

## Our Mission



*“We empower rural communities to manage the sustainable utilization of natural resources through applied technical and social research and community partnership”*

# **VELD PRODUCTS RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT**

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# VELD PRODUCTS RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

## BACKGROUND

Veld Products Research & Development was formed in 1982 as an informal NGO and registered as a non-profit company some 13 years later (in 1995), based in Gabane, Botswana. Upon registration, we had just completed a two year consultancy into the spatial distribution of 118 wild species with economic potential within a 15km radius of 83 villages/settlements around Botswana. The Final Report - the first of its kind in the whole of Southern Africa - was an 800 page publication in three volumes covering the spatial distribution of all 118 species with economic potential, and detailed proposals for the commercial processing and marketing of the most promising products as well as proposals for the sustainable management of the resource base.

VPR&D has then concentrated in research and development of indigenous plant species for commercial use. We have trained numerous women in the processing of morula into jams, sweets and cosmetic oils. We have also had a long history of collaboration with Thusano Lefatsheng on propagation of various indigenous edible fruits.

VPRD is governed by a Board of Directors on a voluntary basis drawn from various areas of work.

## ACTIVITIES & IMPACT

Some of the flagship projects that VPR&D has implemented in the past are listed below.

- **COMMUNICATING BIODIVERSITY** funded by the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Project (GEF-SGP) for BWP301,922.00. The aim of the project was to promote knowledge about biodiversity in relation to indigenous plants. The project financed compilation of information about various plants, their propagation, use and conservation. The information is presently housed at the office of VPR&D in Gabane. The project closed in 2001.
- **MILLENIUM SEED BANK** funded by the Royal Botanical Gardens for BWP 2,314,395.00. The aim of the project was to create a seed bank for indigenous plant species of Botswana, with emphasis of plants of immediate economic importance. The project closed in 2007.
- **HOODIA INVENTORY** funded by GEF-SGP for BWP 300,00.00. The project was aimed an inventorying the various species of hoodia and the geographical location. The project also documented conservation threats to hoodia and made recommendations on conservation needs for the species.
- **MIRO-ENTERPRISES FOR INCOME, SUBSISTENCE AND IDENTITY** funded by Kellogg Foundation for BWP 1,500,000.00. The project was aimed at supporting rural communities identify natural resources within the area and utilize them in a way that relates to their culture while also creating sustainable incomes therefrom. The project closed in 2004.
- **SUSTAINABLE HERBAL/MEDICINAL INDIGENOUS PLANTS UTILISATION** funded by Forest Conservation Botswana for P442,100.41. The project aimed to promote the use of medicinal



plants in Botswana in ways that created value and helped to conserve the species. The project closed in 2013.

## **FUTURE PROJECTS**

While funding for projects has become erratic, the need for conservation of indigenous plants and their commercial utilization has grown over the years. Many parts of rural Botswana are characterized by high levels of unemployment and poverty. This is especially so in female-headed and child-headed households. VPR&D has been working with other agencies including the Southern Africa Essential Oils Producers Association (SAEOPA) and the Natural Products Association of Botswana (NPAB) to develop a national natural products industry that will see many households within the target area earn a living from natural products. The programme targets morula (*Sclerocarya birrea*) for a range of products such as cosmetic oil, pulp, and livestock feed. Preliminary forecast suggest an annual turnover of over BWP1.4 Billion with over 11% going to harvesters of morula fruit. The full programme includes setting of standards for various products, incubation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and re planting of indigenous vegetation (including morula) to support a growing demand for cosmetic oils.

Other projects include (i) country-wide survey of morula and other indigenous plants and research on factors affecting their fruit yield and (ii) identification and propagation of superior phenotypes.