The concept

The Living Museum is an open-air museum, run by a local community, presenting their historic culture in the most authentic way to visitors. It is an educational institute for their own people and for foreigners.

The main features are:
– presentation of traditional culture,
– reconstruction of traditional huts, dress, weapons, tools, activities etc.,
– the main focus lies on the people, activities and interactivity,
– a high standard of authenticity is important,
– the museum is independently managed by the project group.

The “Living Culture Foundation Namibia” (LCFN) initiates and supports Living Museums. They give no money at all, but encourage communities to build their own business with own resources. The foundation does the marketing for the Living Museums, as the communities have no good access to that. The foundation supports the Living Museums whenever they need an advice.
The aim

The creation of a source of income in often remote rural areas is the main attraction for the communities to build a Living Museum as a business option. With this concept they have access to tourism and job creation. Interaction between actors and visitors provides a great opportunity to cultural exchange. The Living Museum functions as a school for own traditions and indigenous knowledge.

The Living Museums

There are currently five Living Museums existing in Namibia:

1. Ju/'Hoansi Living Museum (a San tribe)
2. Little Hunters Museum       (San)
3. M bunza Living Museum       (M bunza, a Bantu tribe)
4. Mafwe Living Museum        (Mafwe, a Bantu tribe)
5. Damara Living Museum       (Damara tribe)

The two San Living Museums are run by members of the Ju/'Hoansi San, living in the North Western Kalahari (NE Namibia), showing their old way as hunter gatherers. The people of the Little Hunters Museum have still the permission to hunt in reality, this makes this one really attractive to specially interested visitors.
The Mbunza Living Museum is situated close to the Okavango River in Northern Namibia, showing the traditional lifestyle of Bantu fishermen, blacksmiths, basket weavers and millet farmers. The Mafwe Living Museum is situated in the far NE of Namibia, showing a similar, but in details different Bantu tribe, relying on millet farming, cattle herding and fishing. The Damara living Museum is unique, as Damara are indigenous to Namibia and are a usually not well known tribe, not related to any bigger groups within the African tribal system. The Damara show their old way of hunting and herding in the Namib Desert environment.

The Living Museums are very successful in all ways. They directly employ about 180 people (in 2014). About 500 people sell crafts there. In 2012 they had about 10 000 visitors (numbers are about the same each year since their establishment) with an average income of 1,5 Mio N$ (about 130 000,– €) per year, which is very good for Namibia.

The future

The “Living Culture Foundation Namibia” (LCFN) is constantly looking for new opportunities to encourage other tribes in Namibia to build their own Living Museums. There are currently some communities among the Himba and Nama tribes interested.
The basic concept of a Living Museum could be applied to anywhere in the world, with adaptations to the local circumstances. We would be more than happy to support anybody anywhere. The members of the LCFN – at the moment Kathrin Dürrschmidt, Sebastian Dürrschmidt and Werner Pfeifer – do everything in their spare time and completely voluntarily.

For more information about the “Living Culture Foundation Namibia” see at www.lcfn.info.