

3.4. Community Fora as Vehicles of Change? The Hlanganani Forum and Kruger National Park, South Africa

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This chapter examines the relationship between the Kruger National Park (KNP), South Africa, and rural Tsonga communities located adjacent to its western border. Some of these communities are represented on the Hlanganani Forum, which liaises with the Park and was established in 1994 when South Africa became a new democracy. The historical background of these communities is characterized by a perceived inadequacy of compensation for their loss of access to resources within the KNP and to damage caused by wildlife escaping from the park (Cock & Fig, 2000; Freitag-Ronaldson & Foxcroft, 2003). These historical conflicts continued to occur through the dynamic economic and political transformations within South Africa since 1994. Post-Apartheid changes have witnessed a transformation in KNP policies, which are now more socially inclusive and seek to integrate its core biodiversity conservation objectives with socio-economic ones, designed to assimilate the park into the broader socio-economic landscape and improve relations with its neighboring communities. We highlight some of the challenges to the process of integrating biodiversity conservation and rural development in the communal areas of South Africa. This objective is part of a more general problem concerning participation in resource management by rural communities living in the neighborhoods of national parks and other protected areas. Although the focus here is on interactions between South Africa's KNP and its neighboring communities, the findings have relevance and resonance beyond Africa as they raise key questions that can be considered in similar contexts.

3.4.1. Conceptual Framework

People whose livelihoods[§] chiefly involve the direct exploitation of local natural resources often come into conflict with the institu-

[§] Following Ellis (2000; 10), *livelihood* is defined as that which comprises: "...the assets (natural, physical, human, financial, and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutional and social

tions of protected areas (PAs), which are dedicated to natural resource conservation or preservation. Many scholars and managers now question the traditional top-down approach of excluding local participation and ignoring local interests in PA establishment and management (Kiss, 1990; Rihoy, 1995). More participatory planning is believed to enhance local support for biodiversity conservation goals of PAs (MacKinnon et al., 1986; Happold, 1995; Heinen, 1996). It is also believed that sustainable utilization of certain PA resources and/or PA outreach programs will contribute to rural development, especially in underdeveloped countries, and decrease conflicts between local people and park authorities. However, efforts in different parts of the world to integrate objectives of biodiversity conservation and rural development have had mixed results (Alpert, 1996; Brandon et al., 1998; Newmark & Hough, 2000; Hughes & Flintan, 2001; Barrett et al., 2005). These evaluative studies have shown that synergies between the two do not always occur, they are not a panacea, and must more fully incorporate local conditions and expectations in their design and implementation if they ever hope to succeed (Anthony et al., 2011).

In our research, involvement of local stakeholders in the management of KNP may be seen as an evolving social democratic process by which citizens are acquiring increasing rights and power to influence government decisions that directly affect their livelihoods. Related to this, participatory management in conservation refers to situations that substantially involve all or some of the stakeholders in a PA in management activities, especially when access to natural resources are essential to local livelihoods and cultural survival (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996). Because participatory management implies a partnership between the agency with jurisdiction over a PA and other relevant stakeholders, and because decisions are shared between all involved to some extent, the case for participation is further strengthened by the reality that most situations are complex and would benefit from multiple interpretations.

Based on Firey (1960), conventional discourse on sustainability asserts that PA management needs to simultaneously be biologically sound, economically feasible, and socially acceptable.

relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household.”

Moreover, PAs cannot be divorced from people, either as direct users of their resources, or as beneficiaries of the goods and services they provide. Even when a PA's resources are not directly used, its management includes that of the relationship between people and the area's resources, as well as human interactions that are produced. Therefore, the best way for resource planning to proceed is to seek avenues of balancing the criteria used in optimizing each of the three categories of knowledge pertinent to natural resource use (ecological, economic, and ethnological/cultural), i. e. articulating, mediating, and negotiating trade-offs.

In defining which people are impacted by a PA, the concept of local community can facilitate focusing on the needs and rights of resource users who have in the past been marginalized by conservation efforts. However, this might engender a limited understanding of the place of people in complex natural resource use systems, because it suggests a homogeneity that may not exist at all levels, and ignores those who cannot be identified with a local, geographic community. The concept of stakeholder, guided by social democratic influences, has gained prominence in conservation and development circles because of its usefulness in identifying and defining those who have influence on, or can be affected by, the management process. The rationale for stakeholder participation is that it can lead to legitimacy, and in planning includes a) the quality of management decisions that integrate the knowledge, needs and aspirations of all parties; b) the feasibility of management decisions that are accepted and owned by stakeholders; and c) the empowerment and democratization that result from the involvement of people and their organizations in formulating and implementing policy and management decisions.

Relationships among and between stakeholders and their interaction with natural resources are partly governed by embedded beliefs and attitudes (Rokeach, 1976). PA management involves transforming these beliefs and attitudes through integration to meet defined goals. Increasingly, in addition to environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation, these also include social and economic goals, such as the provision of human needs, poverty reduction, social justice, and equity (Luckham et al., 2000). The process of transforming must recognize the complexity and coherence of exist-

ing institutions^{**} and the diversity and interests of the various stakeholders. It therefore must give stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the design of new arrangements, instead of providing external and technocratic answers. It should also embrace the range of development and natural resource management issues, instead of confining itself to narrow conservation objectives.

Within this framework, the challenge for PA planners and managers, including the KNP, is to design and implement planning processes and institutional arrangements that use the tools of participation to achieve objectives as diverse as environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction and provision of basic human needs, and equity and social justice. Moreover, by employing this conceptual framework, it is critical to understand under what conditions social interventions vis-à-vis community fora are operating, and to evaluate how obstacles can be overcome in ensuring their success.

Changes in global development thinking represent fundamental shifts away from the technology-dominated paradigm developed in the 1960s toward a less technocratic and more people-centered approach to sustainable growth (Cernea, 1991; Kottak, 1991; Roe, 1991). Much of this shift arose by reassessing key assumptions regarding the relationship between people and the environment. Central discourses rested on defining poverty (Gray & Moseley, 2005), and the extent to which there is a direct causal relationship between poverty and environmental degradation. Forsyth et al. (1998) refer to the orthodox or mainstream view of this linkage where 'poverty and environmental damage are inextricably linked, and are self-reinforcing' (1998: 2). Underlying this view are specific assumptions as to the way in which people manage their environment in the face of poverty or environmental degradation. It is assumed, for example, that the poor will always degrade their environment in

^{**} Institutions are humanly developed constraints that shape human interaction and the way societies evolve through time (North, 1990). Institutions are made up of formal constraints (rules, laws, constitutions), informal constraints (norms of behavior, conventions and self-imposed codes of conduct), and their enforcement characteristics. Institutions, such as property rights are mechanisms people use to control their use of the environment and behavior toward each other (Bromley, 1991).

response to population growth, economic marginalization and existing environmental degradation, and that the only way to avoid further environmental degradation is to alleviate poverty. In some cases, there may well appear to be a direct, causal relationship between poverty and environment, which would support the orthodox view of this linkage. Frankenberger and Goldstein (1992) cite examples of households that resorted to over-harvesting wild foods, overgrazing pasture, and increased planting in marginal areas when faced with food insecurity. Such examples postulate straightforward causal relationships between poverty and the environment where land degradation is seen as a *result* of food insecurity, or food insecurity as a *result* of faulty natural resource management, neglecting possible feedback loops, and other social, economic, cultural processes that may contribute to these relationships.

Forsyth et al. (1998), however, question the universality of such causal relationships between poverty and resource degradation, offering an alternative view of the social processes involved in resource management. Basing their claims on a growing body of empirical studies, they proposed that the relationship between poverty and environment is complex rather than directly causal in either direction. They argue that local responses to change are socially and environmentally specific, shaped by institutions and that depending on the situation, may actually lessen impacts and promote sustainable livelihoods. For example, Batterbury and Forsyth (1999) demonstrated how local adaptation processes have been utilized by local communities in the face of environmental threats to both improve livelihoods *and* reduce environmental degradation. How individuals relate to their environment cannot therefore be automatically generalized to all people and all environmental situations, as was the development policy based on the orthodox view (Leach et al., 1999). Local institutions, including community fora, are seen as central, and an acknowledgement of the diversity of local contexts is seen as imperative in understanding people-environment relationships. According to Forsyth's alternative view, a re-conceptualization of the relationship between people and their environment must occur not only at the policy level, but at a deeper level, which questions how, why, and under which circumstances such processes might occur.

This systematic search for development has also been accompanied by increasing concern for biological diversity^{††} loss (Wilson, 1988; Ehrlich & Ehrlich, 1992; Reaka-Kudla et al., 1997; Myers et al., 2000). In many developing countries, severe financial constraints and inadequate resources for protecting sensitive areas has resulted in the merging of biodiversity management with more participatory forms of development planning and organization, giving rise to community-based conservation^{‡‡} (CBC) or community-based natural resources management^{§§} (CBNRM). Community participation, in principle, should enable communities to regain control over natural resources and, at the same time, strengthen decision-making capabilities, increase empowerment and involvement, and improve social and economic well-being (Uphoff, 1991). While these terms have been used extensively in both political and research fora, the concepts underlying these expressions and the conceptual links between them are often ambiguous and based on very different assumptions and interpretations of how individuals within communities experience daily life and interact with the environment. Further, although CBNRM projects have been broadly praised as activities, which seek to bridge the gap between the needs of wildlife and of local human populations, they can only be considered successful if they improve *both* the well-being of local communities *and* maintain, if not increase, biodiversity.

This chapter, which focuses in part on control of, and access to, resources will be examined more holistically in light of social processes embedded in both the conservation and development spheres,

^{††} 'Biological diversity', according to the Convention on Biological Diversity, means the variability among living organisms from all sources including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

^{‡‡} 'Conservation' in this study is defined as more than an *intentional* practice leading to the maintenance of biodiversity, ecological processes and life-support systems. It also encompasses practices that *result* in the above regardless of their stated or non-stated intention.

^{§§} 'CBNRM' means any utilization of indigenous biological resources by a community for sustainable harvesting, traditional use or commercial purposes.

exploring how issues of power, participation, legitimacy, and costs and benefits are integral parts of people's relationships with nature, each other, and PAs, not only locally, but in relation to wider societal processes. These are themes that have only been touched on briefly in southern Africa, and are particularly little understood in the former homelands of South Africa. By taking such an approach, we offer for the first time community perspectives and internal perspectives of the Hlanganani Forum in South Africa. Despite being in existence for more than a decade, no evaluation had been conducted on the effectiveness of the HF, its influence, nor its perception by neighboring communities. Research findings here are crucial in understanding the role of KNP's interaction with community fora including the HF, and hopefully will be utilized to guide further engagement with community groups. Moreover, findings on attitudes of local communities towards both the KNP and HF and the factors that influence them, are valuable in determining priorities for more targeted policy action in resolving conflicts and improving relationships.

3.4.2. Context: Kruger National Park

Bio-physical Characteristics

The KNP, situated in the northeastern section of the Republic of South Africa, is approximately 350 km from north to south, averaging 60 km in width, and covers nearly two million hectares (Mabunda et al., 2003), i.e. about the size of Israel or Slovenia (see Fig. 3.9). Second only to Table Mountain National Park, annual visitor numbers to KNP surpassed 1.4 million in 2008/2009 (SANParks, 2010). It is unrivalled among South Africa's 20 national parks, being home to an unparalleled diversity of wildlife and maintained by one of the world's most sophisticated management systems (Braack, 2000). Furthermore, more than 254 cultural heritage sites have been identified within the Park's borders (SANParks, 2000a).

According to Jacana Education Ltd. (2000), 16 ecozones exist within the KNP. Three of these ecozones are represented along the western border from the Punda Maria gate south to the Klein Letaba River, namely the Mopane/Bushwillow Woodlands, Sandveld, and Riverine. The KNP also comprises eight main river catchments, including the Shingwedzi and Letaba in our study area. Annual precipitation ranges from 500–700 mm in the area, and thus is classified as 'semi-arid' (Jacana Education Ltd., 2000).

Land use adjacent to the western border of the KNP is characterized by slightly undulating plains containing villages with built-up land, surrounded by areas for subsistence farming. However, there still remain relatively sizeable vacant, bushland areas with biodiversity largely intact, especially between the Shingwedzi and Klein Letaba Rivers (DWAF et al., 2001). Adjacent areas are demarcated from the KNP by way of a boundary fence originally intended to control the spread of foot-and-mouth disease. However, many sections of the fence are dismantled and/or need repair (Bigalke, 2000; SANParks, 2000a). A combination of factors contributes to the poor condition of the border fence: extensive damage during flooding in 2000; elephant breakages; poor maintenance; and actions of persons illegally crossing into South Africa from Mozambique (Anthony, 2006).

Social Ecology

In 1994, the then National Parks Board, driven by national policy changes and the need to improve its image, issued a directive that parks cannot exist in isolation from their neighbors and thus, dialogue should begin. According to early Social Ecology Unit (transformed to People and Conservation Department in 2003) staff, with this directive, and without a framework nor any planning or objectives, rangers began to use black subordinates to initiate discussions with neighboring traditional authorities^{***} (TAs). The focus was to increase the ‘sense of ownership’ of parks by local communities and, concurrently, create fora that could establish communication regarding park-people issues and alleviate conflicts. At that time, there was much friction between the KNP and communities as the KNP was still very much dominated by whites and followed Apartheid practices. According to the former Chief Warden of KNP (1994–1998), fora were initiated with communities within the ‘red line’^{†††} (which was

^{***} The terms ‘traditional authorities’ and ‘traditional leaders’ are all encompassing terms to refer to ‘chiefs’ of various ranks. As the usage in this review refers to both people and structures, both terms are used.

^{†††} The ‘red line’ is a veterinary demarcation, which runs approx. 15–20 km from the KNP’s western border. It is currently managed by the national Department of Agriculture to control foot and mouth disease in terms of the Animal Disease and Parasite Act (No. 13 of 1956).

an arbitrary choice) and were partly modeled after community representative frameworks from the Richtersveld National Park.

Concomitant with these changes, the KNP established its own Social Ecology Program, which facilitates participatory communication structures with the Park's neighbors and affected communities^{†††}. It consists of about 120 villages and private game farms with an estimated total human population of 1.5 million (SANParks, 2000a). The first duty of the Program was to break down barriers of ambiguity and antagonism and address real issues affecting the daily lives of their neighbors. As of 1999, this program was working with 88 communities bordering the Park and by March 2000, twenty-four permanent social ecology staff (~0.8 % of total) were employed by KNP (SANParks, 2000b). Seven multi-village fora have been organized and meet monthly to discuss issues of concern to the communities such as wildlife depredation on crops and livestock, foot-and-mouth disease, and land claims. In addition, ways to bring about socio-economic development in the communities are discussed, including the establishment of joint ecotourism ventures with local communities; developing markets within the Park for the sale of local crafts; providing funding for self-help projects; and negotiating with neighboring market gardeners to provide the Park with fresh produce.

^{†††} According to Braack et al. (n.d.), 'Neighbors and Affected Communities' refer to 'any person or grouping of persons which within reasonable limits is deemed to be directly affected by the presence of the Park or the activities present therein'. This includes not only those persons living in close proximity to the Park who may occasionally be subject to damage inflicted by animals escaping from the Park, but also those living some distance away who may reasonably expect to use the Park as an offset area for saleable commodities, or live near main access roads to the Park which offer business opportunities, or who through historic displacement may currently be geographically well removed but have reasonable claim to access for ancestral worship or other purposes. The above description refers largely to black communities living along the western boundary of the KNP, but other stakeholders include many private nature reserves, hotels, mining and agricultural industries.

3.4.3. Context: Hlanganani Forum

The Hlanganani Forum (HF) was initiated by white KNP rangers at a meeting in Punda Maria on 24 February 1994 in which all TAs within the red line were approached and invited. Originally, it was named the 'KNP-Giyani/Malamulele Forum' and was formed to have three major actors 'come together', i. e. KNP, The Northern (now Limpopo) Province, and neighboring communities. According to minutes of that meeting, a KNP representative described the relationship between KNP and its neighboring villages stating that 'KNP has not had a mandate to work in these communities'. Emphasis was placed on 'the changing political and economic circumstances within the country, and the recognition that a good working relationship between KNP and its neighbors is essential for both parties'. According to a KNP Social Ecology staff member from that period, there was a conscious decision to exclude any white communities, vis-à-vis mining operations, out of the forum even if they fell within the red line and experienced DCA (damage-causing animal) problems. The reason for this was simple: the focus would be on black, previously disadvantaged communities.

The overall aim of the HF, according to its first constitution (approved 9 March 1995) was to: *'...build a relationship between Kruger National Park, the Northern Transvaal Department of Environmental Affairs (NTDEA), and the communities bordering on the Park within Giyani and Malamulele regions so as to enhance development and environmental education opportunities within these organizations and villages'*.

More specifically, its primary goals were:

1. To build trust and friendship between the KNP, neighboring villages, and the NTDEA.
2. To resolve mutual problems.
3. To facilitate the establishment of small business development and to support existing business in the communities bordering on the Park by using the infrastructure and economy of the Park.
4. To promote environmental education within the communities.

5. To facilitate development and capacity-building within the region with the support of sponsors and developers not directly involved in the region.

Original membership in the HF consisted of (a) 26 villages with 2 representatives each, (b) KNP with 5 official members: 3 local rangers plus 2 head office staff, (c) NTDEA with 5 official members, and (d) South African Police Service (SAPS) with 5 officers (SAPS are no longer members in the Forum). According to the HF Chairman, the HF gained Section 21 status (not-for-profit) in 2001, and represents 27 villages; although an additional 15 villages lie in our study area, which are not represented on the HF. The main issues that were central to discussion of the HF were damage-causing animals that were escaping from the KNP and the resulting lack of compensation to damage caused by these animals, the poor condition of the Park's border fence, the proposition of installing a new public entrance (Shangoni Gate) to the KNP, and a proposed buffer zone which would comprise both community and KNP land (Mariyeta Park). The HF is considered by both KNP Social Ecology staff and its chairperson to be the most active KNP forum, due primarily to the long history of conflicts in the area.

As the HF matured, it developed a new Constitution in 2000 with an expanded primary goal to more accurately reflect its priorities: *'To build a healthy working relationship between Kruger National Park (Park), the Limpopo Province Department of Agriculture, Land and Environmental Affairs (Government), and the communities bordering on the Park within the Mopani and Thulamela municipality (Forum) so as to enhance development, employment opportunities, environmental education opportunities, care of problem animals and compensation on livestock that belong to members communities.'*

HF objectives were also extended and encompass both primary and secondary objectives:

A. Primary objectives:

1. Deepen and strengthen a healthy relationship between the Forum, the Park, and the Government.
2. To work toward development of the previously disadvantaged communities.

3. To create employment opportunities either in the Park, the Government, or even in the Forum.
4. To help educate member communities about conservation and other environmental matters.
5. To help take care of problem animals either by employing professionals or by participating in the tendering process of the Government and of which the money generated thereof shall be made available for the use that will benefit the Forum.
6. To look at compensation of the members who have lost their livestock.

B. Secondary objectives:

7. Managing different environmental and conservation related projects that are beneficial to the community members (aimed at community development and empowering the community socially and economically).
8. Creating employment opportunities.
9. Establishing a support center that will look at training of professional hunters, compensation of people who have lost their livestock and also giving information to the relevant law enforcement officers in the Park and the Government about people who transgress the law according to the Nature Conservation Act.

3.4.4. Methods

This research studies the ongoing interaction of the KNP with its neighboring communities and so is limited by lack of baseline data on communities, including those represented on the HF, before its establishment. Therefore, a post-test only control group design was chosen which has virtually all the experimental rigour of a pre-test/post-test control group approach. Since data were collected at approximately the same time, problems of maturation, history, test effects and regression towards the mean have been minimised. Although it is impossible to be certain that the experimental and control groups were equivalent to begin with, by employing randomization techniques and ensuring a relatively large sample size in each group, researchers can safely use this design type (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000).

This research involved a one-month pilot study, followed by a longer field component from February to November 2004. The techniques employed in this research included a protocol for securing access to local stakeholders, archival analysis of KNP and Limpopo Province reports and HF meetings minutes, a face-to-face questionnaire administered to randomly selected village households, written questionnaires for HF members, and semi-structured interviews.

Household Face-to-face Questionnaire

Based on theoretical and conceptual considerations, face-to-face questionnaires were formulated to elicit primary data from respondents. Questionnaires contained factual questions (e. g. age, gender, level of education, resources used), ranking questions (e. g. community needs), and contingency questions (e. g. whether respondent knew of HF). The questionnaire incorporated both closed-ended questions with a combination of different measurement scales (nominal, ordinal, scale) and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were primarily used to allow respondents to express their beliefs in their own words or determine attitude strength, and were manifest (content) coded using a contextual method based on positive/negative or topical classifications, trying to preserve as much detail as possible (Weisberg et al., 1996). Likert-type questions, which use a rating scale to measure *inter alia* attitudes (Anderson et al., 1983), were limited to 3-point only as this form is most frequently used in African contexts (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). Questionnaire length and order of questions/topics were constructed to maximise the comfort of the respondent and to reduce consistency bias. These questionnaires helped to determine the role that independent variables (e. g. involvement in the Forum, age, gender, level of education, household income, Traditional Authority affiliation, proximity to the KNP) play in attitudes towards the HF.

Community questionnaires were first written in English, and then translated into Tsonga-Shangaan (local language) by a linguistic teacher. The Tsonga-Shangaan version was then translated back into English. Inconsistencies and/or clarifications in the text were then discussed and modified in a joint meeting between the two translators and the author. Questionnaires were pre-tested on the research assistants, as well as a sample of 20 people from rural villages adja-

cent to the study area (Sudman, 1983). As a result of the pre-testing and discussions, some questions were deleted and others modified to improve clarity.

Sampling Procedure

In order to ensure an accurate representation of the target population, especially in cases where populations are non-homogenous, it is important to obtain a representative sample in order that results can be generalised to the larger population (Weisberg et al., 1996). Thus, simple random sampling was chosen from the target population (18,339 households). A sample size of 240 households was used which ensures a maximum sampling error of ± 6.28 at a confidence level of 95 %. Although the fraction of total households sampled is only 1.3 % when $N = 240$, this has little effect on the margin of error and many studies have typically less than 1 % sampling fraction (Weisberg et al., 1996). In order to minimise sampling error, when possible, the researcher team attempted to sample at least one village within a day. The questionnaire was administered within 32 days in May-June 2004 extending from north to south through the study area.

As far as possible, household heads^{§§§} were surveyed at each selected household and the time of sampling was optimised i. e., when household heads were likely to be home (e. g. during daylight hours, weekdays only). In cases where the household head was not home, the household occupants were allowed to determine who would respond to the questionnaire. Moreover, by utilising two mature, male field assistants, both cultural inhibitions and non-sampling error was minimised, and data disclosure from the respondents maximised. Research assistants were instructed, if possible, to ensure an equal representation of male and female respondents, and avoid gatherings of neighbors or other household members when individuals were being interviewed.

^{§§§} In keeping with Statistics South Africa practice, a 'head of household can either be male or female, and is the person who assumes responsibility for the household' (Budlender, 1997). In this research the respondent was allowed to decide who the household head is.

Research Focus

In keeping with KNP's commitment to involve villages within 15 km of its border in community fora, and to include all those within the jurisdiction of the HF, the sampling frame consisted of all village households located within that area, extending from the Punda Maria gate, south of the Luvuvhu River to the Klein Letaba River (Fig. 3.9a, b), excluding four villages in the southern section which were moved to the Phalaborwa Forum (Mbawula, Palawubeni, Makuva, Savulani). In addition, two communities (Lambani, Mushiro) which are currently represented on the HF, were also excluded, as they joined the HF later and were not original members. The final sampling frame consisted of households within 38 villages (23 HF-represented villages; 15 non-HF villages) from seven *de jure* TAs.

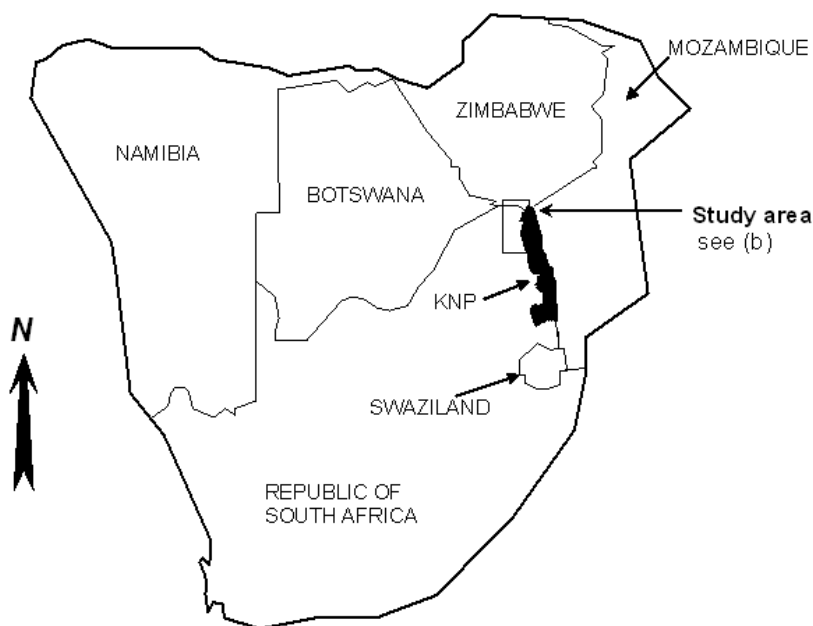


Fig. 3.9a. Location of Kruger National Park in Southern Africa

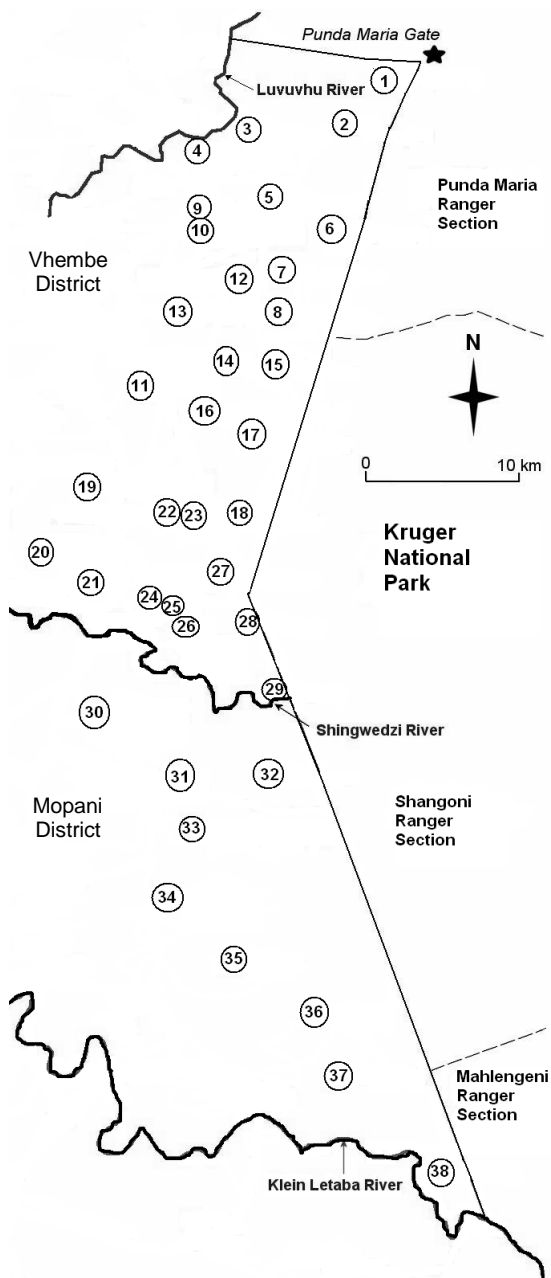


Fig. 3.9b. Study area with villages (listed below with associated de jure Traditional Authorities; Hlanganani Forum-represented villages in *italics*, non-Forum villages in normal font)

Mhinga TA: *Matiyani* (1), *Josepha* (2), *Mhinga* (3), *Botsoleni* (4), *Maphophe* (5), *Maviligwe* (6), *Makuleke* (7), *Makahlule* (8); **Shikundu TA:** Ximixoni (9), Saseleman (10), Nkovani (11); **Bevhula TA:** Ntlhaveni D (12), Nkavela (13), Makhubele (14), *Bevhula* (15); **Magona TA:** *Nghomunghomu* (16), *Mashobye* (17), *Magona* (18); **Madonsi TA:** Gijamhandzeni (19), Matsakali (20), Halahala (21), *Peninghotsa* (22), *Govhu* (23), *Merwe A* (24), *Shisasi* (25), *Jilongo* (26); **Mtiti TA:** *Lombaard* (27), *Plange* (28), *Altein* (29); **Xiviti TA:** *Miniginisi Block 3* (30), *Miniginisi Block 2* (31), *Muyexe* (32), *Shitshamayoshe* (33), *Khakhala* (34), *Gawula* (35), *Mahlathi* (36), *Ndindani* (37), *Hlomela* (38)

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Forum Representatives Questionnaires

Two separate written questionnaires were prepared for members of the HF: one in Tsonga-Shangaan for village representatives; the other in English for institutional representatives. Many of the questions within these questionnaires were similar to those of the household survey allowing for statistical comparisons, although specific questions were added to target respondents' personal involvement in the Forum. The questionnaires were distributed over a period of 3 months at regular HF meetings with the provision that they be returned before November 2004. Total returned questionnaires were N = 15 (village representatives) and N = 4 (institutional representatives).

Interviews

In order to capture and better understand the perspectives of relevant actors, interviews were also utilized. Interviews involve direct, personal contact with research subjects who are asked to answer questions relating to the research problem (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). In order to better understand social phenomenon from the actor's perspective, Mkabela (2005) emphasizes the need for researchers to empathize and identify with the people being studied within African indigenous communities. Although indigenous knowledge systems are often situated knowledge, the researcher does not necessarily have to be indigenous to understand them, including in this research where the researcher [BA] was considered a 'white, northerner' (Mutema, 2003). By allowing interviewees to freely explain terms and issues from their own perspective, these interactive interviews helped to construct a 'picture' of the nature of the relationship between the communities, the HF and the KNP, including how they value each other, and approach and resolve conflicts. Where necessary, follow-up interviews were carried out to clarify issues and explore further avenues of interest related to the research, as it unfolded.

Data Analyses and Interpretation

Using the Miles and Huberman (1994) interactive structure, and assisted by Atlas.ti (ver. 5.0) software, qualitative data was analyzed in three main components:

1. Data reduction
 - editing, segmenting and summarizing data;
 - coding and memoing, finding themes, clusters and patterns;
 - conceptualizing and explaining.
2. Data display: organizing, compressing and assembling information.
3. Drawing and verifying conclusions (includes linkages with quantitative data).

Quantitative data was first compiled in Microsoft ® Excel 2002, then transferred to and analyzed using SPSS (ver. 13) software to:

- study trends and variation (mean, medium, variance, etc.),
- study associations (correlation, regression analyses, non-parametric tests) between basic socio-economic and demographic data/factors and attitudes/perceptions,
- produce ‘classifications’ or groupings of households according to social and demographic factors, and attitudes and beliefs.

3.4.5. Results

Significant Achievements

Reduced Costs for Park Entry. Since its commencement, the HF has been involved in a number of activities related to its Constitution’s objectives. As part of its more significant achievement, since 2000, the following persons have reduced entry fees to enter KNP, after first applying to KNP’s Department of People and Conservation:

- HF Executive receives free entrance to KNP for business-related trips.
- When HF meetings in KNP, all members receive free entrance.
- Elderly people and their children receive free entrance to visit heritage sites.
- School groups receive free entrance if they are from neighboring communities (first negotiated by HF). Currently, this privilege extends to all school groups within South Africa who participate in the KNP’s Environmental Education program.

- Further, chiefs accompanied by up to 10 people had free entry and Forum village members a 50 % discount on entry to KNP until 31 Dec 2004, but *not* on school or public holidays. This last caveat raised much opposition from Forum members as they felt that these are the times when families would normally go.

Socio-economic Development. The HF has also been instrumental in promoting socio-economic development in the region where it operates. Some of the most noteworthy achievements include:

- In 1998, HF compensated farmers who lost cattle to lions (1500 ZAR [~210 €]/animal). The meat from the lions also went to the communities (to *tindhuna* [village headmen] for distribution).

- HF has 11 people from neighboring communities who are being trained as professional hunters. In time, they hope to form an ‘Outfitter’, which can deal with DCA themselves and gain other employment.

- The HF assisted in developing a tourism link for the region through the ‘Hlanganani Route’ initiative.

- HF secured 175,000 ZAR (~21,000 €) in 2001–2002 through the community-based and government-supported ‘Land-Care’ program to stabilize streambanks in Matiyani village. This money was partly used for ‘unskilled labor’ from the community.

- Any KNP tenders must now stipulate that winning tenders source at least their ‘unskilled labor’ from local communities.

- Community dance groups are paid to do occasional performances within the KNP.

- The HF, in partnership with KNP and the Dept. of Welfare, secured 393,000 ZAR (~47,000 €) from Development Bank South Africa to build a new Art & Craft Centre at the Punda Maria gate.

- Organizing soccer and handball teams from neighboring villages to participate in KNP-sponsored tournaments.

- Employment has been secured for community members in the Working for Water Program^{****}, and in KNP border fence construction/maintenance.

^{****} This national program was launched in 1995 to fight alien species and is administered through the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. It provides employment in its partnerships with local communities.

Complaints and Constraints

Notwithstanding these achievements, the HF has had a rocky road since 1994. Not only have they encountered challenges beyond their control, but also perceptions and beliefs of the organization by other institutions (e. g. TAs, KNP, Limpopo Province) have not all been affirmative and, in some cases, are extremely critical. Of major concern have been issues of HF meeting absenteeism, management, and representation. Environments where broken promises are not uncommon and the competence of the KNP Social Ecologist questioned (discussed later) exacerbate these concerns.

Meeting Absenteeism

Assuming that HF has convened monthly since its inception in February 1994, there have been approximately 152 meetings to September 2004. Of these, meeting minutes from both the HF secretariat and KNP Social Ecology combined are available for only 44 (29 %) meetings (Fig. 3.10). Moreover, only 27 of these 44 (61.4 %) had an attendance record, although this has improved somewhat in recent years.

HF members and the Limpopo Province have identified meeting absenteeism as a problematic constraint for the operation of the HF. Meeting absenteeism has been of such magnitude that, in some cases, meetings have had to be cancelled (02/1996; 02/2000). Analysis of attendance records at HF meetings since 1994 reveal that only 15 of 27 villages have been represented at a minimum of 50 % of meetings, and only 8 have attended 67 % of the meetings or more (Table 3.4). If one looks only at 2003–2004, however, 13 villages have had attendees at > 66 % of the meetings. If village attendance at HF meetings can be an indicator of representation, there appears to be a growing trend in representation for some villages since 2003, although many villages are under-represented and five have simply not been represented at all. Further, aside from Mininginisi Block 2 and Gawula, all other villages south of the Shingwedzi River have attended ≤ 17 % of HF meetings in the last two years. Despite this high absenteeism rate, the HF's 2000 constitution and its secretariat both maintain that these villages are indeed full-fledged members.

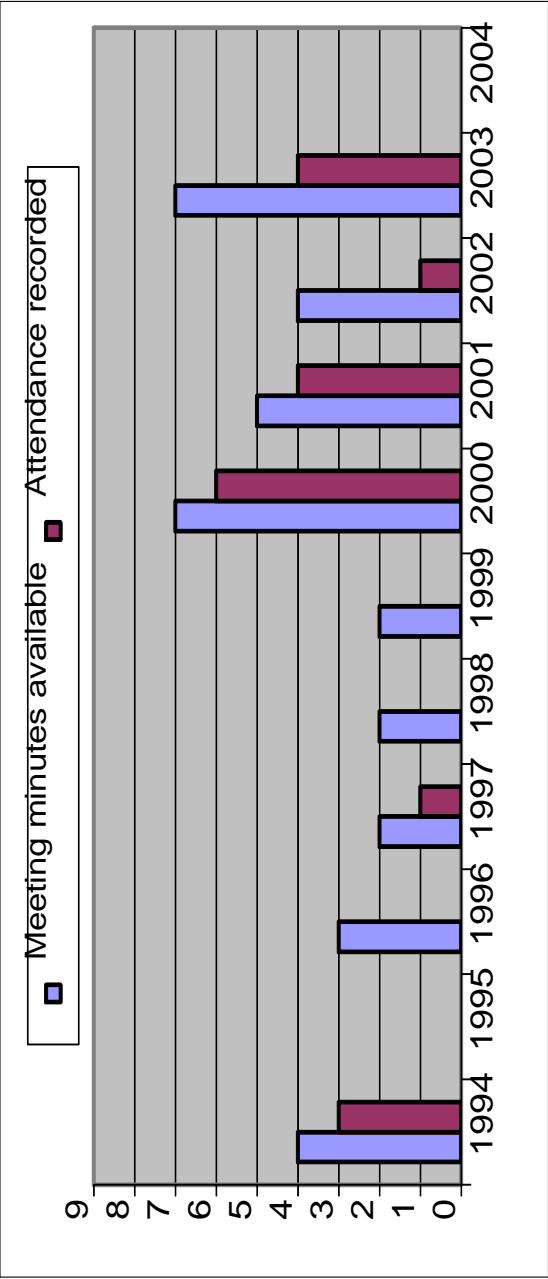


Fig. 3.10. Available HF meeting minutes and recorded attendance: Feb 1994 — Sept 2004

Table 3.4

Village representation at HF meetings 1994–2004

| Village name | Meetings attended | As % of minutes with recorded attendance (1994–2004) | As % of minutes with recorded attendance (2003–2004) |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--|--|
| Mhinga (Nkhavi) | 27 | 100 | 100 |
| Maviligwe* | 24 | 89 | 92 |
| Mushiro | 22 | 81 | 92 |
| Mahlathi | 20 | 74 | 75 |
| Mashobye‡ | 19 | 70 | 75 |
| Peninghotsa‡ | 19 | 70 | 67 |
| Plange (Mtititi) ‡ | 19 | 70 | 92 |
| Makuleke* | 18 | 67 | 83 |
| Altein‡ | 16 | 59 | 75 |
| Govhu‡ | 16 | 59 | 83 |
| Botsoleni | 15 | 56 | 75 |
| Lombaard‡ | 15 | 56 | 58 |
| Mininginisi Block 2 | 15 | 56 | 83 |
| <i>Muyexe</i> † | 15 | 56 | 17 |
| Maphophe | 14 | 52 | 58 |
| Josepha | 11 | 41 | 75 |
| <i>Magona (Gidjana)</i> ‡ | 9 | 33 | 0 |
| <i>Makahlule</i> * | 9 | 33 | 17 |
| <i>Bevhula</i> ‡ | 6 | 22 | 8 |
| <i>Lambani</i> | 6 | 22 | 17 |
| <i>Matiyani</i> | 6 | 22 | 17 |
| <i>Nghomunghomu</i> ‡ | 6 | 22 | 8 |
| <i>Sawulani</i> | 5 | 19 | 0 |
| <i>Gawula</i> | 3 | 11 | 8 |
| <i>Ndindani</i> † | 3 | 11 | 0 |
| <i>Hlomela (Macene)</i> † | 2 | 7 | 0 |
| <i>Vuyani</i> | 1 | 3 | 0 |

Notes: villages in *italics* have been absent from HF for ≥ 3 consecutive meetings in last 12 months

† TA from these villages formed Nghunghunyani Trust

‡ TA from these villages formed Gazan Trust

* villages also represented on Makuleke C.P.A.

Even at the time of this research, confusion as to the number and identity of member villages actually in the HF remains. According to the 1995 HF Constitution, 26 villages are members. In contrast, the revised 2000 Constitution states 27 villages, and in a letter from the HF Chair to KNP Technical Services (10 April 2003), 29 communities are stated as belonging to the HF. When asked which villages are actually members, there is uncertainty amongst the HF Executive. This uncertainty was addressed at a forum meeting held on 25 July 2003, when the KNP Social Ecologist was mandated to write down HF village membership. The Chair instructed him to 'ignore villages which are claiming that they are no longer members of the forum because they didn't do it in writing as the [2000] Constitution of the Forum states in Article 4.3.' To date, this list has not been produced.

In addition to HF village representatives, complaints within the HF were raised about absence of KNP staff at meetings, including those within Social Ecology. Available attendance records show that the KNP Social Ecologist mandated to liaison with the HF has attended only 68 % of HF meetings since 2000, and only 50 % in 2004. According to HF questionnaires, village representatives attended a mean of 7.4 meetings in 2003 (median = 9, range = 11, N = 14), while institutional representatives averaged 6.8 meetings (median=6, range = 7, N = 4). Reasons for absence by village representatives included transport problems (6), attending funerals (2), attending other meetings (2), leaving the HF, and time conflicts with employment. Institutional representatives cited pointless discussions with no progress (2), and other work-related commitments (2) as reasons for their absence.

Meeting absence is also affected by years of participation in the HF. Questionnaire results indicate that HF village representatives have only participated in the HF for an average of 4.8 yrs (median = 3, N = 13), and institutional representatives slightly longer (median = 5.5, N = 4). Based on interviews conducted with former and current HF village representatives, disappointment with the HF, and changes in personal and employment commitments all contribute to reduction in HF participation. Similarly, institutional representatives state that high employee turnover and changing positions affect years of participation. Time taken to refill these positions has meant lack of institutional representation at HF meetings during these periods.

Regarding village attendance at HF meetings, the Chair stated that the Constitution stipulates that if there are three consecutive meetings in which a village is not represented, the Executive Committee should request the KNP Social Ecologist to go to the villages ‘and see what’s happening.’ This occurred in November 2003 with Ndindani, Hlomela, Muyexe and Gawula villages, but so far, there has been no report back from the KNP Social Ecologist. On closer examination of the Constitution (Article 4.3.4.a.), however, it states: ‘if a representative does not attend three consecutive meetings, the *Management Committee* of the forum will decide upon the termination of such a membership.’ The HF Executive gave no explanation for the transfer of responsibility to investigate village absenteeism from the Management Committee to the KNP Social Ecologist, or for why no village memberships in the HF have been terminated to date, despite high absenteeism.

Meeting and Forum Management. Sub-standard financial accounting, quality of meeting management, and organizational structure have been cited by KNP, Limpopo Province and HF village representatives as hampering HF effectiveness. As early as 1998, both the Province and KNP staff were frustrated at the lack of HF responsibility in producing authentic audited financial annual reports. In 2000, the HF Executive acknowledged this deficiency and received training in 2001, but this was discontinued due to high costs. More recently, however, some HF members attended a KNP-sponsored THETA Leadership Training Course, which included project management and leadership, tourism, communication, and conflict management. It is hoped that capacity building like this will improve HF’s ability to manage its financial affairs.

Similarly, much discourse regarding HF capacity revolves around meeting management style and its effects. Efficiency of the HF has been obstructed by:

- meetings being cancelled without notification;
- short notices for meetings;
- meeting venue changes without notice;
- lateness by meeting chair;
- insufficient number of meeting minutes being produced;

- meeting minutes not being accepted/approved because of incompleteness;
- letters mandated by HF to be written and forwarded by HF Executive not undertaken.

HF village and institution representatives alike have declared hindrances of this sort to be debilitating and conducive to promoting meeting absenteeism. Some current and past members go as far as to proclaim that the apparent *raison d'être* of monthly HF meetings are 'only an excuse to eat meat' during the lunch provided afterwards because 'KNP basically covers all catering'.

Both lack of communication and miscommunication are further constraints on the effectiveness of the HF. Although HF meetings are to be held in both Tsonga and English, in reality the languages are often switched, with little or no translation. Although many members are fluent in both languages, some are not. This aspect of communication became especially problematic when the KNP Social Ecologist was absent, and KNP was being represented only by section rangers, who have limited understanding of Tsonga. This generated much misunderstanding among HF members regarding issues during meetings, exacerbated by reporting of and acting on second-hand information, and lack of clarity when discussing topics. Given that meeting minutes and other written correspondence are sometimes incomplete, and produced in English only (often poor), the flow and quality of information between the KNP, Limpopo Province, and HF is in dire need of improvement.

Other criticism of the HF has focused on how well it adheres to its Constitution with respect to organizational structure. Firstly, by Constitutional definition, the HF Executive Committee should be elected annually by secret ballot. According to most institutional and some village representatives, however, the current Chair and Executive have been in their positions for 'as long as they can remember' and condemn HF election practices. Secondly, of the three bodies that steer and govern the Forum, the Management Committee is to be composed of eight members, including one each from the KNP and Limpopo Province. Currently, the Management Committee consists solely of Executive Committee members and no institutional representatives. Finally, gender inequality has been quoted as a sign of

poor representation in HF, with only 2 of 54 (3.7 %) village representatives being female.

Community Representation and Reporting. Linked with meeting absenteeism, representation of communities and reporting by HF members to their villages has been a contentious issue for the HF for many years. From the community questionnaire only 19 respondents (7.9 %) of the sample in the entire study area (12.4 % within HF villages) indicated that they had even heard of the HF, let alone knew of its activities (N = 240). This low frequency significantly limits the ability of this research's attempt to compare HF to non-HF villages, and is reflected in subsequent analyses. Further, all 19 respondents were from villages purported to be villages with HF membership, although only 11 of these respondents believed their village was actually represented on the HF. When asked the question, '*If you know of the Hlanganani Forum, how did you hear about it?*', 13 indicated 'interpersonal', 5 'KNP staff', and one had attended an early HF meeting.

Statistical tests were conducted to identify variables affecting knowledge of the HF by community members (Table 3.5). Responses were analyzed using Pearson's χ^2 tests to discern if two variables were independent of each other. Households within particular villages was found to be very highly significant ($p < 0.001$, $df = 37$, $N = 240$) with Bevhula, Govhu, Mashobye, Maviligwe, and Minginisi Block 2 all having higher observed than expected frequencies. Both being male and from villages represented by the HF were also found to be highly significant in association with knowledge of the HF ($p < 0.01$, $df = 1$, $N = 240$). Although not significant ($p < 0.067$, $df = 61$, $N = 240$), those who knew of HF also tended to be younger. These data suggest that knowledge of the HF is very poor in the study area and, where it does exist, is influenced largely by village association and gender, and to some extent by age.

Table 3.5

Association between selected variables and knowledge
of Hlanganani Forum

| Variable | Pearson χ^2 | continuity correction ¹ | N | df | Asym. sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----|----|--------------------------|
| village represented on HF | 11.733 | 10.091 | 240 | 1 | 0.001** |
| village | 74.806 | | 240 | 37 | 0.000*** |
| age | 78.335 | | 240 | 61 | 0.067 |
| number in household | 14.182 | | 240 | 15 | 0.512 |
| years in village | 38.706 | | 225 | 43 | 0.658 |
| gender [male] | 7.447 | 6.138 | 240 | 1 | 0.006** |
| de jure TA | 5.169 | | 240 | 6 | 0.522 |
| de facto TA | 17.781 | | 240 | 19 | 0.537 |
| education | 7.918 | | 240 | 5 | 0.161 |
| household income | 1.815 | | 240 | 3 | 0.612 |

¹ for 2x2 tables only

*** $p < 0.001$

** $p < 0.01$

HF village members are to be appointed by their respective community and ideally representatives must report back to their villages via monthly meetings. On the one hand, spokespersons for the Mhinga TA are pleased with the representation their villages have on the HF, and acknowledge that the TA was part of that decision-making process. In contrast, however, representatives from Maku-leke, Magona, Mtiti, Ndindani, Hlomela, and Gawula TAs all expressed concern about the representation of their villages on the HF, and the individuals claiming to represent these areas, many of whom do not report back to the villages on HF activities. One *Hosi* [chief], with three villages in the HF area, stated that originally, the community chose the Forum representatives with the co-operation of the *Hosi*. However, the representatives currently '*never report the activities of the Forum to the Hosi*', and '*we have no idea what's going on and this shouldn't be so. The communities are under the Hosi's control and it's incorrect to not involve or consult the Hosi on these matters.*' Although many TAs have discontinued

their association with the HF, a number of representatives from these communities still attend HF meetings and exacerbate tensions between TAs and the HF. As maintained by another *Hosi*, “*the HF representatives for villages in my area are illegitimate and only out for their own gain*”. In April 2004, even the HF Chair acknowledged publicly at a HF meeting the fact that ‘*some HF members were not elected by communities, nor give reports to their communities nor ndhuna [village headman]*’. Due to allegations of questionable representation and non-reporting, it was agreed that the forum steering committee should inform all the villages individually ‘*that it is very important that representatives report back and that they be democratically elected by the communities*’ (6 July 2004 HF minutes). This issue has been rectified in recent years as a system of nomination forms has been developed whereby a *Hosi* or *ndhuna* stipulates in the form that a member has indeed been nominated by the village to sit on the forum.

Many TA representatives accuse the HF of gross nepotism, especially when it comes to equity and benefit-sharing in employment opportunities and DCA compensation. For example, one *Hosi*’s own daughter was denied an application when she approached the HF about applying for a job, and was told ‘to go get a job from your father.’ A second case mentioned was the selection of people for employment opportunities only from villages favored by the KNP Social Ecologist. Thirdly, when people were compensated for livestock losses through the HF in 1998, it is alleged that the only people compensated were actually HF members. Finally, some *Hosi* claim that the HF is dominated by KNP objectives only. Given these conflicts, many TAs have polarized themselves from the HF and formed their own institutions to deal with land-use issues, negotiate with provincial administrations regarding DCA compensation, and the KNP for potential CBC partnerships. These include a number of TAs who subsequently decided to pull out of the Forum in mid-2001, and became involved with the Mariyeta Buffer Zone. When they discovered that Mariyeta was much like the HF and not representing the communities, a number of TAs then formed the Gazan Trust (Mtititi, Magona, Madonsi, Bevhula) and the Nghunghunyani Trust (Ndindani, Muyexe, Hlomela).

This disenchantment may also explain why HF members do not report back to their respective villages and thus, why knowledge of the HF and its activities is so poor in many communities. For those community members who know of the HF, 42.1 % stated that HF village representatives report to their respective communities at least once a month (Fig. 3.11), although, not surprisingly, a higher proportion of village representatives claim this frequency. It must be kept in mind, however, that due to poor knowledge of the HF in its member villages (12.4 %, n = 183), this translates into only 5.2 % of community members learning of HF activities on a monthly basis.

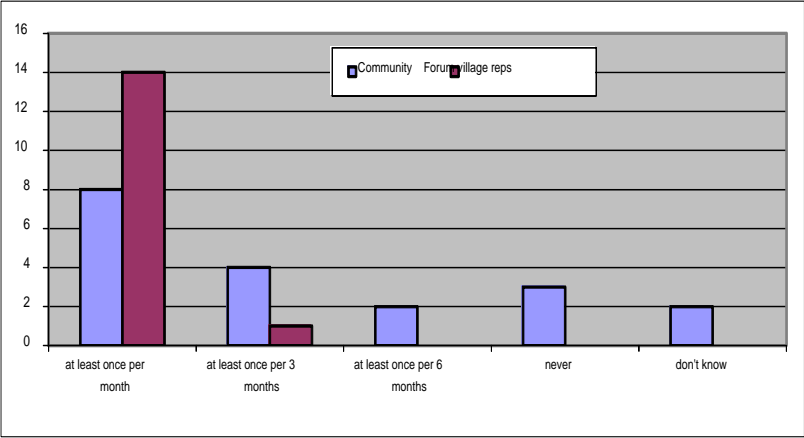


Fig. 3.11. Frequency of reporting of HF village representatives to communities

When asked ‘*How well does HF represent its communities’ interests?*’, 63.2 % of community members with knowledge of the HF stated ‘much’. Reasons for saying so included:

- because they call regular meetings,
- they respond quickly to our complaints,
- they are discussing compensation with the KNP,
- they are trying to create harmony,
- when there's a problem, they quickly inform us,
- jobs are being created and they inform us when there are job vacancies.

HF village representatives who similarly believe that they represent their communities to this extent cite co-operation between the HF and its communities, education of children, improvement of the environment, reductions in poaching, and the fact that ‘community cries of DCA damage are now reaching the government and KNP’ as reasons for this high level of representation.

In contrast, 31.6 % of community respondents claimed ‘not at all’, citing the following reasons for their response: ‘*it does nothing for us and has never reached our expectations*’; ‘*we are not being compensated*’; ‘*because in July this year over 8 cattle were killed and no help was given*’; ‘*we have no knowledge of recent developments*’; and ‘*they were busy fixing the fence but didn’t employ our people*’.

Issues of representation and management capacity, especially financial, have had repercussions on the extent to which the HF can fulfil its goal in securing DCA compensation. According to the HF Chair, the HF had approached the Province before obtaining its Section 21 status in order to request that it be the main mechanism responsible to disburse DCA compensation to affected parties in its area. At that time, the Province informed the HF Executive that it must first obtain Section 21 status (or be registered as a ‘Trust’^{††††}). After attaining Section 21 status in 2001, the HF, as part of a delegation with Limpopo Province staff and the Deputy Director, Limpopo Province Tourism & Parks Board, met the Limpopo Department of Finance and Economic Development (DFED) Member of Executive Council in Polokwane in October 2003 to issue a statement regarding their Section 21 status and the request for withheld funds. They received a verbal promise that all funds would be given by the end of the fiscal year (31 March 2004). However, to date they’ve received no word or any monies. In response, DFED and Department of Land Affairs officials cite ambiguity of HF representation, reflected partly by high meeting absenteeism, and questions of financial management competence as principal reasons why funds are being withheld from the HF. A Limpo-

^{††††} According to the Financial Institutions (Protection of Funds) Act № 28 of 2001, which repealed the Financial Institutions (Investment of Funds) Act № 39 of 1984 and associated amendments.

po Province high level manager stated that the province is unlikely to forward money to the HF as it “*has serious concerns about the Forum’s legitimacy and representativeness, and there are other institutions vis-à-vis Trusts wanting the same money*”.

Local Social Ecologist

In the study area, interaction between the KNP, local communities and the HF is primarily the responsibility of a social ecologist based in Punda Maria. This position can be described as the KNP’s ‘face’ or ‘front-line’ liaison person, whose responsibility is to attend HF meetings, build trust with local communities, informing them of KNP policies, benefits including employment and training opportunities, and community-related events. Regarding this relationship, a number of transgressions and complaints surfaced in interviews with village members, HF representatives, and both Limpopo Province and KNP staff. These include:

- lateness and/or unexpected absence from HF meetings and a belief by fellow workers that he ‘disappears without a valid explanation’;
- miscommunication to KNP Conservation Services staff;
- lack of oversight and response to contractors contravening KNP policy by sourcing employment from outside HF member villages for local projects;
- repeated complaints of unreliability and being difficult to contact;
- unilateral decision-making regarding employment opportunities in which the HF was not informed, causing confusion to HF members who were asked to recruit people;
- unfulfilled promises of DCA compensation to village members;
- discrediting the trustworthiness of TA administrations;
- denying job applications to village members based on their TA affiliation; and
- failing to facilitate community elders from Muyexe village wishing to visit ancestral burial sites in KNP.

One can argue that because the social ecologist was also a member of a village within the HF, potential conflicts of interest

would inevitably arise, and should have been expected. However, his superiors believe that *“he allowed his position as a community member to override his position as a SANParks employee.”* In early 2005, the social ecologist was called before a disciplinary hearing on allegations of embezzlement of funds raised by selling curios made by artisans from rural villages. He was found guilty and subsequently dismissed from his KNP position. According to the Head of People and Conservation (PaC), the ex-social ecologist is *“appealing this decision legally and, therefore, we cannot replace him until a final decision is reached.”* This has meant that KNP Corporate PaC staff have had to attend HF meetings during this interim period. Despite the positive role that social ecologists can have in acting as a liaison, incidents and experiences of this nature only serve to further break down trust between the KNP, local communities and the HF, and tarnish the reputation of the KNP in its neighboring villages.

Broken Promises

The HF has existed in a climate of broken promises almost since the day of its inception. Sadly, where promises have been made by KNP to its neighboring villages via the HF, and later been unfulfilled, it has resulted in mistrust and a loss of legitimacy of both the KNP and the HF. Examples summarized below include promises related to support in attending KNP functions, employment processes, opening of the Shangoni Gate, DCA compensation, and thatch grass collection within KNP.

KNP Functions

In a letter dated 15 April 1998, Headman Nkhavi strongly criticized KNP Director, complaining of the way that representatives from 6 villages waited throughout the night for promised transport to Skukuza for the KNP Centenary Celebrations. They feel that they were *‘left out on purpose because we are taken as not very important to the KNP’*. In response to an unsatisfactory apology letter sent by the KNP Director (14 April 1998), it reads, *‘This shows that you do not care about us and this makes us take you as people who want to benefit from us and return nothing to us.’* (15 April 1998). A second example involves one hundred people who were to attend the 10 year Democracy Celebration in KNP. KNP informed the HF later that the

Limpopo Province promised funding, but later reneged, and therefore only a handful of children actually attended (5 March 2004).

Employment Processes

In minutes of a meeting between KNP Director and HF Executive (22 June 1998), the HF stated that they are dissatisfied with the employment process of the KNP as they were promised advertisements would be distributed to community fora areas but that has stopped. This occurred a second time in which KNP promised to send job advertisement to HF, but didn't (21 Oct 1999). Finally, in a letter from HF to KNP Social Ecology, a complaint was launched about the unfair allocation of employment opportunities regarding the Working for Water program for HF villages. The HF believes that other communities (e. g. Bushbuckridge) are favored over them. The letter states, *'What we see as our cognitive perception as a Forum, is that the HF are utilized as a road for friends' enhancements because people are called to an interview for certain posts, but it is a strategy for corruption as friends are earmarked ... those who are connected to the authority get opportunities for better employment, but not in a transparent, efficient, and equitable way...'* (30 October 2000).

Shangoni Gate

The Shangoni Gate was to serve as an incentive for economic development in the area, which would alleviate high unemployment, high dependency ratio and the low human development index. This gate would make KNP more accessible to neighboring communities who currently need to travel to Punda Maria or Phalaborwa to gain entrance to the Park, and would prove to be a gesture of goodwill to KNP's neighbors and, thus, improve their relationship. The request for the gate was from the communities themselves west of Shangoni (adjacent to Altein village; see Figure 3.9b). The HF had written a formal request on this issue on 30 October 1995. The KNP responded positively in the Park Warden's letter dated 13 December 1995, in which it advocated that the opening would be as early as April 1996. Subsequently, on-site investigations were conducted in May 1996. In the first draft of an initial ecological impact report by KNP Scientific Services (October 1996), three route options were prescribed. It was also recommend-

ed that the Northern Province improve existing roads outside KNP, which lead to the Shangoni Gate (October 1996). However, in a KNP letter to HF (dated 1 April 1999), the KNP Director apologized for prior commitments made by KNP to the forum regarding opening of Shangoni Gate. They state that the KNP Management Committee has agreed in principal to the opening of the gate subject to a completed feasibility study, full EIA, and that the project be subject to the development of infrastructure outside the park. Finally, the Park Management stated that the gate might not open 'due to cost' (19 August 1999). To date, the Shangoni Gate remains a private gate for KNP staff, and is not open to the public.

DCA Compensation

A detailed description of the DCA issue has been provided by Anthony et al. (2010), however two cases of broken promises are worth mentioning here. Firstly, before the new electric border fence was erected in 2000, the communities were promised that once it is in place, an insurance policy would be taken out in order that communities would be compensated for livestock/crop loss due to problem animals. It was remarked later that KNP couldn't take an insurance policy out on something it didn't legally own (21 January 2000). Secondly, the HF claimed that it had been promised 6 million ZAR (~600,000 €) from Limpopo Province for livestock compensation after it had registered as a Section 21 company (16 August 2002), and that this was to take place before March 2004. The funds never materialized.

Thatch Grass Collection Program

In July 2004, the Shangoni Section Ranger was asked by his superiors within Conservation Services to commence a thatch grass harvesting program within KNP for neighboring communities. After initiating the program, it ran successfully for two weeks with members of Mtititi, Altein and Muyexe villages. Then, without any reason or explanation, he was ordered to terminate the program. He was given no idea as to the rationale for such a decision, and feels "*it is indicative of how KNP works, i. e. with either no communication or miscommunication.*" Understandably, affected communities became disgruntled, as they were also not given any explanation for the termination of the program. It was later discovered that the program

was forced to be terminated prematurely by KNP after it received a letter from the Department of Animal Health (DAH) stating that the program was actually in contravention to the Animal Health Act No. 7 of 2002 (Government Gazette No. 1023), i.e. 'no fodder material can be removed from an infected area [KNP buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) are maintenance hosts of both bovine tuberculosis or 'BTB' (*Mycobacterium bovis*) and the SAT group of foot-and-mouth-disease (FMD) viruses (R. Bengis, pers. comm.)] and transported to an area where livestock exists' (c.f. section 4(a) under 'Detention and disposal of imported animal or thing, and animal or thing conveyed in transit'). In the DAH letter, it was recognized that there was some complaint by communities that the grass collected was for roofing material, but it was also noted that 'there could be no guarantee that it would not also be used for feeding domestic livestock'.

Broken promises and their consequences to relationships have been identified and publicly acknowledged in HF meetings, where it was noted that the 'KNP and Forum's relationship is poor' (21 October 1999), and 'communication between the Northern Province, its rangers, and the communities should improve' (21 January 2000). It must be understood, however, that broken promises are not unique to the HF and its interaction with conservation agencies. Informal interviews with community members revealed that corruption, broken promises, and unfulfilled expectations are widespread, especially between government and people. They have come to expect these types of constraints as commonplace. Despite this culture of broken promises, many questionnaire respondents believe that the HF is improving relationships between the KNP, Limpopo Province and local communities (Fig. 3.12). Justification for these responses include increased environmental awareness in some rural areas, the fact that the HF is '*the only mouthpiece between the three parties*', and that it provides a forum by which the parties can meet together, share experiences, and begin to co-operate especially on DCA-related issues.

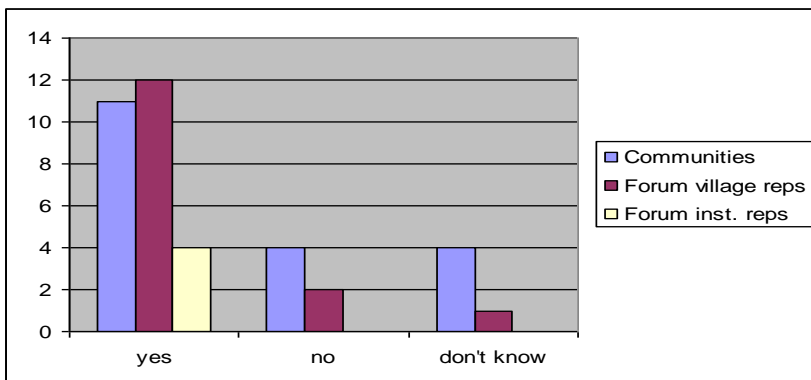


Fig. 3.12. Responses to ‘Is the HF improving relationships between KNP, Limpopo Province Environmental Affairs and communities?’

Damage-causing Animals

Problems of DCAs and the lack of compensation for damages inflicted on neighboring communities were raised at the very first HF meeting, and continue to be a source of contention today (Anthony et al., 2010). Implications for the HF specifically are dealt with here.

At the second HF meeting (23 March 1994) it was decided that the following actions should be adhered to regarding DCA and their control:

- Communities, along with the then Gazankulu Nature Conservation (GNC) will assign people in communal areas bordering KNP to deal with problem animals. GNC will train and assist these people and, possibly, KNP on request.
- TAs are to try and make phones available 24 hours a day.
- GNC will man a radio 24 hours a day to take DCA reports.
- GNC will assess situation, and will either handle DCA themselves, or ask KNP personnel for assistance, but with GNC staff member present.
- GNC and KNP will write letters to officially invite each other to work in their respective regions upon request.
- KNP proposed that any meat or monetary compensation generated from the DCA should be channeled back to the communities troubled.

These actions and proposed responsibilities formed the basis by which communities, informed via the HF, believed DCAs would be controlled in their areas. Subsequently, however, organizational and policy changes within the GNC led to corruption and inefficiency in carrying out its duties. A meeting was held between KNP and GNC on 19 July 1994 to discuss DCA control and co-operation between the two institutions. In this meeting, it was noted that KNP had already written a letter inviting GNC staff to assist KNP staff in the park with DCA control, but a reciprocal letter was still expected. The GNC representative stated that due to GNC law enforcement activities they could not attend to every DCA report, and therefore 'the GNC are not popular among some of the local communities'. He also pointed out that current GNC rules don't make provision for compensation; however, they are investigating the possibility of diverting some funds generated by trophy hunting to people that have experienced losses. He further noted that hunting permits previously given out to certain Gazankulu officials have now 'changed hands and are currently being used for illegal hunting'. Finally, he remarked that 'with the current constitutional changes, many people think the old laws are no longer valid and that this is creating problems.' Most of these policy changes were not communicated to communities, who continued to experience DCA damage and build resentment towards the GNC and KNP.

Later, in 1997, the process was changed in that community members should now contact Northern Province Department of Environmental Affairs (replaced the GNC) for assistance. The Province, if necessary, would request the help of KNP in controlling the animal(s). However, inaction and corruption on the part of provincial rangers was again raised at a HF meeting in March 1998, where HF members stated that community members are complaining because the province only attends to DCA incidents when they are buffaloes and not lions^{****}. This was confirmed by *Hosi* Muyexe who stated that the province '*only brought him a hind leg and the rest of the meat was taken by provincial rangers*'. Unhappy with animals escaping from the KNP and perceived inadequacy in controlling DCA once outside the Park, a

^{****} Buffalo meat is generally preferred to that of lion. It is also believed that there is a higher success rate in tracking and shooting buffalo, which tend to be more gregarious than lion.

number of communities in this period felt that KNP was ‘reluctant and uncaring’ and ‘not committed to its undertakings.’

Within this backdrop, the HF has had limited experience in being able to compensate DCA victims in its member villages. From May 1997 HF meeting minutes, the Deputy Chair informed the HF that a farmer from Matiyani village was compensated 4500 ZAR (~850 €) from the HF for cattle killed by lions. A second case occurred in 1998 when the HF was able to compensate 24,000 ZAR (~3360 €) from the sale of two lion skins by the KNP to eight farmers from four villages for livestock loss. Concern at this time was raised, however, that this compensation scheme by HF of 1500 ZAR (~210 €)/head of cattle was not market related as cattle were worth at least 2500 ZAR (~350 €). Aside from these two cases, there is no further record to date of communities receiving compensation for DCA damage, contributing to the belief by many community members and a number of TAs that the HF has been incompetent in its ability to fulfill its goals. In its defense, minutes of an HF meeting in June 2001 state that the government had promised to deposit 6 million ZAR (~600,000 €) generated from trophy hunting into the HF’s bank account for compensating affected farmers, but only after it was registered as a Section 21 company (discussed earlier). Raised expectations from the HF and community members alike were dashed, however, as even after attaining Section 21 status, this money has never materialized. This partially contributed to increasing tension between TAs and the HF, and the decision by many to circumvent the HF, form their own Trusts and seek compensation monies directly from the Province. At the July 2004 HF meeting, the representative of Maviligwe village emphasized this tension, and strongly urged the HF to ‘*gain credibility by addressing the problem of compensation for DCAs immediately.*’

Despite being unsuccessful in compensating most of its member villages for DCA damage, the HF does, however, have a role in reporting DCAs to the Limpopo Province and KNP in the rural areas. This fact is well known by HF village representatives and those with knowledge of the HF. Although there are mixed questionnaire responses to how well the HF functions in this regard (Fig. 3.13), it is acknowledged by a majority of community respondents who know of the HF that it indeed does little in getting compensation

to affected farmers. Those who did believe HF assists in this respect were primarily those who knew of the compensation received from the HF to farmers in 1998.

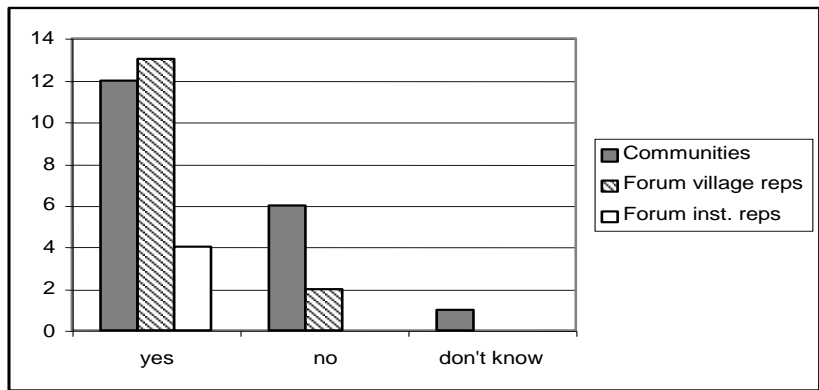


Fig. 3.13. Responses to ‘Do you think HF helps in controlling DCAs?’

Juxtaposed with continuing questions of the HF’s representation and legitimacy, the ambiguous role of various institutions also continues to cloud the DCA control issue and affect perceptions of the HF outside its control (Anthony et al., 2010). After almost two years of planning, a high level meeting with SANParks, KNP, Department of Veterinary Services, and Limpopo Province was convened in March 2005 regarding the issue. In this meeting, the actual ownership and maintenance of the KNP border fence was debated, as well as strategies of DCA compensation. According to the KNP District Ranger, in this meeting SANParks/KNP offered to assist with DCA control outside the Park but was denied. Instead, the Limpopo Province agreed that, if they feel its necessary, they would request KNP assistance. As institutions continue to debate over their roles and responsibilities, DCA problems persist, as do perceptions of ineffectiveness of the HF in helping community members with DCA compensation. Currently, the HF is meeting with community trusts (Nghunghunyani, Gazan) in order to take a more united front to Limpopo Province to receive DCA compensation funds. It waits to be seen how this co-operation will be received.

3.4.6. Evaluation of Effectiveness of Hlanganani Forum

Effectiveness of the HF regarding representation, reporting, building relationships, and DCA problems have been outlined above. This section will summarize perceptions by community members and HF members alike on how successful the HF has been in its other objectives, namely conservation projects, environmental education, development and employment, and overall functioning.

The HF was successful in securing funds through the government's LandCare program to stabilize streambanks, utilizing gabion baskets, in Matiyani village (Fig. 3.14). This project is a relatively high-profile initiative as the work was done adjacent to the paved road, and clearly visible to all that enter the KNP at the Punda Maria gate. More recently, there has been a proposal by the KNP to provide trees, which will be planted by HF members along the KNP border fence near Altein village to create a small buffer between the Park (and its elephant population) and neighboring maize crops. Aside from these two conservation projects, available HF meeting minutes and interviews conducted in this research indicated no other 'hands-on' conservation projects undertaken by the HF.

However, when asked for reasons behind responses to the question, '*Does the HF do good conservation work?*' in the three separate questionnaires utilized in this study, respondents indicated that in addition to soil erosion reduction projects, reporting DCAs, and KNP border fence maintenance, they believe education to be part of 'conservation work'. Education here was defined as a) discouraging people from cutting trees and poaching within the KNP, b) encouraging nature conservation, and c) educating people on the importance and dangers of wild animals. Negative responses to this question cite poor conservation work on behalf of the HF being evidenced by severe illegal activities and increased threats to biodiversity adjacent to KNP, e. g. illegal hunting, timber removal, erosion, litter, overgrazing, extraction of river sand, and developments undertaken without any EIA.



Fig. 3.14. Streambank stabilization project near Matiyani village

A similar pattern of responses resulted from a related question on the role of the HF in environmental education in its member villages. Responses by HF village representatives were more positive than community members and HF institutional representatives. Responses to open-ended questions on these opinions revealed that HF village representatives claimed that they conduct environmental training and workshops in most member villages, often by cooperating with TAs and inviting KNP staff. In contrast, some community members who know of the HF have never heard about these workshops and doubt they've ever been held in their village. Respondents believing that the HF performs poorly in environmental education again refer to increasing environmental threats in the neighboring areas as support for their opinions.

Questionnaire respondents were also asked their opinion on the effectiveness of the HF with respect to enhancing employment and development in the region. Again, HF village representatives responded more positively compared to the other two groups (Fig. 3.15). They mention the fact that the KNP is creating jobs for people in the area as evidence of this contribution, as well as dis-

counted KNP entrance fees, limited DCA compensation, and quicker responses to DCA reports. In contrast, community members and HF institutional representatives are more divided on this question, with similar reasons to HF village representatives for positive responses. Those who do not share this belief argue reduced employment in some villages and the fact that ‘*money is not trickling through to village members*’ as reasons for weak performance of the HF.

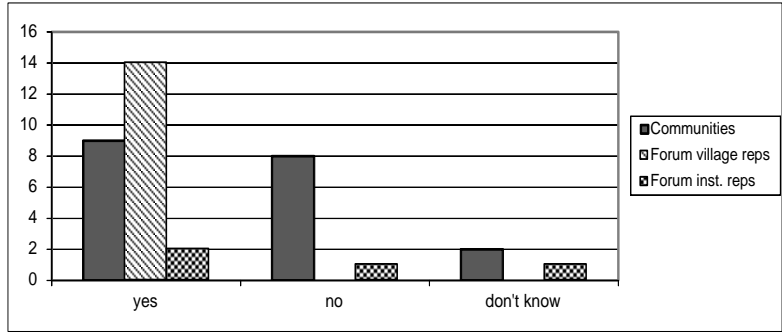


Fig. 3.15. Responses to ‘Do you think the living standards of HF villages has improved because of its activities?’

In a related question, respondents were asked their opinion as to whether they were satisfied or not with community development programs delivered by KNP through HF (Fig. 3.16). Those with positive responses stated co-operation in DCA control, employment, reduced KNP entry fees, free environmental education by KNP, and the thatch grass program as rationale for their choice. Those who think otherwise and are dissatisfied with the programs indicated that their experience with nepotism by HF members in employment practices, broken promises by the HF, and because ‘currently no one is benefiting from this partnership’ all contribute to this belief. One respondent from Bevhula village emphasized lack of communication as particularly problematic, noting “*although the Hlanganani Forum is said to be encouraging KNP to employ our people, unfortunately, there is no information flowing between the Forum and our village.*”

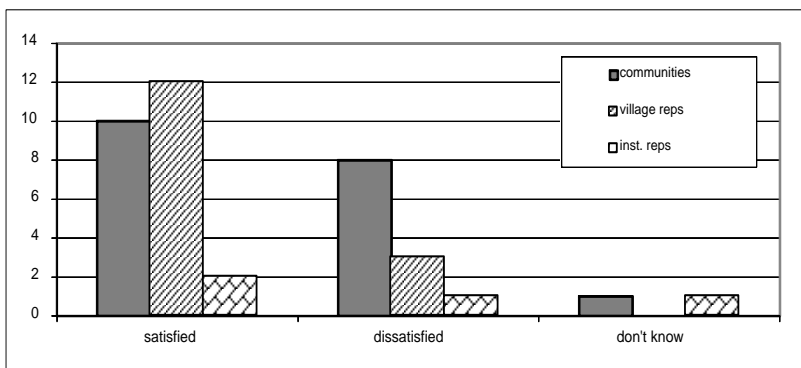


Fig. 3.16. Responses to ‘To what extent are you dis/satisfied with community development programs delivered by KNP through HF?’

Effectiveness of the HF was further investigated by addressing whether respondents believed that the HF functioned well or not. Again, responses by community members who knew of the HF were varied, with a slightly higher number of positive responses. Reasons for their belief included:

- it is democratic in its activities,
- because they usually give a report back of their activities,
- they effectively consult with KNP and the community,
- they are encouraging people to behave responsibly,
- without it, we couldn't manage what they are doing.

Community members who, on the other hand, believe that it fails to function well, justify their position with the following reasons:

- they are unsuccessful in their activities,
- we don't even know their representative here,
- we are not informed of its activities enough,
- we never received the promised compensation. This is a failure on their part.

HF village representative respondents were primarily positive in their responses, indicating high community representation, providing feedback and communicating with their villages, being an active voice to the KNP and Limpopo Province, and the delivery of KNP jobs to the communities as primary reasons for their belief. The

single negative HF village representative response believed the HF fails to function well '*because it is not working with the chief*'. Finally, HF institutional representatives claim that although the HF is recognized, and has raised some money for DCA compensation, it could improve greatly because '*there are no decisions at meetings and no deadlines for their activities*'.

In order to understand the current impact of the HF in the neighboring areas, an open-ended question was also included in the questionnaires regarding expected consequences if the HF were to cease to exist. Responses that indicated negative consequences to such an incident centered on concepts of relationships between communities and the KNP, DCA problems, and benefit flows from the KNP (Table 3.6). In contrast, some respondents felt that nothing would change or that the activities of community Trusts would expand.

To explore perceptions by community members and HF representatives as to whether the HF should be changed and if so, how, was also addressed in the questionnaires. Responses to the question of whether the HF activities should, in fact, be changed are provided in Fig. 3.17.

For those who responded in the affirmative, an open-ended question allowed them to offer their views on how the HF should be changed. These suggestions, ordered in decreasing frequency, are listed below. The HF should change by:

- better representing communities' interests;
- being replaced by another organization;
- working harder on the DCA problem;
- being more equitable in its benefit-sharing;
- being more transparent;
- providing transport for members to attend meetings;
- keeping their promises;

Table 3.6

Responses to ‘If HF stopped tomorrow,
what would happen?’

| Expected consequence | Communi- nity (N = 19) | Forum village reps (N = 15) | Forum inst. reps (N = 4) |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Relationships with KNP would deteriorate | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| DCA problems would worsen | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Employment & development opportunities would decrease | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| People would destroy nature in and out of KNP | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Loss of knowledge of KNP activities | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Representation would decrease to service providers | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Gazan and Nghunghunyani Trusts would expand activities | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| It would be replaced by another forum | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Nothing, because it bears no fruit | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| It would be better | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Don't know | 2 | 0 | 0 |

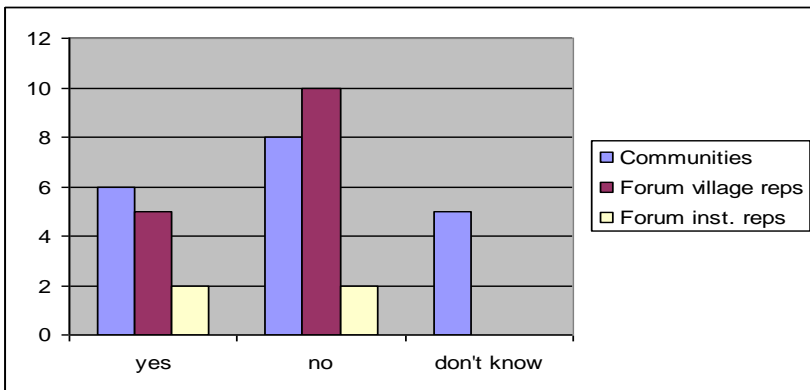


Fig. 3.17. Responses to ‘Should HF’s activities be changed?’

- involving more people familiar with law;
- having more representatives per village;
- having representatives selected by the community;
- increasing the number of women in its membership.

3.4.7. Discussion

Since its foundation in 1994, HF activities have revolved around DCA control and compensation, relationship building, development and employment opportunities, conservation projects and environmental education. With minimal capacity and experience in working with KNP, HF has forged ahead into relatively uncharted territory in realizing a number of significant achievements in relation to its stated objectives. However, a number of constraints outside their control including shifting government policies and questionable competence of KNP Social Ecology staff have affected HF's ability in meeting some objectives. In addition to these constraints, internal weaknesses including meeting absenteeism and management, representation, reporting, and accountability in benefit-sharing has led to the questioning of the legitimacy of the HF by TA, KNP, and Limpopo Province staff.

The relational links between interacting stakeholders is conceptualized in Fig. 3.18. Understanding the circumstances under which these stakeholders are operating is crucial in making any evaluations in intervention success. After dramatic policy changes and the belief that KNP could not exist in isolation from its neighbors in 1994, the KNP sought to develop links with its neighboring communities and initiated a number of community fora, including the HF. It has cultivated its relationship with the HF over the last decade through monthly meetings and co-operating with the HF in establishing a number of benefit-sharing arrangements in terms of reduced entry fees, employment, and training. In addition, the HF has played a critical role in DCA reporting to KNP and Limpopo Province.

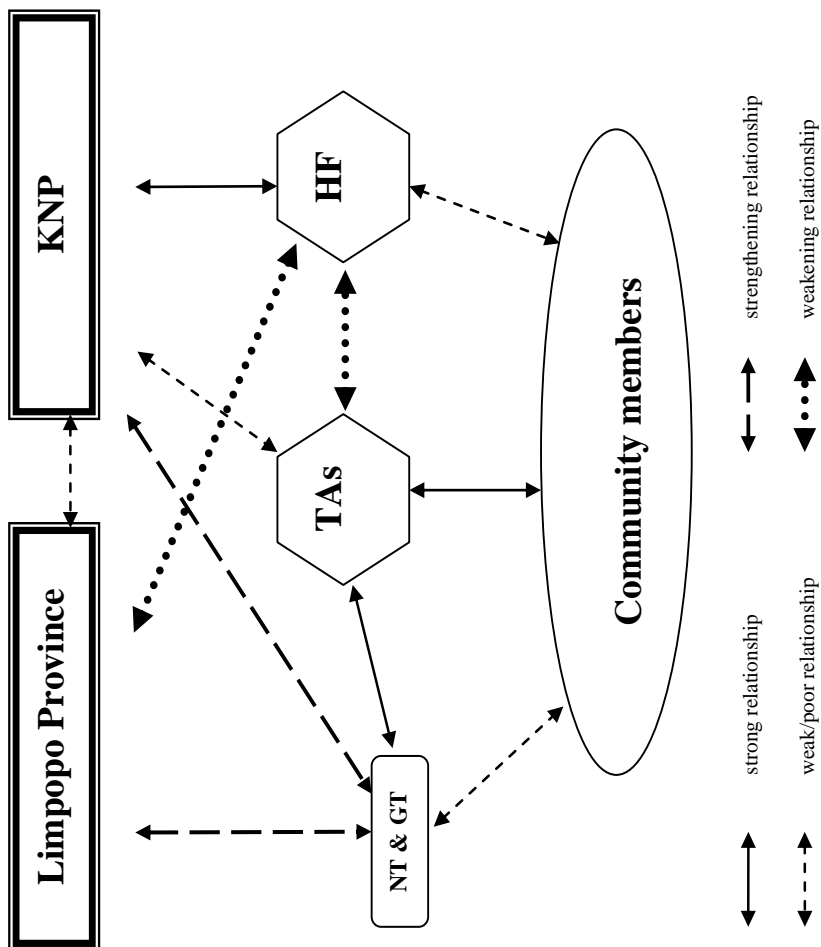


Fig. 3.18. Diagram showing temporal changes in relational links between stakeholders

However, due to perceived inaction of the HF with respect to DCA control, lack of promised compensation for DCA damage, nepotism, and poor representation and reporting, resentment toward the HF developed amongst a number of TAs. These TAs, which traditionally have had strong ties with community members in the rural areas, subsequently formed their own community trusts, namely the Ngunghunyani Trust (NT) and the Gazan Trust (GT). Complex and dynamic struggles between TAs and local government have also influenced the way in which TAs interact with ‘democratic’ organizations such as the HF. Concurrently, increased dissatisfaction by Limpopo Province staff with the practices of the HF coupled with new relationships being established with Trusts led to confusion as to the validity of claims of village representation within the rural areas. This confusion has contributed to the apprehension of the Limpopo Province in distributing DCA compensation monies, which were originally promised to the HF in 2003.

Although not wanting to sever its long-standing investment in its relationship with the HF, yet recognizing shifting power struggles between the HF and community Trusts, the KNP began to work more with TAs and recognize these registered Trusts both of which are planning CBC activities in conjunction with the private sector that could affect the KNP both directly and indirectly. However, lack of capacity within the PaC affects these relationships. Meaningfully addressing these shortcomings in a timely and sensitive manner with all actors is a must for KNP.

Complicating these relational dynamics has been the relatively weak relationship between the KNP and the Limpopo Province, especially regarding DCAs and their control (Anthony, 2007; Anthony et al., 2010). Despite both being conservation agencies with similar goals in environmental protection, this lack of co-operation has contributed to an increasing belief amongst rural villagers that these institutions do not care about their needs, nor are willing to accept responsibility for damage caused by wild animals that originate both within and outside the KNP, continuing to fuel a historic point of conflict (Cock & Fig, 2000; Freitag-Ronaldson & Foxcroft, 2003).

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the HF and the interaction described in this research between the HF, TAs, provincial government, KNP, and community members thoroughly dismisses the mythi-

cal concept of cohesive, homogeneous communities that function according to shared norms. Village of residence, e.g., significantly influences knowledge of the HF. KNP's neighboring communities *are* socially stratified, and do not necessarily constitute a community of interests in which all members willingly want to participate in the development of their community through the HF. The simplistic model of community and its representation has been challenged by Agrawal and Gibson (1999: 629) who argue that the focus should rather be on the 'multiple interests and actors within communities, on how these actors influence decision-making, and on the internal and external institutions that shape the decision-making process'.

Tsonga Proverb: *Mhunti va yi bela endhawini. / The duiker must be hit where it lies.*

Meaning: Deal with a problem at its beginning, and not when it is too late.

Far from a simple exercise, PA outreach to neighbors via community fora is a very complex and dynamic undertaking. In 1994, this was exacerbated by the dramatic socio-political changes in South Africa and expectations were high regarding future outcomes of proposed initiatives, including that of the HF. Grandiose objectives were drafted, evidently without much of a framework or planning, and activities began. However, shifting policies, new legislation and power struggles in the rural communal areas brought challenges to the HF that were unexpected, resulting in a loss of legitimacy. Of course, it is impossible to predict all that might occur, but programs of this nature should be conceptualized clearly and in great detail by the full range of stakeholders to anticipate and plan for potential impacts of any new developments before they are implemented. Naturally, this approach is time-consuming and must be based on adaptive management, but is necessary in dealing with such complex relationships.

3.4.8. Conclusions & Recommendations

The process of creating and defining community-based organizations and developing competent institutions, that both represent diverse local interests and are sensitive to community dynamics and power relations, is often arduous and time-consuming (Shackleton & Campbell, 2001). Any attempt to speed up this process can derail the initiative by ignoring important social processes and recognizing the time needed to develop a common language, and an appreciation that people do not all learn easily. Donors and government agencies need to recognize that such processes do not happen overnight and require long-term commitment and on-going support. After a decade of investment by both KNP and the HF, it would be wise not to ‘throw out the baby with the bathwater’, but rather, to investigate ways of improving existing structures that build relationships between the KNP and its neighbors. In this framework, we outline recommendations below regarding the HF which center on membership, accountability, capacity-building, and adaptive management.

Membership

All too frequently, externally derived techniques are applied indiscriminately in poor communities, usually with negative results. Inappropriate public participation methods and practices can be extremely harmful, often either intimidating or alienating the very communities they are attempting to involve. In their evaluation of statutory Local Boards which were instituted in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, to involve communities in protected area management, Luckett et al. (2003) stressed the importance of continuously involving TAs in decision-making processes, especially where these institutions are strong. In the case of the HF, although a bottom-up approach was originally taken in inviting communities and garnering support for community fora through TAs, a ‘hands-off’ approach to conflicts and power struggles with TAs was subsequently taken by KNP. Although one can argue that KNP was not mandated or equipped to mediate these conflicts, the direct consequences have meant that the HF, initiated and supported by the KNP, has suffered in terms of legitimacy and *de facto* membership. In some respects, by relying too heavily on the HF, the KNP has ignored local norms of

behavior with respect to traditional leadership, and as a result now faces additional challenges in terms of initiating dialogue with new structures vis-à-vis community trusts.

The potential representation area of the HF covers approximately 1320 km², encompassing 38 villages. There are no less than seven *de jure* TAs in this area, but upwards of 20 *de facto* TAs recognized. These highly stratified and differentiated communities with multiple interests pose a particular challenge in that such situations create varying incentives and disincentives for participating in CBC or other forms of park–people interaction. Here, the role played by external facilitators is critical. All local actors, regardless of socio-economic background, need to be brought into *and continuously involved* in the process through equitable and collaborative negotiations ensuring broadly representative involvement of the local populace, including women. Similar to the more diverse Local Boards in Kwa-Zulu-Natal (Luckett et al., 2003), the KNP should investigate whether current HF members are truly representing communities and if including other local actors (e. g. local councilors, business, mining enterprises, farmer groups) might accommodate a wider degree of interests. This would involve re-thinking the KNP's original decision to include only black, previously disadvantaged communities in its community fora, excluding all other stakeholders. The hands-off approach by KNP in identifying and tracking HF membership, and relative unresponsiveness to local conditions may have contributed to the current confusion being experienced by the parties involved. In light of these developments and the current state of uncertainty over HF membership:

- In consultation with community members, TAs and staff from KNP and Limpopo Province, *village membership and representatives of HF should be identified, agreed upon, and documented by all parties.*
- If necessary, the HF should *broaden its membership base to include a wider spectrum of people and/or activities.*
- As TAs have traditionally had strong ties with their rural constituencies, and can mobilize communities for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources (Campbell and Shackleton 2001), it is vital that *closer links be devel-*

oped between TAs, KNP and Limpopo Province. However, due to questionable legitimacy of some TAs, it is important that community members collectively decide on whom they want represented.

- Current differences in *objectives and conflicts of interest between HF, and Gazan and Nghunghunyani Trusts should be clarified and resolved* through discussion, mediation, and unbiased support by external institutions.

Furthermore, local level cooperation is believed to increase with women's participation (Molinas, 1998). Moreover, Westermann et al. (2005) found in their analysis of rural programs from America, Asia, and Africa that collaboration, solidarity, and conflict resolution all increase in groups where women are present, as do norms of reciprocity and the capacity for self-sustaining collective action. In our study, gender inequality has been cited as a sign of poor representation in HF, with only two female village representatives. Knowledge of the HF was also shown to be significantly influenced by gender, with women less likely to know of the HF and its activities. Considering these findings and gender differences in accessing and using resources, *women representation should be enhanced on the HF.*

Accountability

Tsonga Proverb: *U nga vuri, u ku 'N'wananga, ndzi ta ku lavela nyama!* / *Don't say, 'Child, I'll get meat!'*

Meaning: Do not promise that which you do not have.

It is believed that if participants are not accountable, not only will communication falter, but they will often reach conclusions or make decisions which are not financially or physically feasible, thus rendering the process futile (Allen, 1998). Accusations of poor representation and reporting, inequity in employment and other benefit distribution by HF members, and lack of adherence to its Constitution are serious accountability matters that the HF must tackle in order to regain legitimacy and support from both community members and other institutions with which it interacts.

Knowledge of the HF is poor in the study area, including within villages it claims to represent. Further, of the residents interviewed who claimed to know of the HF, about half held a neutral or negative opinion on the effectiveness of the HF. This suggests that (i) the HF has not effectively conveyed its aims to its member villages, (ii) failed in meeting these objectives, and/or (iii) its recipients see its purpose and objectives as having little relevance. Recommendations regarding accountability include:

- *Build stronger accountability structures/mechanisms into HF*, which incorporate local forms and understanding of accountability, especially in benefit-sharing arrangements, which should have stricter and more democratic guidelines. These mechanisms can also include TAs as structures through which HF representatives can communicate to their respective communities.
- *Provide more clearly constructed policies or procedures* for appointments, reporting, and project management.
- *Follow through on Constitutional policies* for meeting absenteeism.

Capacity-building

‘Capacity’ is often described as a chicken and egg problem (Ribot, 2002). There is often reluctance on the part of governments to devolve powers before capacity has been demonstrated, but without powers there is no basis on which local institutions can gain the experience needed to build capacity. Hence, without the necessary capacity to improve its ability to manage funds to the satisfaction of the Limpopo Province, the HF will not receive monies to compensate victims of DCA damage, undermining a central goal of its existence. Here the KNP has an important role to play. If it is serious about empowering communities through community fora, then it must actively recognize constraints in capacity, including managerial and communication, and seek ways and/or support to remove them either directly or involving partnerships with other agencies. However, KNP must allocate more resources to its People and Conservation Department to achieve this objective. Without it, the HF is largely left to fend for itself and, like experiences elsewhere, will likely result in project failure and unmet conservation objectives (Pimbert, 2003).

Historically there has been a tendency for outside law to prescribe the structure of local organizations and the rules by which they operate. This is perverse, since one assumption of CBC management is that it is best to build upon local institutions that is rooted in local values and practices. If law tries to mold these institutions into forms too complex and alien to a local situation, and then standardizes that form across many different social settings, the result could be to create institutions that have little legitimacy among their members (Lindsay, 1998). On the other hand, it has been realized in other contexts that social stratification can affect participation in project meetings in that some people can influence opinions based on *inter alia* their relationship with tribal chiefs (Meister, 1972; Wasserman, 2001). Indeed, Meister (1972) argues that consensus often reached at rural meetings is not based on mutual agreement, but rather on the balance of social forces. Although everyone is encouraged to air their own opinions at HF meetings, not all do. Thus, it is worthwhile in this research context, to *explore and, if necessary, integrate more local types and forms of accountability into HF practices*, including the communication of opinions and ideas. Moreover, *provision and/or facilitation of on-going training for HF membership should be made*, especially those in financial management positions.

Khan (1998) found that a vital factor in success for community health projects in South Africa was that meeting times and language were suited to local conditions. Moreover, Soefstestad (2004) has emphasized the need to assess the impact that English is having on biodiversity conservation discourse, especially given the cross-cultural variability in perceiving, classifying, and naming the environment and its relationships. Language constraints identified in this research call for the need for *HF meetings to be conducted in a manner, which enables those present to express themselves in their mother tongue*. For those village or institutional members who are not fluent in both languages, language training and/or translation should be investigated. HF meeting minutes should similarly be produced in both languages.

Since 1997 the neighbor relations strategy in KwaZulu-Natal involves both the Local Boards and a Community Levy Fund, which is generated from levies charged to visitors to protected areas (Luckett et al., 2003). In addition to funding community development pro-

jects, these funds have been used to provide compensation for the expenses of Board members in attending meetings. Thus far, no such service exists for HF members and has been identified in this research as a constraint to meeting attendance. Therefore:

- avenues should be sought *to provide funding specifically for transport to HF meetings* for village representatives.
- training HF members already involved in customary approaches in *improved personal communication and negotiation skills*.
- training HF members already involved in customary approaches to *more effectively facilitate/mediate conflicts, both at micro-micro and micro-macro levels*.
- *develop partnerships with other development agencies and government departments* (agriculture, education, etc.) in building individual and institutional capacity within HF.

Adaptive Management

Tsonga Proverb: *La vutisaka ndlela, a nga lahleki.* / *The one who asks his way will not get lost.*

It has been argued by a number of respondents that the HF has ‘lost sight of its original objectives’ and ‘side-stepped primary issues.’ Given its history, and the fact that no systematic evaluation of its effectiveness has been made until this research (nor of any other KNP fora), the time is ripe to re-evaluate the mission of the HF, and realign its activities accordingly. Recommendations of this nature include:

- in intensive consultation with community members, the HF should *revise its mission, if necessary, and associated objectives*. This should subsequently be conducted at regular intervals.
- in consultation with KNP staff, the HF should *identify its central issues and place problems and information in their wider context*.
- many projects have failed to develop adequate monitoring and evaluation systems for measuring both the biological or developmental impacts of implementation. Although re-

search and monitoring is identified as a pillar upon which social ecology functions, this has been the most neglected component within KNP activities (cf Swemmer and Taljaard, 2011). Thus, it is important to *institutionalize rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems into the activities of the HF*, using appropriate indicators and to respond in a flexible manner to these systems. A procedure whereby data collected can be independently verified would help institute greater transparency.

In summary, the case of the HF should give serious cause for KNP policy makers, and other PAs interested in reaching out to neighbors and shaping CBC schemes, to rethink their strategies. Approaches must be carefully designed to accommodate both internal and external characteristics of communities that it seeks to interact with, and how these evolve and are redefined over time. It is essential for governments, both within South Africa and elsewhere, to recognize these attributes and identify appropriate strategies such as local level mediation services, adherence to locally made rules and their enforcement, engaging in collaborative research with local communities, and adopting adaptive management approaches, characterized by regular monitoring. To do otherwise would continue to position the cart before the horse.

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