

Mashi Craft Trading Post



Situated 118 km west of Katima Mulilo in Kongola on the road that leads to west Caprivi, Mashi Crafts Trading Post is a centre for selling crafts and honey produced in the conservancies of the area. The centre offers a great variety of different items, such as the unique *khwe* fruit collecting baskets of West Caprivi, once used to carry fruits from the bush, and the open East Caprivi baskets used when harvesting crops and sifting millet and maize flour. Necklaces made from *mbono* seeds as well as a variety of other seeds are on sale. Once ground and boiled in oil, the *mbono* seeds were used as a lotion for skin and hair. The crocheted bags were introduced when there weren't sufficient palm leaves. They are made from *narukuku*, fibres taken from fields and soaked in water. Reed mats and wood carvings are to be found in this new and stylish craft centre. Also available is information on local produce, tourism attractions and the well appointed community campsites. An informative poster display provides an opportunity to find out more about the conservancies, community forests and parks in the area, the flora and fauna, history and topography as well as details about the culture, basket making and traditions in the region. In times to come it is envisaged that the centre will grow and become a tourism hub, providing guiding and booking facilities for community campsites.

Mashi Crafts offers an outlet for the work of over 300 craftspeople, among them men who make the woodcarvings. The baskets and beadwork are done by the women, enabling them to bring an income into the household that pays for their children's school fees and clinic costs, or possibly a larger purchase such as a cow. The craft shop also allows the women to improve their skills and, most importantly, to keep the traditional skills of basket weaving alive, as many 21st-century western-world items replace the implements and vessels once used in everyday life.



The new Mashi Crafts Trading Post under construction at Kongola, East Caprivi
2011