



Community participation in the management of South Africa's protected areas

Cynthia Nokubonga Dube
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Cape Town, Republic of South Africa
dubec@cput.ac.za

Abstract

This study seeks to examine how South African communities can be involved in the management of protected areas. Protected areas have witnessed a number of conflicts between stakeholders. The establishment of the majority of these natural protected areas was accompanied by forced removals of indigenous people into remote areas. Local communities have not seen the direct benefits from the KwaZulu-Natal protected areas. The planning, management and execution or implementation of integrated management planning (IMP) processes can be an important mechanism for offering nature-based resources and services for local communities around protected areas in KwaZulu-Natal. A mixed method of data collection in the form of in-depth interviews and a survey technique was adopted in this study. Interviews were conducted with the managers of the three protected areas as well as with local business owners. Community members had to respond to structured questionnaires. The results indicated that communities in KZN are not widely involved in the management of protected areas. It can be concluded that the IMP may be regarded as a development model in enhancing community participation and beneficiation within the protected areas of KwaZulu-Natal and elsewhere in the country. Collaboration can also be used effectively to resolve conflicts and to advance shared visions. One recommendation made is that authorities should pay more attention to achieving better implementation of policies and tourism service delivery, which benefits the local communities maximally.

Keywords: community participation, South Africa, protected areas, collaboration.

Introduction

Protected areas in the world and in KwaZulu-Natal in particular play a big role in biodiversity conservation as well as in tourism. The significance of protected areas is highlighted in the two definitions that follow. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), in Abrams, Borrini-Feyerabend, Gardner and Heylings (2003) defines protected areas as marine or terrestrial areas that have been set aside with the intention of protecting and maintaining diversity of biological; natural and associated cultural resources, by means of legal and other actions deemed active. Authors such as Kolahi, Sakai, Moria and Makhdoum (2012) concurred with the IUCN as they define a protected area as topographical spaces that have been identified and clearly demarcated, assigned legitimate means which are functional, ensuring that nature is conserved and local cultures are respected. As much as the majority of protected areas are in line with the general purposes elaborated in these definitions, that is, (a) support ecosystems to function properly and to be able to renew themselves; (b) do not exploit or allow things that are against the purpose of the establishment of the area, and (c) serve as a substance for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities in practice, the precise purposes for which protected areas are managed differ greatly (IUCN in Abrams, Borrini-Feyerabend, Gardner and Heylings, 2003).



Having realised the rationale behind the establishment of protected areas, it can also not be neglected that protected areas have been drawn into a range of conflicts with some stakeholders such as communities surrounding the parks. In fact, the establishment of most of these natural protected areas was accompanied by forced removals of indigenous people into remote areas. Ghimire and Pimbert (1997) argue that the establishment of protected areas sometimes involved people being moved from their normal places, and this sometimes resulted in their assets getting lost. Protected natural areas used to be the source of life for such indigenous people, providing them with resources for daily living such as being used as farmland; grazing land, source of food and wood. Although governments have formulated policies to redress the imbalances of the past, the issue of the implementation seem to be a challenge in most communities.

The area under investigation in this article is located in the north of KwaZulu-Natal, and the focus was on how adjacent communities are involved in the management of these protected areas. In these areas there are a variety of plants and animals that are protected. These areas are visited by both domestic and international tourists who love nature. The majority of people living in these areas are unemployed and are poor. The researcher strongly believes that through the Integrated Management Planning (IMP) tourism can be developed in a meaningful way that is beneficial to all. The KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa has 114 public protected areas (Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Report, 2014/15), three of which formed the study area for this investigation. The protected areas in question are: Isimangaliso Wetland Park, Ndumo Game Reserve and Hluhluwe–iMfolozi Park.

The rationale was to establish whether there is local community participation in the planning and management of these protected natural areas. Abrams, Borrini-Feyerabend, Gardner and Heylings (2003) state that protected areas do not have a simple socio-cultural, political, and ecological dimensions and that it is imperative for protected areas to do things differently as far as management is concerned. One can argue that this complexity is caused by the ignorance that the social, political and cultural results from the human element. The issue is not only to focus on the ecological side of protected areas, but on all spheres thereof. The objectives of this paper are:

1. To understand how different approaches are used to engage with communities.
2. To assess the level of community participation in the management of these areas.
3. To find out if the Integrated Management Planning is working meaningfully in protected areas of KwaZulu-Natal.

Literature Review

A number of approaches and models for stakeholder engagement have been established by a number of scholars. Local communities should be one of the important stakeholders in protected area management as they have valuable information to share about the area. It is a pity that in many instances managers of protected areas take decisions without involving local communities in making such decisions about protected areas. Chirenje, Gilimba and Musamba (2013) have argued that questions around the involvement of communities in the management of natural resources are some of the common themes towards making decisions thereof. The researcher has found collaborative approaches and Integrated Management Planning (IMP) as being relevant in that they involve all stakeholders in decision making, with communities taking part as well. This paper therefore looks at these two approaches as they are applied in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) protected areas. The IUCN spells this out and World Wide Fund (WWF) (1999) adopted principles and guidelines for protected area management. These guidelines stipulate that:



- The survival of protected areas depend on them being highly regarded not only by the nation, but by local communities in particular.
- One way of showing respect for the rights of local people residing adjacent to protected areas, is by awarding them complete involvement in co- management of resources in a sustainable manner.
- People who were the first inhabitants of the area have indigenous knowledge, and ways of doing things that can serve as a basis for protected area management.
- Country leaders and those responsible for managing protected areas, should include customary and indigenous tenure and resource use, and control systems, as a means of enhancing biodiversity conservation.

The above highlights that locals should see value in protected areas so as to be sustainable. It is therefore important to explain the role of these protected areas so that local communities can understand their importance and how these areas can benefit them as locals. The above guidelines also stress that local people should be allowed to exercise their rights by being allowed to fully participate in the co-management of resources. In some rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal, people still rely heavily on natural resources for their survival. They still use different types of grass for arts and crafts. They use herbs for medicinal use and as food. Wood is still used as building material and for fuel as well. The establishment of protected areas has indeed deprived these communities of some of their rights and ways of living. The above quotation by the IUCN and WWF has pointed out that the sustainability of these areas depends on how they are valued by communities. It is disheartening to realize that some rural households are located at very close proximity to these protected areas, and all they see is busses and cars coming in and out of these places. The majority of them have never been inside the gates and these are usually struggling communities that are not well educated. These communities are also not well respected and do not participate in the co-management of resources. If these communities were fully involved, the researcher believes that some of the problems we are faced with today, such as rhino poaching, could be avoided. Western (1992) states that dire consequences were observed from the exclusion of the rural communities as an important stakeholder in Kenya's National Parks from ecotourism benefits, and this ultimately resulted in deep seated resentment from the local people. This argument can be generalised to other parts of the world including South Africa.

Goldstein and Butler (2010) have argued that in the late 1980s, a number of collaborative approaches were tried out by planners. There had been observations that regulatory agencies were not able to reach decisions and also ensure enforcement in a cost effective manner that was fair to all. Goldstein and Butler (2010) further define collaborative approaches as processes that are non-discriminatory and bring together various stakeholders so as to build trust and enable them to network until they reach consensus decisions and compliance. In 1989, Gray came up with different types of collaborations which included joint ventures, regulatory negotiation, public-private partnerships, community gatherings, public meetings, and other settings in which stakeholders with a shared interest assembled to diagnose a problem and develop understanding of how to address it. Mediating differences was an essential element of a collaborative process. Collaborative management (also referred to as co-management, participatory management, joint management, shared management, multi-stakeholder management or roundtable agreement) is used to describe a situation in which some or all of the relevant stakeholders in a protected area are involved in a substantial way in management activities (Kepe, 2008; Lane, 2001). It is also defined as a situation in which two or more social actors negotiate, define and guarantee amongst themselves a fair sharing of the management functions, entitlements and responsibilities for a given territory, area or set of natural resources (Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.*, 2004). Gray (1989:112) suggested that effective collaborative processes could reduce adversarial relationships and redress power and resource disparities among stakeholders.



The collaborative approach

The term 'collaborative management' of protected areas refers to a partnership by which various stakeholders agree on sharing among themselves the management functions, rights and responsibilities for a territory or set of resources under protected status (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996). This is what everyone would expect is happening with these communities living adjacent to protected areas, that they also share responsibilities for those territories. Chirenje, Gilimba and Musamba (2013) contend that people advocating for community participation in decision making, note that policy and development which adopt a bottom-up framework where local communities are actively involved in decision-making, better facilitate the achievement of target objectives. Collaborative approaches are seen as leading to efficient agreements between parties. Collaborative institutions have been found to indirectly increase the level of consensus by changing collective beliefs without changing the levels of cooperative behaviour (Lubell, 2004). On that same note, Kenney (2000) also contends that collaborative approaches have led to attitudinal changes without behavioural cooperation. This means that collaboration should not only be theoretical, but practical as well. Proponents of collaborative planning maintain that the best management processes involve stakeholders working jointly to make decisions, rather than government agencies ordaining resource management decisions independently (Camacho, Susskind and Schenk, 2010). According to Borrini-Feyerabend (1996), in the collaborative management process, different stakeholders develop a partnership that is relevant to specify and guarantee perspective functions; rights; responsibilities concerning a protected area. Benefits and costs therefore have to be shared equally regarding the protection and management of a protected area as this is regarded as important when one speaks of co-management of protected areas.

There is a strong belief that the successful management of protected areas is dependent on sound cooperation between different stakeholders. This is therefore the reason why collaborative management is often preferred as a favourable approach. Another reason why a collaborative approach is preferred is that it is based on an argument that it advances an equitable management of all parties involved, particularly people dependent on the resources included in protected areas (Dhoubhadel n.d). This collaboration therefore is said to have a potential for producing better, more equitable, decisions because scientific knowledge is supplemented by, specific local information, as resource users, as well as resource managers, are involved in the decision-making process. Jamal and Stronza (2009) have stated that the relevance to collaboration in the protected area context lies in ensuring just and equitable participation of those most disadvantaged or least capable of receiving fair treatment in the collaboration and its outcomes. This argument therefore suggests that attention need not only be put on input from various stakeholder groups, but also to their direct participation in decision making and control of the processes and outcomes.

In line with the argument made above, relating to collaboration in biodiversity management, a number of stakeholders contend that a call for stakeholder participation in the sustainable development of tourism has long been called for (Ryan, 2002; Getz and Timur, 2005; Dodds, 2007 and Hall, 2007). Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNW) strategic plan (2009-2014) explains that there are challenges in ensuring the management of conservation programmes for communities throughout the province. The EKZNW strategic plan (2009- 2014) further states that even though there are systems and platforms in place, community participation in the formulation of policies and decision making is still a challenge. Stakeholder forums have been found to enhance participatory approaches as far as the management of protected areas is concerned.



In South Africa, the Tourism White Paper (DEAT, 1996) defines participation as an active process by which those groups that benefit from the project influence the direction and the way the project is carried out for their own well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish. Local communities have been seen selling their arts and craft and other souvenirs to tourists visiting protected areas, but their role in decision making and other economic benefits is minimal. According to Casmir (1990) to participate is to take part in or become involved in an activity. In terms of this study, participation is taken to mean the contribution of the community or its taking part in the management, conservation and service delivery of tourism activities that are sustaining the natural and protected areas concerned. As such, participation has been referred to as those activities by which community members share in the identification and selection of rules that are directly or indirectly associated with the formation of public policy (Dieke, 2001). In this context the concept denotes how much the community participates in the project, and how they divide certain activities among themselves, as they are offered by the protected areas as tourist destinations. In other words, community participation is seen as central in tourism activities relating to protected areas.

The Integrated Management Planning approach

The integrated management planning [IMP] can be explained as a code of practice which seeks to ensure that good management considerations are fully integrated to the development process of all natural resources so as to be sustainably conserved and beneficial to the local communities living next to natural areas (DEAT, 2006a). The involvement of all affected parties is a crucial element for integrated management planning. Thomas and Middleton (2003) contend that the IMP process should be participatory in a sense that it should involve the people affected by management of the protected area. Thomas and Middleton (2003) further state that participation should take place as early in the process as possible and continue throughout. The three protected areas discussed in this paper have conducted their integrated management planning process, and they now have integrated management plans in place.

The case of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and community participation

Ezemvelo KZN wildlife is a government agency tasked with a duty to retain protected areas and public nature reserves in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. This agency was established in 1999 under the KZN Nature Conservation Management Act (EKZMW annual report, 2014-2015). The EKZMW is made up of a large stakeholder profile that ensures that the organisation is able to perform effectively on its mandate (EKZMW annual report, 2014-2015). This profile includes local communities; the business sector; non-governmental organisations and government departments. The motivation behind the establishment of these collaborations was to ensure that EKZMW excellently administers biodiversity conservation principles in a collective way and not alone (EKZMW Annual Report, 2014-2015).

The establishment of most of natural protected areas was accompanied by forced removal of indigenous people into remote areas. Walker (2005) contends that from the early 1950's to the early 1980's, Zulu speaking households were removed from what is now known as iSimangaliso wetland Park and in other parts of South Africa. This removal was conducted so as to make way for conservation as well as commercial forestry. Kepe (2010) concurs with the previous authors as he also argues that the establishment of protected areas sometimes involved displacement of, and loss of assets by indigenous people. Protected natural areas used to be the source of life for such indigenous people, providing them with resources for daily living. The implications of the



above view are based on the fact that communities in some regions that are still developing have been disappointed on the ability of tourism managers to equitably involve local communities in the management of tourism resources, protected areas inclusive.

In his report in the Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife Strategic plan (2009-2014) the CEO highlighted that EKZNW is dedicated fully to the operation of this strategy that is founded upon three pillars which are: conservation, ecotourism and partnerships, upon which the organisation rests. He further stated that the communities in the province of KwaZulu-Natal are grateful for taking part in broader biodiversity conservation, and that the trend in conservation exercises has led to the introduction of the KZN Biodiversity Stewardship and the People and Parks Programmes to encourage custodianship. Other projects that have been identified include Community Rhino Ambassador Programme, which is aimed at fighting against rhino poaching. It is interesting to note that there are processes in place to involve locals in the activities of protected areas. This programme also assisted during the negotiation process regarding the proposed Fuleni mine. It is through such projects that the CEO of EKZNW contends communities in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal are involved in these protected areas. The biggest challenge this paper seeks to establish is whether communities concur with the management's contention. The KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Management Act no. 9 of 1997 provides institutional structures for nature conservation in KZN; to institute; regulate and monitor bodies and mechanisms, and to take care of the secondary matters (KZN Nature Conservation Act, 2007). The EKZNW admits that there have been signs of a positive trend towards a co-management and partnership approach over the past few years, but that challenges still exist with regards to the coordination of extensive community conservation programmes across the province. It was noted earlier that even though community forums are in place, involving the wider community is still a problem.

Research Methodology

A mixed method was used to collect data. Structured interviews were conducted with the managers of the three protected areas namely Ndumo Game Reserve, Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and iSimangaliso Wetland Park, as well as businesses in the area. Surveys were conducted with local communities. Data used in this study was collected in 2011 after ethical clearance was obtained. A purposive sampling method was adopted when structured interviews were conducted. This method allowed the researcher to save time by only approaching respondents with relevant information, such as managers and owners of businesses. A probability sampling procedure was applied in this study in the distribution of questionnaires to the communities. All elements of research had an equal chance of being chosen.

Even though the sampling method was stratified, it allowed for probability of selection and analysis. From among the different categories of stakeholders, any tourist; or community member could be chosen. The questionnaire administration and person-to-person as well as telephonic interviews were used to collect data. Thus, the study employed both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Some e-mail questionnaires were also used to facilitate data collection, mainly from tourism and conservation officials. Data was collected from the local community so as to establish their awareness and understanding of the Integrated Management Planning Process (IMPP), and also to ascertain the community involvement in the development of the IMPs. The process and procedure of selecting the stratified random sampling technique was encouraged by wanting to get a sample where respondents have an equal chance of being selected.



In this regard, to achieve the stratified aspect of the sample respondents were approached in terms of strata or groupings such as tourists, officials, service providers, community and various demographic characteristics. This sampling method was chosen with a view of eliminating bias in the processing of research data gathering. Considering that statistical measures such as the Likert scale and Semantic Differential techniques were used to elicit responses, the SPSS programme became indispensable for performing statistical analyses. The researcher transcribed the interviews. During analysis of interview data, general themes of research findings were then developed. Findings were presented using graphs and tables.

Results and discussion

The main findings are based on the analysis of both primary as well as secondary data collected from the study areas. It was indicated earlier that the involvement of all affected parties is a crucial element for integrated management planning. Thomas and Middleton (2003) contend that the IMP process should be participatory in a sense that it should involve the people affected by the management of the protected area. The analysis of the IMP process in the protected areas of KwaZulu-Natal has given an indication of community participation in the management of KZN protected areas.

Theory-based IMP Findings - iSimangaliso Wetland Park

It was interesting to note that all the three case study areas do have Integrated Management Plans (IMPs) in place. One of the intentions of the IMP is to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders in the planning process. The IMP for iSimangaliso Wetland Park has clearly indicated the co-operative agreements, stating the responsibilities of different stakeholders involved. According to the IMP for iSimangaliso Wetland Park, the rights and duties of the iSimangaliso Authority, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and some municipalities, with respect to the management and development of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, are regulated through legislation and have been further elaborated through a management agreement signed in August 2001 by the involved parties. The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority is the nationally appointed policy and management body for the Protected Area. In other words, this Authority is a statutory body, empowered to manage the Park and make conservation and management decisions.

The cooperation between the two bodies cited above (IWPA and EKZNW), is based on the fact that the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife derives its power through its contract with iSimangaliso Authority, and operates as its service provider. The agreement specifies that the parties will assist one another in achieving the required regulatory processes and approvals necessary for the general enhancement of iSimangaliso, and to give effect to management objectives. The rights and duties of the two parties to the agreement provide, amongst others, for the following responsibilities:

(a) The iSimangaliso Authority shall:

- Come up with processes that will ensure environmental and cultural protection of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park and protect as well as implement values of the World Heritage Convention. This includes taking full responsibility by conservation management in the Park.
- Stimulate, manage and expedite actions that enhance the development of tourism and other related development within iSimangaliso Wetland Park.
- Facilitate programmes that encourage job creation.



- See to the development and implementation of the IMP.
- (b) Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife shall be responsible for:**
 - Day to day operational conservation management of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, including implementation of iSimangaliso policy, controlling and ensuring that law is enforced, and help the iSimangaliso Authority in monitoring compliance by concessions related to contractual and statutory obligations.
 - Implementation of Conservation Operation Plan, and regulatory enforcement related to conservation within the iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

The responsibilities of these two organisations are structured with a view of generating cooperation between the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife promoting biodiversity and iSimangaliso Authority formulating policies.

In the context of the cooperation of these two organisations, it is necessary to look at the key objectives and the accompanying key action for iSimangaliso as presented in the IMP document. Empowerment and transformation was one of the key areas of planning, with the following objectives:

- (i) To facilitate change within the tourism sector in a way that assist locals to participate in the establishment of businesses within the Park

There are two fundamental actions under this objective and they include: Firstly, where appropriate support encourages the establishment of equity partnerships between private sector service providers and mandatory community partners. Secondly, where the implementation of an SME incubation pilot programme, which will enable the entrepreneurs to successfully tender for activity concessions within the local parks.

- (ii) To assist local communities living around the Park to have access to economic benefits through programmes in the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, as well as through programmes having to do with taking care of the land.

This objective appropriately provides opportunities for SMEs and temporary job creation strategies for rehabilitation work, alien plant clearing, construction and maintenance of Park infrastructure.

- (iii) To ensure that good relationships exist and are maintained between the Park authorities and adjacent communities and that effective consultation processes are implemented with communities living around the Park and land claimants

The aim is to develop Local Area Plans with beneficiary communities in order to provide a framework for development within each locality that takes account of the relevant legal, social, environmental, institutional, economic and financial parameters.

- (iv) To offer any form of support to those who have claimed their land back, and to facilitate the settlement of land claims and to see to it that land agreements are implemented.

The objective is to facilitate the participation of communities living around the Park and land claimants in the management of the Park, through the Local Area Planning process, which is anticipated to bring about tourism benefits to the local people. In addition, to take part in



undertakings aimed at enhancing the settlement of land claims by the Regional Land Claims Commission on the Park Those activities may include mobile workshops.

(c) Some Local Challenges and Threats

Some of the challenges and threats that have been identified at the iSimangaliso Wetland Park include the following:

(i) Socio-economic environment

The IMP for iSimangaliso states that the entire area of uMkhanyakude region together with the adjacent areas of the Park is made up of the poorest communities in South Africa. The 2001 census, reveals that there are 573,331 people living in the uMkhanyakude District Council area, the majority of whom depend on natural resources from iSimangaliso for survival, for example, harvesting of reeds and fruit, agriculture and fishing. Due to this harvesting there has been depletion and degradation of natural resources in areas where people live. This situation has therefore meant increasing pressure on the resources inside the Park. For example, Coastal Peat Swamp Forests are severely threatened from a number of uses, one of which being cultivation. This cultivation assist in food production capacity in the short-term. This food production is not sustainable, and does not promote ecological sustainability or food security in the long-term. There is a transfer tangible benefits from iSimangaliso, and this is not only an economic imperative but also a conservation concern.

(ii) Slow resolution of land claims

Another threat that has been identified is the slow resolution of land claims. It is stated in the IMP for iSimangaliso that some of the consequence of the forced removal and re-settlement of people in new areas not by own choice prior to 1994, have resulted in people having to claim back their land with the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights 21. The reason why people had to be removed from a large proportion of the land under claim was to make way for commercial timber plantations or for military purposes. Agreements settling nine of the fourteen claims on iSimangaliso (including the areas of the Eastern Shores, Cape Vidal, Sodwana State Forest, uMkhuze, Maphelane and False Bay) have been finalised.

It is further stated that things have not been moving fast enough regarding the settlement of land claims on the Parks. This situation has created doubts, and this has resulted in doubts in many cases worsened the relationship between iSimangaliso and the land claimants. There has also been some resentment fuelled by the slow progress and irritation as locals have high expectations with regards to delivery of economic benefits from the land. Land claims have raised people's expectations as in some areas people hope that there will come a time when benethey (as beneficiaries) will eventually replace the management agency and have the right to develop tourism facilities and farm without any regulation from conservation authorities. It has further been stated that until recently, the difficulty faced by rural communities in the region has further been worsened by conservation efforts, with no contribution to economic growth and poverty alleviation. The legacy of forced removal underpins the situation that is evident in the area, where there exist side by side underdeveloped local communities adjacent to protected areas. For many people living in the area today, conservation is seen as similar to land distancing followed by social disruption. These communities do not have pleasant living memories, and so it is not surprising that there is hostility towards conservation and conservation authorities.

(iii) Transformation of the tourism sector



It is saddening to note what has been stated in the IMP for iSimangaliso, that at the start of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative, less than 3% of tourism businesses (including government-run facilities and camp sites) were owned by black people. Whilst this has subsequently increased to 5%, the transformation of the tourism sector is another important strategic challenge for iSimangaliso. Due to the current social and economic relations of power, the majority of local black residents occupy marginal and vulnerable positions within the tourism industry in the area, where they earn an income from informal sector activities only. Given the socio-economic context of the Park, with deepening rural poverty and unemployment, the transformation of the tourism sector is important. iSimangaliso Authority and its concessionaires must comply with government's Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) policy and the relevant industry charters (including the Tourism Scorecard as contained in the Tourism Charter). Training and capacity building are important for gaining entrance into the tourism sector.

Theory-based IMP Findings - Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park

The IMP for Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park is an important document and states that regarding the management of the park, Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife is the management authority of Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park and is responsible and accountable to the provincial MEC and the Premier ensuring coordination of matters affecting this park through provincial departments, local and district municipalities. Some of the IMP related findings pertaining to this park include land claims, co-management of resources and socio-economic benefits, all discussed below.

(i) Land claims and co-management

It is again stated in the IMP for Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park that since 1996 three land claims have been registered in this park. One of such claims was the Corridor Game Reserve (24100 hectares) in Mpukunyoni and Hlabisa Communities, under the Corridor of Hope Community Trust claim which was settled on 8 June 2008. A Co-Management Agreement was signed. A section of iMfolozi near Cengeni Gate including Okhukho loop 4000 ha Zungu or Okhukho Community are all in the process of settlement. A co-management structure was formed, involving landowners, community members and the management authority, about the process to be followed. The land-use would not change and EKZNW would continue managing the entire Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park including the restored or claimed land according to the co-management agreements. It is also interesting to note that the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park is considering broadening conservation land-use management in areas surrounding the park, as it is effectively an "island" surrounded by a sea of residential development. This management would include various forms such as Community Conservation Areas, Biosphere Reserves and game farms. Co-operative agreements would be identified and developed with neighbours in order to enhance the ecological processes and viability of biodiversity in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park. These agreements would enhance the financial and existence value of the asset to the land owner and provide for informed and coordinated sustainable management of the asset. Assistance for these projects would be on a cost-recovery basis and would encourage public participation. This study therefore, seeks to set up a management mechanism which would facilitate scientific, technical and monitoring processes.

(ii) Socio-economic context

The IMP for Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (2011) states that the park lies in a region which is marginalised with respect to its geographic location, community beneficiation and the rate of government expenditure. The population of the region where the park is located is estimated at



2 million people. This population is also said to have an annual growth of 2.5%. It is considered to be the most deprived region in KwaZulu-Natal. The level of poverty is also estimated at 75% of all individuals. It is further stated that more than 80% of the residents in these areas do not have jobs.

The area does not have proper infrastructure, and this is an indication that for a long time, the area has been neglected. The condition of roads is bad, and in some areas roads do not even exist. Services such as telephone communications, electrification and water supplies, are lacking. Schools are available in the area, but they are of a poor standard, and they lack the necessary equipment. There seem to be no economic base in the area, and this further escalates the problem of poverty in the area. Subsistence farming and harvesting of available natural resources is what the greater part of the community make a living from. The rural communities neighbouring the park are also poor they too practice subsistence agriculture in order to support their families, (cattle, maize, sugar cane, and vegetables), working for government and community services and providing migrant labour to the industrial areas of Gauteng, Durban and Richards Bay, (Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Integrated Management Plan 2011).

Theory-based IMP Findings - Ndumo Game Reserve

Similar to the two other parks discussed in the previous section, the Ndumo Game Reserve is an important protected area that has experienced similar administrative challenges. These are briefly discussed in the next two subheadings.

(i) Administrative and Legal Framework

The Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNW) is the designated Management Authority and is responsible for the smooth running of Ndumo Game Reserve (NGR). According to the IMP for NGR, the reserve was originally declared in 1924 after being annexed from Mathenjwa and Tembe Tribal Communities. It is further stated that during March 1998, the two above mentioned communities lodged a land claim against the communal land that makes up the reserve. The claim was successful and a settlement agreement was signed on February 2008. It is interesting to note that a fundamental condition for the transfer of land is that claimant landowners will not physically occupy the land and land-use shall not be altered and will remain a conservation area in perpetuity under the management of the existing management authority (EKZNW), (Ndumo Game Reserve Integrated Management Plan 2008).

With regard to the legal framework and related documents, the Ndumo Game Reserve IMP has highlighted agreements such as: the Banzi Camp Concession and the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) cooperative agreement. Other important agreements relate to the establishment of a Transfrontier Park between the government of Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland. Such agreements have incorporated large land parcels into the Trans Frontier Conservation Area.

(ii) Operational Management Policy framework and Guiding Principles

Discussed hereunder is the management policy framework that is operational at Ndumo Game reserve. It is anticipated that with the design of the proposed management model, the existing operational management policy framework will be better served. This is so mainly because the

empirical findings of this study have indicated that the IMP policy has not been successfully implemented.

With regard to the principle of local community involvement, the findings have indicated that the community did not participate adequately in the management of the park. Notwithstanding, the Ndumo Game Reserve IMP (NGR-IMP,2008) has indicated that the EKZNW will strive to work collaboratively with institutions and adjacent landowners/communities to improve communication as well as conservation management in and around the game reserve, for the benefit of all. Some of the programmes which have been identified include: (a) Tembe Ndumo Local Board and Ndumo Izinduna Forum; (b) Community Levy Trust Fund; (c) External Funding Projects; (d) Land claims; (e) Environmental education; and (f) the Adjoining Mozambique communities.

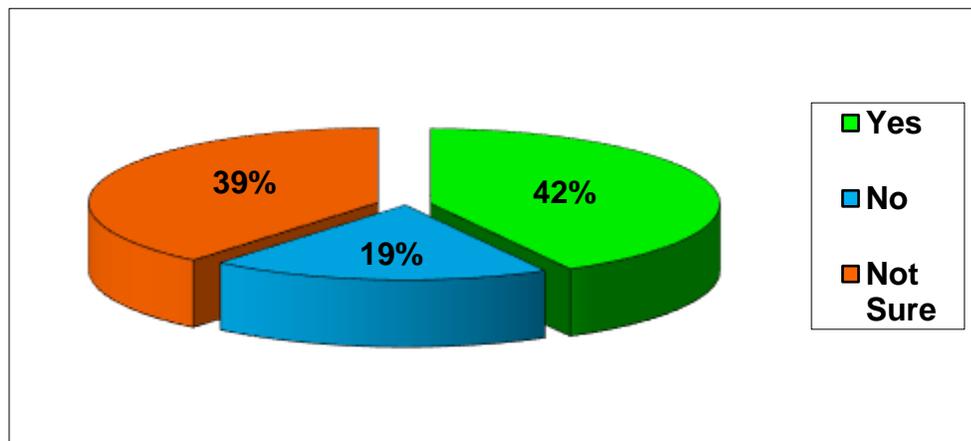
Table 1: DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

VARIABLE	SUB-VARIABLE	SERVICE PROVIDERS n=20		LOCAL COMMUNITY n=285	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
Education	No Schooling	00	00%	00	00%
	Primary Level	03	18%	83	29%
	Secondary	08	39%	100	35%
	Matric+Diploma	07	33%	77	27%
	University Degree	02	10%	25	09%
Occupation	Unskilled	05	26%	103	36%
	Semi-skilled	06	27%	57	20%
	Skilled	04	18%	46	13%
	Professional	04	17%	23	08%

Table 1 indicates results from community members and it shows that 64% of respondents do not have matric. The table also indicates that 56% of respondents are unskilled and semi-skilled respectively. These findings therefore raise even a greater need for local communities to be involved in decision-making as they know what their needs are.

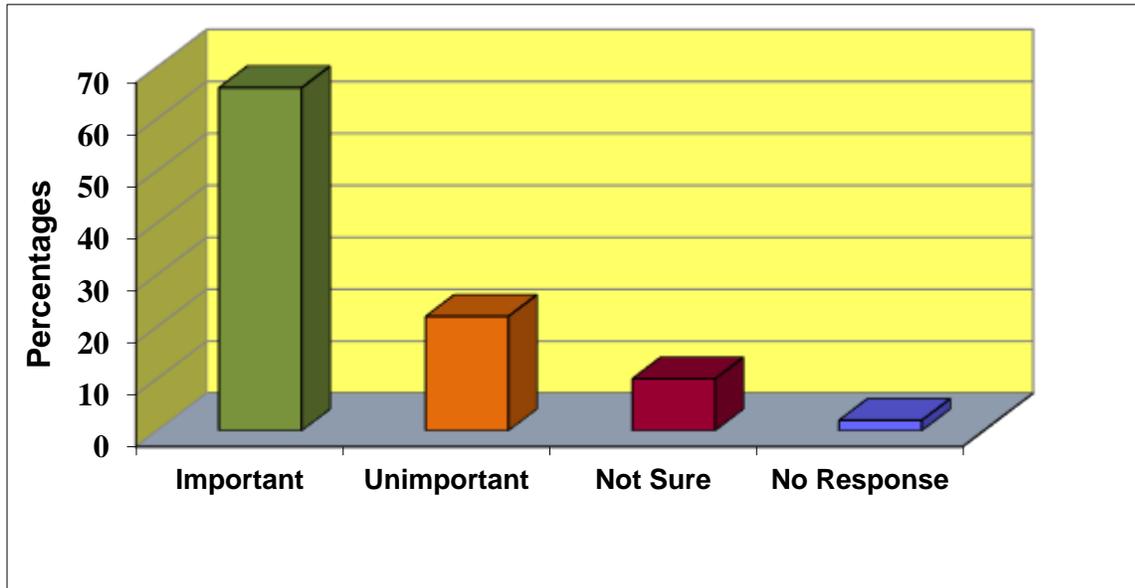
Results in figure 1 indicate that the majority of respondents (42%) were aware of the existence of the IMP process in the study area.

FIGURE 1: AWARENESS OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE IMP PROCESS IN THE STUDY AREA



This figure (42%) is considered majority because the other 58% includes those who were neutral and those who were not aware of the IMP process. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents (66%) perceived the IMP process as important for several reasons that were given as displayed in figure 2.

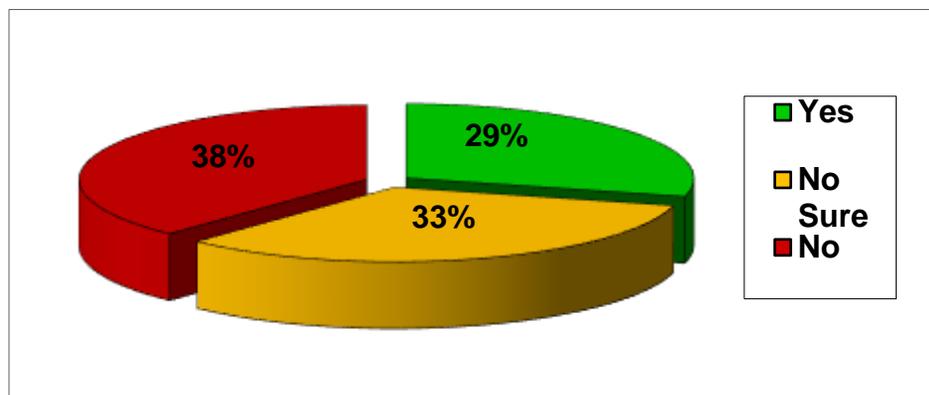
FIGURE 2: IMPORTANCE OF THE IMP PROCESS



The emerging responses relating to the question on the importance of the IMP, suggests that there was some confusion about the state of awareness and the actual importance of the IMP process. Only 22 percent and 10 percent of the respondents reflected that the IMP process was unimportant and were 'not sure' about it.

On the objective that sought to establish the involvement of local communities in the development of the integrated management plans in the area, it is interesting to note that the majority of respondents (71%) indicated that they did not see the community getting involved in decision-making about the development of the IMP programmes in the study area.

FIGURE 3: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IMP



About 71 percent of the respondents show a negative perception this is in contrast that only 29 percent of the respondents concurred that the community is involved in the development of the

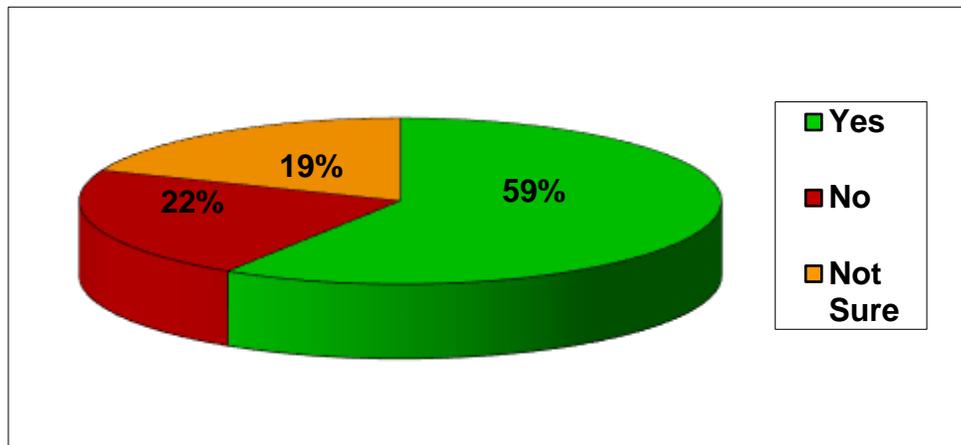
IMP. Regarding the contribution of the IMP to the community’s reliance and understanding of the tourism benefits for local communities, the majority of respondents (56%) indicated that they were not sure about the contribution of the IMP system to community tourism.

Table 2: EFFECTIVENESS OF THE IMP IN PROMOTING TOURISM IN THE STUDY AREA

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Dis-agree	Strongly Disagree
	01	02	03	04	05
The IMP is beneficial to tourism, social, economic, and environmental tasks.	(87) 25%	(74) 21%	(123) 35%	(67) 18%	(03) 01%
The IMP tool has promoted the development process in the area,	(42) 12%	(63) 19%	(84) 24%	(109) 24%	(52) 21%
The IMP programmes or strategies do contribute to community development.	(46) 13%	(49) 14%	(63) 18%	(147) 42%	(45) 13%
The visitation pattern to the area seems to be declining (accommodation used)	(07) 02%	(74) 21%	(63) 18%	(63) 18%	(143) 41%
The IMP tool has contributed largely to community-based tourism in the area.	(53) 15%	(59) 17%	(109) 31%	(66) 19%	(63) 18%
The IMP has not improved the job creation and employment situation here	(49) 14%	(66) 19%	(158) 45%	(42) 12%	(35) 10%
The IMP project will not improve the range of tourism products in the area.	(53) 15%	(102) 29%	(122) 35%	(38) 11%	(35) 10%

Only a negligible 12 percent of the respondents were positive about the IMP’s contributions.

FIGURE 4-PERCEIVED NEED FOR AN INTERVENTION STRATEGY



It is interesting to note that a significant number of respondents (59%) agreed that there was a need for an intervention strategy to facilitate tourism planning and development in the study areas. Respondents were asked to give reasons in support of why they thought there was a need for an intervention strategy to facilitate tourism planning and development. The reasons that were given included the following: “The IMP is useful, but it has not addressed conservation and community development issues such as Rhino poaching at Ndumo”; “The Land claim issue at iSimangaliso Wetland Park has resulted in the Authority taking the communities to court”; “ We have not seen tangible benefits from the IMP process”. These reasons therefore make some respondents see the need for an intervention strategy for the study area.



From these findings, one can conclude that an organisation can have good policies but it all depends on the implementation of such policies.

Conclusion and recommendations

This paper sought to establish local community participation in the management of KZN's protected areas. As noted earlier, the majority of respondents (71%) indicated that they did not see the community getting involved in decision-making about the development of the IMP programmes in the study area. This is because matters which were core to livelihoods of local communities such as land ownership, job creation, employment and poverty alleviation were not included in the IMP agenda items. The researcher had an opportunity to attend a few IMP meetings in the study area where community leaders as representatives were also present. As good as the IMP technique may be, the biggest issue is with making people understand, embrace and own the IMP programmes. If the IMP does not address their immediate needs, it will never yield good results.

Below are some of the recommendations to the authorities of protected areas in KwaZulu-Natal:

1. The authorities at the Ndumo Game Reserve, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park and the iSimangaliso Wetland Park should attempt to improve the lack of community involvement in IMP related activities by:
 - Paying more attention to achieving better implementation of policies and tourism service delivery that benefits the local communities maximally.
 - Improving the accessibility status to all three nature reserves and parks by charging affordable entrance prices and accommodation fees for the local community members.
 - The establishing of IMP-related tourism programmes which are associated with the creation of jobs, employment and various benefits would expose the local communities to the travel and tourism industry.
 - Commitment on the part of the three Nature Reserve and Park authorities to provide skills development, career guidance and in-service training for the members of the local communities.
2. The establishment of a tourism delivery strategy in the study areas should be managed by nature reserve officials. It should be recognised that the aim of the South African government to achieve a non-discriminatory and all-inclusive tourism industry would be a dream-come-true for all stakeholders in KwaZulu-Natal. It is important to allay the beliefs that Nature Reserves and Parks are predominantly used by the "elites", and this belief has to change. This can be achieved by:
 - Commitment on the part of the three Nature Reserve and Park authorities to open access of the natural resources to the members of the local communities.
 - Encouraging the marketing of all nature-based products and services among the local communities around the protected areas, against the notion that outdoor recreation and tourism is the playing field of 'white people' only.
3. The three Game Reserves and Park authorities should work together with the local communities. The existing Community Trust structures comprising local representatives



should be all-inclusive, transparent and strengthen community benefits. Community levy funds from the gate proceeds of the Game Reserves and Parks should be used constructively in development projects so that the entire community can benefit from such projects. This can be achieved by:

- Commitment on the part of the three Nature Reserve and Park authorities to involve the local community to participate in decision-making programmes in the study areas.
 - Encouraging the participation of women, youth and disabled people in the promotion and development of nature resources so as to achieve higher levels of decision-making that are all-inclusive.
 - Making sure that all community-related benefits such as the community levy, tourism levy, culling of animals and harvesting of plants reach the ordinary community members and not the chiefs and *indunas* only.
4. The findings also revealed that there was an inadequate supply, utilisation and patronage of resource facilities in the study area. This inadequacy is revealed by the meagre percentage of stakeholders participating in some tourism activities. To rectify the lack of facilities, the following recommendations are put forward:
- Making the rules and regulations that make it easy to encourage local community members to have easy access at a reduced entrance-fee at the three Nature Reserves and Parks.
 - Providing and encouraging regular educational visits of schools to the nature reserves and parks, so that there is evidence of the transfer of knowledge from the authorities to the younger inhabitants of the protected areas.
5. The inclusion of local community members as service providers is almost non-existent in these nature reserves. As part of the Black Economic Empowerment programme, Nature Reserve and Park authorities should consider funding Black entrepreneurs to open their businesses that would serve the study area.
6. Nature reserve officials should establish and manage a tourism delivery strategy.
- The strategy should be a commitment on the part of the three Nature Reserve and Park authorities to open access of the natural resources to the members of the local communities. The free access week to National Parks in September should be extended to include the weekend, and not end on Fridays.

References

Abrams, P., Borrini-Feyerabend, G., Gardner, J. & P. Heylings, (2003). *Evaluating governance: A handbook to accompany a participatory process for a protected area*, Joint publication of Parks Canada, Ottawa and TILCEPA – Theme on indigenous and local communities, equity and protected areas of the International union for conservation of nature IUCN, Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy and World Commission on Protected, Gland.

Borrini-Feyerabend, G. (1996). *Collaborative management of protected areas: tailoring the approach to the context, issues in social policy*, IUCN, Gland (Switzerland).



Borrini-Feyerabend, G., Pimbert, M. P., Farvar, M. T., Kothari, A. & Renard, Y. (2004). Sharing power: learning by doing in co-management of natural resources throughout the world. Tehran, Iran: IIED AND IUCN/CEESP/CMWG.

Camacho, A. E., Susskind, L. E. & Schenk, T. (2010). Collaborative planning and adaptive management in Glen Canyon: A Cautionary Tale. *Columbia Journal of Environmental Law*. 35(1).

Casimir, F. (1990). *Communication in development*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing Company.

Chirenje, L. I.; Giliba, R. A. & Musamba, E. B. (2013). Local communities participation in decision-making processes through planning and budgeting in African countries. *Chinese Journal of Population Resources and Environment*. 11(1). [Accessed 1 November 2017]

DEAT [Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism]. (1996). *White Paper: The Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa*. Pretoria: Government Printers of South Africa, DEAT.

Dhoubhadel, S. (n.d.). Participatory and collaborative management of protected areas. https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/6331926/Participatory_and_collaborative_management_of_protected_area. [Accessed 31 October 2017]

Dieke, P.U.C. (2010). The forgotten giant: women's role in Africa's delayed tourism development. In Apostolopoulos, Y., Sonmez, S. & Timothy, D. J. (Eds.), *women as producers and consumers of tourism in developing countries* (167-190). Westport: Praeger Publishers.

Dodds, R. (2007). Sustainable tourism and policy implementation: lessons from the case of Calviá, Spain. *Current Issues in Tourism*. 10(4).

Duckworth, J. W., Salter R. E. & Khounbolin, K. (1999). Wildlife in Lao PDR status report. United Kingdom: IUCN, Vientiane, Lao PDR.

Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife Five Year Strategic Plan and Performance Plan, 2009- 2014.

Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife Annual Integrated Report, 2014 – 2015.

Getz, D. & Timur, S. (2005). *Global tourism*. 3rd ed. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Ghimire, K. B. & Pimbert, M. P. (1997). Social change and conservation: environmental politics and impact on national parks and protected areas. United Kingdom: Earthscan Publications Limited.

Goldstein, B. E. & Butler, W. H. (2010). Expanding the scope and impact of collaborative planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*. 76(2). [Accessed 1 November 2017].

Gray, B. (1989). Collaborating: finding common ground for multiparty problems. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Jamal, T. & Stronza, A. (2009). Collaboration theory and tourism practice in protected areas: stakeholder, structuring and sustainability. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. 17:169-189.



Kenney, D.S. (2000). *Arguing About Consensus: examining the case against western watershed Initiatives and other collaborative groups active in natural resource management*. Natural Resources Law Centre, University of Colorado: Boulder.

Kepe, T. (2008). Land claims and co-management of protected areas in South Africa: exploring the challenges. *Environmental Management*. 41:311–321.

Kolahi, M., Sakai, T., Moria, K. & Makhdoum, M.F. (2012). Challenges to the future development of Iran's protected areas system. *Journal of Environmental Management*. 50:750. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-012-9895-5>. [Accessed 1 November 2017].

KZN Province: KZN Nature Conservation Management Act 9 of 1997

Lane, M. B. (2001). Affirming new directions in planning theory: co-management of protected areas. *Society and Natural Resources*. 14:657 – 671.

Lubell, M. (2004). Collaborative environmental institutions: All talk and no action? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. 23(3) 549-573.

Ryan, C. (2002). Equity, management, power sharing and sustainability: issues of the 'new tourism'. *Journal of Tourism Management*. 23(1):17-26.

Thomas, L. & Middleton, J. (2003). Guidelines for management planning of protected areas. United Kingdom: Cardiff University.

Walker, C. (2005). Land of Dreams: Land Restitution on the Eastern Shores of Lake St Lucia. *Transformation critical perspectives on Southern Africa*. 59(1):1-25.

Western, D. (1992). *Ecotourism: the Kenya challenge*. Ecotourism and sustainable development in Kenya, Wildlife Conservation International, USAID and UNEP