Three of our major industries (which include 1- The Fishing industry, 2- The Mining industry, and 3- The Private sector) have all been carrying on, although the private sector has lost a lot of Businesses that closed down due to our 4th and most important industry in Namibia which is - The Tourism industry. The tourism sector has made a major contribution in the development of the country in the last 30 years after Namibia became independent. The Tourism Industry is one of the biggest sectors in Namibia, creating many jobs in cities, towns, lodges, farms and National Parks throughout the country. It has been a major downfall for all Namibian citizens all around the country that have lost their jobs, homes and even lifes due to the pandemic. The tourism industry is least dependent on local immigrants and most dependent on International travelers from all over the world, mostly from Germany, the USA, and China.

It has impacted the tourism industry of Namibia in such a way that all local tourism operators, guest houses, hotels, farms, lodges, game reserves, and even all National Parks are at a complete stand still even though they are still open for business. There are no visitors coming to Namibia anymore.

After 6 months Namibia is still under the state of emergency, having all borders closed, and being in stage 3 lockdown with basic rules and regulations. However, the President and State of Namibia have stated that our economy is in need of a boost and therefore they have decided to open the International flights coming in and out of Namibia, thereby allowing overseas visitors to come to Namibia with strict precautions and a 7 day quarantine including the Covid 19 test which should be a negative result when upon arrival.

I see this as a small step in the positive direction. We are slowly but surely trying to conquer the Global pandemic in such a way that we can carry on as normal in the upcoming months. It is said that we will be able to reopen the Tourism industry fully by the beginning of next year. Giving me hope and foresight.

Although the pandemic has cost Namibia's economy and its people a major loss, it did not stop us from carrying on with our day to day routines. The local people are able to go for walks, go running or visit the gym but with all prevention methods mentioned. The locals are also allowed to partake in sport and take their dogs for walks.

However, is a major prevention factor for all Namibian citizens to wear face masks, sanitize their hands and to practice social distancing to prevent the spread of the virus.

In the cities, towns and townships, the local people have helped each other in many ways. A lot of food contribution and necessities have been granted by the government to the poor people and those in need. They have contributed tents, clothes and other hygienic necessities towards the less fortunate. Some local people started by selling home made food and drinks.

Besides my work as a professional tour guide, I also volunteer for an organization called TOSCO which is involved in community conservation in Namibia, where my leading role is being a game guards officer. I am basically in charge of communication and granting the game guards uniforms in order to protect the wildlife from poaching activities in the areas. It is very vital and of utmost importance to help our local people in the community in order to help protect the conservancy communal lands against poaching and other illegal activities.

In Namibia have a lot of conservation programs, educational programs and field rangers, as well as general rangers that have taken the lead in supporting the field of conservation during the Global pandemic. A lot of workshops and seminars are being organized, and money is being raised, by NGO's to make sure that Namibia's tourism industry and wildlife keeps being protected and preserved for the future.