

Trans-Frontier Parks: Tourism Development and Poverty Alleviation Vehicles? Lessons from Southern Africa

Zhou Zibanai*

Abstract *This study is a surgical examination of the Trans-frontier Conservation Area (TFCA) concept in the frame of Southern Africa using the poverty alleviation construct as the analytical lens. The paper aimed at creating a new narrative, deepening the comprehension of TFCA, and integrating its ecological goals with poverty alleviation. The research touched base with community residents through in-depth interviews to get first-hand experience encounters with reality on the ground. Peace parks have dismally failed to tackle poverty within communities as evidenced by loss of fertile agricultural land, outlawing access to natural resources, destruction of agricultural crops, livestock decimation due to diseases from wild animals, and elusive job prospects. Anecdotal evidence point to local communities' anathema to parks and dismissed the poverty alleviation benefits as an illusion given the huge social capital loss accentuated by involuntary relocation and spike on human-wildlife conflict. Local communities were miffed by prioritisation of ecological needs at the expense of their socio-economic needs; hence logically dismiss peace parks as public relations stunts. Bottom-up approaches are recommended to address poverty issues, coupled with a root and branch shake up of administrative structures in communities and parks hierarchy for fair representation of all the segments of community population.*

Keywords: *Tourism Development, Trans-Frontier Park, Pro-Poor Tourism, Poverty Alleviation, Southern Africa*

INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing amount of research output on pro-poor tourism as a way of helping people out of poverty, particularly in developing countries (Shackleton, 2008; Spencely and Goodwin, 2007; Munthali, 2007; Mitchell and Faal, 2007; Manayara and Jones, 2007; Babalola and Ajekigbe, 2007; Hill *et al*, 2006; Rogerson, 2006; and Ashley, 2006). However, the amount of research on peace parks and poverty alleviation in Southern Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular has been limited. The issue of poverty alleviation is an important aspect of global concern and this research can help underpin the importance of peace parks in the fight against endemic poverty levels in Southern African countries. The livelihood of millions of people that live in and around the TFCAs are intricately linked to the integrity of biodiversity. World over marginalised rural communities harvest natural resources for subsistence and commercial purposes in addition to utilising the land

to rear and maintain livestock, to grow food and cultivate cash crops. In its framework of development of TFCAs, SADC emphasises that rural communities be the primary beneficiaries of TFCAs and must have an intrinsic right to be involved in the decision making processes of TFCAs. However, given the illiteracy levels so endemic amongst the rural populace this is highly doubtful. The noble SADC policy wherein it is advocated that TFCAs plans be developed through a participatory process that should lucidly demonstrate the benefit flow to these communities and be aligned with regional poverty alleviation strategies has been frustrated to a greater extent by the top-bottom approach that is adopted in the implementation of those peace parks.

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE OF TFCAS

TFCAs came into being in the aftermath of the maiden UN Conference on Environment and Development Convention of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro against the backdrop to stop

* Department of Tourism & Hospitality Management, Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe.
Email: zhouz@staff.msu.ac.zw; zhou.zibanai@gmail.com

biodiversity loss spawned by human activities (UN,1992). A TFCAs is simple an area spanning over parts of two or more communities including one or several different kinds of protected areas (SADC, 2012). Different nomenclatures have been used to refer to TFCAs, for example, peace parks, which are considered to promote cross border cooperation in the countries where they exist and catalytically in rural poverty alleviation (Dahlberg, *et al* 2010; SADC, 2012; Silva and Mosimane, 2012). To date varying opinions have been emerging on whether or not peace parks can trigger development in their nearby communities. The ideal scenario is that local communities can benefit from nature conservation through partnership with national park authorities in conservation efforts and in tourism enterprises; by getting some of the revenues from the tourism enterprises from development projects linked directly to the conservation area. Andersson *et al* (2013b) observed that it is common that local communities are excluded from the management of TFCAs, and if there is tourism in the area, local communities are included as 'tourist attractions' - a derogatory term- to be observed by the visitors, but not as an equal partner. The exclusion of local communities give credence to the idea that the author claims is behind the TFCAs construct, which is, the idea of an unadulterated, virgin piece of nature hence the thought of people living in the TFCAs destroy this illusion. It seems the members of the local communities are mostly welcomed in a tourist setting if they conform to the image that the tourists may have of a local community.

If the local community consists of 'bad natives' to borrow from Neumann (1997)'s narrative, that is, people that are living lives that are modernised and disruptive for nature, this can be used by conservationists to legitimise a claim on their land in favour of nature conservation. Forced removal of residents from different kinds of conservation areas seem to be common overall (Brockington and Igue, 2006; Andersson *et al*, 2013b). A good native is one who lives a traditional life and who conserves nature and these are most welcome to stay within or adjacent to the park. Mbaiwa (2005) noted that despite glowing narratives spoken about tourism, evidence on the ground indicate that tourism reinforces socio-economic injustice particularly in developing countries largely because tourism is usually enclave, that is, tourists travel between islands of economic and political centres where the money they spent does not benefit the poor at all. Mbaiwa (2005) further posited that infrastructure, goods and services that are developed for tourism purposes are adjusted to suit the tourist demand and are therefore not what the local communities desire or can afford, for example, local communities may prefer rehabilitation or sinking of new boreholes to guarantee water supply at no cost but park authorities may prioritise the fencing of the park to make sure that local communities' livestock do not stray into the park in search of pastoral land.

The TFCAs concept recognises that management of shared natural resources across national boundaries has the potential to significantly contribute to conservation of biodiversity and the socio-economic transformation of rural communities. Renowned global examples of TFCAs can be cited as the Polish Pieniny National Park and Slovak National Park Reserve, Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, and the Albert National Park in Central Africa. In the 1990s the concept of peace parks took root within the SADC region. TFCAs advocate for collaboration in the sustainable utilisation of shared natural resources, and call for the active participation of local communities in the management and equitable sharing of benefits derived from natural resources. The World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 laid the bedrock or foundation for the establishment of peace parks. The term 'trans-boundary protected area' is a generic term whose acceptable definition as given by IUCN (2004) is "an area of land and/ or sea that straddles one or more boundaries between states, sub-national units such as provinces and regions, autonomous areas and/or areas beyond the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction, whose constituent parts are especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources and managed cooperatively through legal or other effective means". The TFCAs concept was widely embraced across the globe as can be attested to by the increase in the number of TBPAs over the years that saw a leap from 70 TBPAs in the early 1980s to over 300 TBPAs in 2007. The growth and upsurge of TBPAs was also met with overwhelming support from the international community in the way of international development banks, international conservation NGOs and through the cooperation of national governments.

TFCAS CONSTRUCT IN THE SADC REGION

Van Riet (2000:1) defined TFCAs as "relatively large areas which straddle the frontiers between two or more countries and cover large-scale natural ecosystems encompassing one or more protected areas". Government wildlife departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donors alike began to plan international cross border parks protected areas in the mid 1990s. Mowforth and Munt (1998:163) made us to understand that many cash squeezed third world governments see the conservation of natural resources-wildlife- so that it pay for itself. Wildlife is envisaged in terms of the potential income it can attract through safaris and game watching, an economic justification for their retention and development.

TFCAs are deemed a suitable strategy to combine nature conservation and poverty alleviation in Southern Africa

through tourism development. There has however been dissenting calls questioning whether this has actually been achieved to date. Researchers like Andersson *et al.*, (2013b); Silva and Mosimane, (2012); Dahlberg *et al.*, (2010) claim that the conservation and tourism developments efforts are leaving remote local communities worse off than they were before exposing them to greater vulnerability and risks or lack and marginalisation rather than helping them. There is convergence among researchers that only those communities that have found ways of empowering and developing themselves through tourism schemes are embracing TFCAs whilst the majority of communities bemoan further isolation and deprivation of their livelihood. Their sources of livelihood has been sacrificed to please the tourist. Inconclusive arguments have been put forth to the effect that economic interests of capitalists are prioritised at the expense of the socio-economic welfare of the local communities.

Tourism in Southern Africa is synonymous with wild life safaris. In the post-colonial era the establishment of the so-called 'peace parks' that straddle the borders of states has come to be seen as key not only to increasing tourism in the Southern Africa region but also to the modernisation of conservation policies and the development of rural economies. The TFCAs concept is based on the premise that joint trans-boundary management of natural resources can prevent incompatible resource use policies and practices that have a deleterious effect on the continued existence of these resources and by extension the livelihoods of the people that depend on the use of these resources. TFCAs are gigantic nature conservation areas that transverse the borders of more than two sovereign countries and ordinarily contain several nature reserves. In the context of development lexicon, these TFCAs are considered a suitable strategy to combine nature conservation and poverty alleviation in Southern Africa's development trajectory. Local communities are envisaged to benefit from tourism schemes established adjacent and around TFCAs.

Munthali, (2007:53) boldly stated that "stakeholders who are individuals or groups with a direct interest in the resources within the TFPs, such as local communities have largely been ignored and side lined in the process of establishing the TFPs, and are not represented on the development and management boards. Resultantly, overt and latent conflicts characterise the development of TFPs thereby imposing a major obstacle for achieving their conservation and rural poverty alleviation objectives. The establishment of protected areas such as parks has in many past instances been associated with rural communities being forced off their land, or being deprived of access to land. There have been widespread suspicion among communities that the new or expanded TFCAs will limit agricultural and grazing land

and become a playground of the rich to the detriment of local needs (de Villiers, 1999), for example, the case of GLTP which saw some 2500 Shangaan people forcibly relocated.

The irony of TFAs is that with inadequate funding, most state protected areas agencies are unable to employ sufficient numbers of qualified staff and fail to provide the requisite infrastructure and equipment that can capably fulfil the management requirements of protected areas. At an individual community and protected area's level some of the approaches that have been attempted to address human socio-economic needs include revenue sharing between protected areas and local communities, border or buffer zone development, and co-management of protected areas. However, none of these approaches seem to have tangibly contributed to community livelihood security.

Ashley *et al.* (1994) and Barnes (1998) posited that commercial wildlife production and use contribute the much needed cash and are complementary to other household coping strategies such as livestock husbandry and crop production in the semi-arid areas of Southern Africa. Rural poor communities require functional and legally binding community-private partnerships to tangibly benefit from biodiversity conservation. The communities could use their land, forest and wildlife resources as collateral in negotiating fair equity in the profits made from commercial forests and wildlife utilisation ventures. Cases whereby the local community only benefit as labourers or the benefits received by the community are significantly below the opportunity cost of committing their land to biodiversity conservation and tourism development has led to a widely held perception that community based natural resources management (CBNRM) in Southern Africa has only benefited the private sector, thus rendering them paper tigers. Most governments in the SADC region have tended to focus their infrastructural development efforts in urban areas, consequently constraining the potential for tourism development and opportunities for the rural people to participate and earn a living from tourism development. There is a disconnect in Southern Africa between government policies on development processes and the scholarly debate between biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation.

A trans-frontier park (TFP) is state managed and is considered to be a cross border extension of conservation areas (Munthali, 2007). Wildlife is an important source of income for the people living in TFCAs and some have ventured into eco-tourism and trophy hunting for tourists to generate an income (Murphree, 2001). However, Murphree (2001) sadly noted that some 2000-3000 people were evicted from Kruger National Park (KNP), using the most cruel means of burning of huts to force people to move out of the park. Whilst others were allowed to stay in the park, it was on condition that they pay rent or laboured in the park (Carruthers, 1995). TFP

are a mega industry playing host to more than one million visitors yearly world-wide. This opens up for employment opportunities for the local residents and therefore a chance to generate an income. Historically, the local communities in general disliked the game reserve because they lost access to what was formerly their land and for the fact that they were not able to protect themselves against the wildlife as they were not allowed to carry firearms. Ekblom and Notelid, (2010) revealed that to date expelled local communities are demanding compensation for the economical and social consequences of the removal of them from their land. A case in point is where some 7000 people were relocated in Limpopo National Park (LNP) who were living in what was regarded as land best situated for tourism and wildlife conservation (Milgroom and Spierenburg, 2008; Rodgers 2009; Ekblom and Notelid, 2010). And the relocation was lauded as voluntary by authorities. Ferreira, (2006) enlightened that park authorities sought to incentivise people to relocate in form of compensation for the land they would have lost, job offers, offering land equivalent to the land lost, financial aid and increased access to schools and hospitals, which is a classic example of induced volition.

There is a counter argument to the effect that the establishment of peace parks, national parks and wildlife reserves has somewhat provided a 'safe' environment wherein wildlife populations have some protection from marauding poachers and ever increasing human agricultural needs. National parks in the context of the SADC region have become the most important selling points and resultantly draw cards for tourism as witnessed in the run up to the FIFA 2010 World Cup where some nine member countries marketed and advertised the nine most established TFCAs at regional level. These TFCAs are meant to boost foreign currency inflows and not only that but also that further expansion of nature-based tourism can equally contribute to the quality of life of all people within the region, especially those living close by or in and around the parks.

SADC is born of the vision of a common future in a regional community that aims at ensuring economic prosperity,

improvement in the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice and peace and stability for the people of Southern Africa. Within the SADC region the TFACs have been recognised as vehicles to ensure equitable and sustainable use of the environment and natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations through tourism. This is despite the fact that tourism has been contested or rebuffed in some quarters for perpetuating external dependency and entrenching regional and international inequality (Mbaiwa, 2005). Westerners have been promoting tourism as the solution to Africa's economic woes, namely poverty and underdevelopment for decades, and have been providing most of the funding and technical assistance towards the establishment of TFCAs.

STATUS OF SADC TFCAS

The process of establishing TFCAs has mostly been a top-down approach in Southern Africa. Trans-frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) in tourism literature discourse are also known as Trans-boundary Protected Areas (TBPAs) are a relatively new concept in the conservation arena. TFCAs came into being upon the realisation that natural resources that transverse the national boundaries are shared assets with the potential to significantly contribute to conservation of biodiversity and the socio-economic development of remote and neglected rural communities. Currently, there are more than a dozen of existing TFCAs in the SADC region. One of the basic tenet of TFCAs is that the ultimate goal of conservation should embrace active participation and involvement of multiple stakeholders like the private sector, government, local communities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in the planning and management of natural resources. With an essential proviso that local communities who bear the cost of living with wildlife should benefit from sustainable utilisation of natural resources. A number of major TFPs that have been established in the SADC region to date, are summarised on the Table below. The ensuing is a gamut of TFCAs in the SADC region.

TFCA Name	Current Status	Partnering Member Countries
Kgalagadi Trans-frontier Park	Bi-lateral agreement signed in May 2000.	Botswana and South Africa
Lubombo Trans-frontier Conservation Area Complex	Tri-lateral Protocol signed in June 2000	Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland
Great Limpopo Trans-frontier Park	Treaty signed in December 2002.	Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe
Ais/Ais-Richtersveld Trans-frontier Park	Treaty signed in August 2003	Namibia and South Africa
Kavango Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area	Treaty signed in August 2011	Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe
Chimanimani Trans-frontier Conservation Area	MOU signed in 2001	Mozambique and Zimbabwe
Maloti Drakensburg Trans-frontier Conservation and Development Area	MOU signed in June 2001	Lesotho and South Africa
Iona-Skeleton Coast Trans-frontier Conservation Area	MOU signed in August 2003	Angola and Namibia

Makuni-Zambia Trans-frontier Conservation Area	MOU signed in August 2004	Malawi and Zambia
Greater Mapungubwe Trans-frontier Conservation Area	MOU signed in June 2006	Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe
Maiombe Forest Trans-frontier Conservation Area	MOU signed in July 2009	Angola, DRC, Congo Republic
Mnazi Bay-Quirimbas Trans-frontier Marine Conservation Area	No MOU signed	Mozambique and Tanzania
Niassa-Selous Trans-frontier Conservation Area	No MOU signed	Mozambique and Tanzania
Liuvn Plains-Mussuma Trans-frontier Conservation Area	No MOU signed	Angola and Zambia
Lower Zambezi-Manapools Trans-frontier Conservation Area	No MOU signed	Zambia and Zimbabwe
Kagera Trans-frontier Conservation Area	No MOU signed	Tanzania and Rwanda
Trans-frontier Conservation Area of the Western Indian Ocean	NO MOU signed	Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe
ZIMOZA Trans-boundary Natural Resources Management	No MOU signed	Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe

Adapted from: SADC, 2013.

resources. The concept recognises that borders are political rather than ecological, and aims to ensure that key ecological processes continue to function where borders have divided ecosystems, river basins and or wildlife migration corridors. Although the concept is not new it has theoretical appeal in Southern Africa because it integrates ecosystem conservation and socio-economic development at the trans-boundary landscape scale.

Besides ecological reasons, the TFCA concept is being accepted as a means of increasing economic opportunities, decreasing cultural isolation, as well as fostering cooperation in a bilateral and regional framework (Singh, 1998). The TFCA concept has appeal because it encourages the formation of alliances between different stakeholders, that is, government, private sector, local communities and NGOs, as a means of developing consensus and enabling the available finite skills and resources to be maximised in promoting sustainable land use, biodiversity conservation and alleviating poverty in rural areas. Although the impetus and political will to establish TFCA is high there are fundamental disparities among the promoters, NGOs and donors and implementers (government) of TFCAs in their perception of the concept, and in the policies that relate to wildlife management in general and local community participation in the TFCAs development process in particular.

There is an emerging narrative that TFCAs are a strategic spatial development programme aimed at consolidating biodiversity assets, integrating management procedures and thereby expanding opportunities for both conservation and rural development. However, on the other hand there is the view that the concept is simply an extension of protected areas at cross border scale, that is, Trans-frontier Parks, managed by the state at the expense of rural communities' interests. This is buttressed by their emphasis on state ownership and control. Trans-frontier parks are materially no

TFCAs broadly have a multi-pronged mandate that encapsulates having a direct economic and social benefits to member countries, contributing to poverty eradication and human development, unlocking the economic potential of least developed areas and countries to provide balanced and equitable development, integrating the SADC member countries into the regional continental and global economy. Most importantly, TFCAs must empower local communities, particularly women, to participate in TFCAs decision making processes, facilitate public and private investments in trans-boundary infrastructure, trade and tourism projects, increase opportunities for investment in income generating activities for local communities for the overall socio-economic well being of the local communities.

MOTIVATION OF ESTABLISHING PEACE PARKS

The ultimate TFCAs' objective remains rooted towards boosting tourism, protecting biodiversity, uplifting communities and promoting harmony within Southern Africa. Such a gloss motivation behind the establishment of TFCAs has won support at an international level. However, while there is euphoria about and support for the establishment of TFCAs, Ferreira (2004) ominously pointed out that there are factors that constrain and undermine the realisation of the benefits of TFCAs to Southern African countries. A new and more complex conservation paradigm of espousing trans-boundary ecosystem management TFCA concept is being widely promoted in Southern Africa. Singh (1998) posits TFCA as a part or component of a larger eco-region that straddles the border between two or more countries, encompassing one or more protected areas as well as multiple resource areas for the use of communities and private land holders, managed for sustainable use of natural

different in principle from other national parks, where local communities are usually marginalised into buffer zones, and peripheral economic activities such as menial jobs as cooks, labourers or guards.

PRO-POOR TOURISM AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Sub-Saharan Africa countries continue to face the daunting challenges of alleviating poverty due to slow economic growth. Principal causes of poverty in the region include but not limited to high unemployment rate, no value addition, and mono-cultural economies. World-wide several approaches or models have been instituted ostensibly to contribute to poverty alleviation. One such model that has been adopted is the Trans-frontier Conservation Areas (TFCA) that promote multi-land use and multi-stakeholder participation. TFCAs are documented to have a higher probability of sustaining biodiversity conservation and contributing to the alleviation of rural poverty.

Rogerson (2006) refer to pro-poor tourism as tourism that is meant to create net benefits for the poor in order to reduce poverty. Tourism can bring in another source of income and provide employment opportunities to the local people but a problem with its growth is the environmental and socio-cultural impacts which can be very detrimental to the host community as alluded to by Neto, (2003). The World Bank (1980) (WB)), and Adams and Richard (1989) define poverty as a state or condition of someone living on \$1 per day. Sen (1999) further intimated that being 'poor' is not defined by the amount of income received, but also by a person's access to social services. Pro-poor tourism development in communities can greatly increase and improve access to resources within that community. According to Rogerson (2006) pro-poor tourism development would result in better water supplies, sanitation, refuse removal, drainage, flood protection, local roads development, transportation and traffic management, all ingredients necessary for tourism to be successful in the community. In addition, Rogerson, (2006) observed further that locals can also see changes in land management practice, improved access to shelter, support for urban agriculture, and enhanced access to municipal services. On the flip side, Goodwin, (1998) cautioned that in an area with limited resources, an increase in tourism could result in negative impacts to the communities, locals can lose their land, access to water and communal areas, and damages can also result from social pollution.

Poverty in all its facets including denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development to lead a healthy and creative life and enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self esteem and the respect of others, is pervasive in Sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, SADC countries have sought to fight poverty from various fronts,

that is, use of donours, NGOs, provision of social safety nets, government grants, food for work programs, land reform, mining claims, and free education. Despite such effort, about 350 million people were estimated to be living on less than \$1 per day in 2015 by the UNEP, contrary to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals' proposition that the proportion be halved during the same period. The increase in poverty is attributed to economic underperformance of most SADC member countries triggered by the recurrence of natural episodic events like droughts and floods, which lead to famine, malnourishment and underperformance of the human capital, armed conflicts in some countries like Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, Sudan, Madagascar, and Zimbabwe, which besides killing people, contribute to the destruction and loss of the valuable economic assets like forests and wildlife. External factors such as competition that results from the liberalisation of international trade due to globalisation, increases in agricultural subsidies in developed countries, prescriptive SAPs, and debt overhang also account for endemic poverty in the SADC region. (Anon, 2005). This basically cripples SADC's agriculturally inclined economies. Given the above state of affairs, countries are turning to pro-poor tourism that underpins poverty alleviation. To realise this, Stoddart and Rogerson, (2006) tourism development in most least developed jurisdictions has been underscoring local community empowerment through involvement and active participation. Ashley *et al* (2000) posited that community level participation in pro-poor tourism decreases or plug economic leakages, whilst the involvement of locals allow visitors to experience an unadulterated and more authentic tourist experience. Okumus *et al*, (2007) further buttressed this noting that tourism must not be the only form of revenue and employment for a community but instead it should be used to help expand the employment opportunities of the local people. Diversification of jobs not substitution is needed.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Tourism development is ideal especially to women and unskilled workers living in poverty to secure a job. Benavides (2001) posits that the tourism sector is the only sector that provides employment opportunities for all people and that the level of development of the community they are living in is not a limiting factor. Women are likely to gain employment and income opportunities they might not be able to secure outside of the tourism industry (Torres and Momsen, 2004). There are numerous jobs in the tourism sector that need physical labour, instead of a higher education or special skills. Tourism is continuously growing around the world and should be used as a tool to help countries with struggling economies. The SADC region still has pristine environment in itself an attraction for tourists. Even though the member

countries may have few amenities and an rudimentary infrastructure, the positive environment may be enough for an investor to consider tourism development (Hill *et al*, 2006). Some writers like Inskeep (1987) argued that bringing in large numbers of tourists does not always mean there will be a corresponding high economic return. The costs due to damage to the environment can drastically increase social costs and decrease benefits. Net revenue created by foreign money earnings, expenditure and average length of stay are better determinants to measuring sustainable economic growth spawned by tourism. Traffic congestion, disruption to natural areas in parks, air and water quality, and noise pollution are the down side of tourism development.

Tourism provide opportunities for local people to increase their individual income through multiplier types of jobs, some paying more than occupations that are not related to the tourism industry. The tourism industry has clear economic benefits for local people and the vast array of job opportunities enable people of varying skill levels of work to be absorbed. There is also a wide array of informal and formal employment opportunities such as park vending, artistry, craft making, hotel housekeeping, waitressing, driving taxis, leading organised tours, and monitoring recreational activities. Furthermore, increased investment by the private and public sector in cross border infrastructure and tourism projects like the TFCAs can also contribute significantly to improving local economies. Tourism can thus be used as a tool to reduce poverty in developing countries by giving locals the opportunity to be employed or indirectly participate in the tourism sector. Tourism is a powerful tool that can be employed globally to create economic stability and alleviate poverty (Hugo and Nyaupane, 2016).

STUDY RATIONALE

The current study has been motivated by the increasing poverty levels in local communities despite the abundance of tourism resources in their midst. There has been a marked visibility of TFCAs at regional, continental and global level however what is conspicuously missing in the current tourism literature discourse is the link between TFCAs and poverty alleviation among member states at local community level. The current study seeks to bridge this literature gap. The study focused on TFCAs in Southern Africa nearly some thirty years after they were inceptioned to establish the extent to which they have alleviated poverty; and to determine the precise manner in which they have uplifted the livelihoods of the local communities. In addition to examining how the local communities have been affected socially and economically, the study will also look at other development alternatives, the opportunity cost, success to that, failures and the way forward. A perusal of Southern Africa countries is used to draw lessons on the establishment of peace parks and their link to poverty alleviation. Southern

African countries are collectively indexed as least developed countries by the Bretton-woods institutions, that is, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) on account of having similar geographic features, political, economic, cultural and tourist attractions. However, there are major differences in the current status of their level of development. Despite embracing the peace parks initiative, SADC countries are still characterised by high poverty levels, low per capita income, and rudimentary infrastructural facilities. The study focuses on how the establishment of peace parks help to reduce poverty in Southern Africa.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research involved surveys of local communities adjacent to the peace parks, NGOs, community leaders, in-depth interviews with local people and a separate interview for people working in the tourism industry in these peace parks. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected through questionnaires and interviews using convenience sampling. A major section in the questionnaire used the 5-points Likert scale. The questionnaire had questions regarding the impact of trans-frontier parks on the livelihood of local communities, economy, employment, income, conservation of resources, relations between residents and parks authorities, benefits, and losses. Interviews were conducted with local residents and tourism business owners, and TFCA park managers. The population studied was the people that live and work around the peace park. To complement the methodology policy documents were combed through, white papers, blue prints, strategy documents, and expert opinions, commissioned researches on trans-frontier parks using the GLTP as the flagship. A crosscutting analysis of SADC TFCAs was used to create a clearer picture of the local communities' poverty alleviation prospects within TFCAs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Study findings are presented along five key themes highlighted by respondents during field work, that is, disruption of local community livelihood survival strategies due to restricted access to natural resources, economic disempowerment due to elusive job opportunities, socio-economic spin offs due to the community levy, human-wildlife conflict, involuntary community relocation and displacement, loss of livestock due to foot and mouth disease, and prioritisation of ecological conservation at the expense of community's socio-economic needs. These are discussed in detail below.

No Access to Natural Resources

Findings painted a sorry situation on the ground as locals bemoaned social and economic exclusion in the sense that

they could no longer access the abundant natural resources which they were accustomed to since time immemorial before the establishment of the park. What irked them most was that these natural resources had become part of their social and economic livelihood base. Locals could not fathom that they were now being barred from fetching firewood, manure, nor harvesting wild fruits, they were prohibited from picking macimbi, mice, and even thatching grass. Life had become unbearable in that even access to fishing, grazing land, and sand mining were outlawed. All these threatened the very socio-economic base of the local communities. This is a direct assault to the very socio-economic fabrics that sustain local communities where there is no electricity, where most people cannot afford to buy zinc or corrugated roofing material, where most people survive through selling macimbi, mushroom, and fish in order to get some income that would enable them to send their children to school. With the establishment of the park, if one is caught with wild fruits, fish or any other item from the park he or she is fined heavily. In this way the establishment of the park cut local communities from natural resources that they used for survival hence further entrenching poverty and dependency on donors, hence the narrative of eradicating poverty through TFCA's to them is just but a facade. Local communities' predicament was exacerbated by the fact that there was restriction in accessing water points for their livestock and this is corroborated by Giller *et al* (2013); Milgroom and Spierenburg, (2008) who established that harvesting of natural resources for commercial use was outlawed post the setting up of the TFCA. In addition, the same authors further established that local communities were deprived off 'emergency pastures' that they traditionally use for their cattle whenever there was drought, and fishing became strictly regulated. This finding ties in well with Ekblom and Notelid, (2010) who arrived at the conclusion that with the establishment of parks, it naturally followed that hunting became illegal for local communities, there were restrictions imposed and application for hunting permits have to be made, much to the disappointment of locals. People in the park were not allowed to mine minerals, sand or looking for manure (hwakwani), firewood thus depriving them their source of living.

Elusive Employment Opportunities/ Promised Jobs Failed to Materialise

Results further revealed that when the park was established there was optimism among local residents that they would be gainfully employed but alas only a few locals were taken on board specifically to erect fences which were meant to serve as a barrier to make sure that locals inclusive of their livestock are shut out, and completely have no access to the park. A handful of locals who were engaged in the construction of

park structures bemoaned that the employment contracts were only for a few youths. Community leaders were most vocal registering their displeasure insisting that only menial jobs were offered to locals whilst for job positions with a decent salary people were hired from outside the community especially from towns and cities ostensibly because they had the needed requisite experience and skill. At the end of the day, locals felt short changed because they were of the belief that the resources which were being exploited were also rightfully owned by them. One headman revealed that plans were afoot to confront the park authorities about this, and they had since petitioned their local councillor to seek audience with park authorities. The writer observed that increases in outward migration of able bodied men and women from communities to neighbouring South Africa and Botswana was unabated, itself a clear testimony that the promised jobs in the park were not forthcoming. All active community folks with no prospect of securing jobs in the park were joining the trek to South Africa and Botswana as economic migrants, a tide which could have been reduced had the promised jobs materialised. Locals also intimated that there was rampant corruption in the recruitment process wherein only those who allegedly greased the palms of the human resource officers were the ones whose children and their kith and kin were hired. Contrary to what was promised at the outset that only locals would be considered for jobs, it was revealed that over 90 per cent of the staff complement were non locals, and the question was how did they worm their way to get employment in the rural community. A follow up inquiry by the writer with parks management established that non locals were employed on the basis of their requisite technical skills which the locals did not have. In view of this, it was suggested that instead of hiring people from towns parks authorities should train the locals so that they have the requisite and basic skills for other jobs. This way the locals are empowered and can look for jobs elsewhere after having acquired the necessary training and skills since most jobs promised to the local communities failed to materialise in most instances.

Escalation of Human-Wildlife Conflict

Respondents were unanimous that ever since the park came into being locals did not have peace and life was never the same again owing to a lot of vandalism of their shelter and structures especially by elephants and buffaloes. Locals poured out horrendous narratives citing increases of deaths due to attacks from elephants, buffaloes, and lions. To compound the sorry situation it was claimed that no compensation was provided to such losses. Respondents impressed that in response they retaliated by upping poaching to compensate for the losses they incur, they destroyed the fence, engaged in demonstrations and they also undertook class action to signing petitions through their local political

leadership, they have also instituted land claim proceedings, and involved in all manner of sabotage in order to send a clear message that they are not happy with the parks. Conflicts have come in so many ways including destruction of crops, attacks on humans, killing of livestock by lions, and restriction in accessing grazing land and watering points. The finding is in tandem with what is documented in literature world over that the creation of peace parks inevitably results in an increase of human-wildlife conflict in the local communities. Elephants have been cited as the most menacing mammal (Gitter, 2013; Murphree, 2001; Rodgers, 2009; Ekblom and Notelid, 2010, de Garine-Wichatitsky *et al*, 2013). Elephants do some most despicable acts like eating crops, excreting in communal water wells, and they also make it difficult for locals to access environmental and cultural resources. Lions also wreck havoc by killing livestock, attacking people, hence locals are increasingly worried about the safety of their children on way to school, and equally the same women feel not safe when working in their fields away from the village. Locals are psychologically traumatised. One villager was quoted as saying: “If I defend myself against wild animal attack I am quickly arrested by park and government authorities but if we report that ‘their animals’ have destroyed our crops they don’t do anything”. As such local communities find themselves between a hard ground and rock because staying in the park means no legal hunting, and restricted access to natural resources, decreasing land available as well as increasing human-wildlife conflicts. Since compensation for the damages caused by wildlife have not been forthcoming, these losses might eventually become too much for the residents and cause them to open retaliation. This conforms to Doxey (1975) ’s irritation index annoyance and antagonism stages wherein locals are frustrated with the tourism industry and everything that it stands for, thus venting their frustration to industry stakeholders. In addition, locals saw nothing positive but only negatives that tourism development brought to their communities. Locals were extremely angry and expressed their anger to stakeholders through outright hostility.

Murphree (2001) got similar results in Mahenye community where locals were not allowed to use wildlife to support themselves. This had a huge impact on the communities since hunting had been an important livelihood for them and they had developed sustainable hunting practices. The creation of the park meant that grazing land areas that local cattle owners had been using ended up inside the park. This caused human-wildlife and livestock movements over the park boundaries, which in turn led to human-wildlife conflicts. This view is also supported by Rodgers, (2009); Murwira *et al*, (2013); and de Garine-Wichatitsky *et al*, (2013) who stated that human-wildlife conflicts manifest themselves when elephants and buffaloes from the park sporadically raid gardens in communities. de Garine-Wichatitsky *et al* (2013) intimated that predators from KNP go outside the park to

get easy prey. This leads to livestock losses mostly to lions, leopards and hyenas (Spierenburd *et al*, 2009). Elephants are also causing problems for local communities around the park as documented by Murphree, 2001; Rodgers, 2009; Ekblom and Notelid, 2010; de Garine-Wichatitsky, *et al* 2013). In response TFCA park authorities intimated that local people are given carcasses, skins and meat from wild animals that would have been killed by the parks authorities.

Involuntary Community Relocation and Displacement

Results indicated that on the whole locals were relocated against their will to areas far away from their ancestral land. They were displaced off their fertile agricultural land, fields and homesteads where they had so painstakingly invested over the years by way of planting fruit trees, and sinking boreholes. Relocation was involuntary and had unquantified socio-economic loss. There was no meaningful compensation for the forced relocation. This is contrary to what was established in other studies that relocated families were assisted with bags of cement, a once off lump sum of \$500, and also that their cattle were moved by trucks, however, they did not get help in the actual construction of the structures, and clearing of land. The agricultural land offered was regarded as of inferior value or infertile as compared to where they were before. Some argued that the relocation had seen them being far away from sources of basic services like clinics, shops, schools and water sources. Respondents gave the writer an impression that asking local residents to move or relocate was akin to trampling on their human rights. It was understood as a human rights issue in the sense that who decides that nature conservation should get priority over the rights of the local residents especially if the latter were the first to settle on the concerned land. A counter view was proffered which however did not find traction with the majority of the respondents to the effect that despite the involuntary relocation local communities were to find solace in that there were attendant advantages to living close to a peace park, even though residents in and around the other parks were not allowed to use the natural resources inside the park like the communities outside TFCA are, there were other possible benefits of being proximal to the parks such as jobs and getting freebies like free meat from park animals killed by rangers. To bolster their argument it was cited that local communities had to be relocated due to the fact that the presence of wild animals may be a threat to the health and lives of the resident communities, particularly in the main wildlife zone.

Given the preceding narrative, perhaps the most pressing question could be how many benefits like these are necessary to compensate for the hardships caused by the proximity to the TFCA such as loss of crops, livestock or family members

to wild animals, and worse off displacement? To corroborate this Murphree, (2001) documented that some 1500 families were relocated after the establishment of Gonarezhou National Park (GNP); whilst the works of Ferreira, (2004) revealed that the Chitsa people's area was the worst affected by the involuntary relocation and forced displacement. The Chitsa chieftaincy was particularly affected by the redrawing of park boundaries resulting in some chieftaincies disintegrating. Similarly, GNP evictions caused the local people to be separated from their ancestral land and the identity connected to it which is a huge social capital loss that cannot be quantified in monetary terms.

Wolmer, (2007) also documented that increasingly elusive job opportunities in tourism enterprises within the park on the part of locals would eventually cause hostilities and resentment towards park authorities. Worse still if sites where people were relocated are away from sources of water coupled with the fact that residents do not get assistance in building houses or clearing of the fields. It is the writer's considered view that relocation of local residents kind of like condemn them to perpetual poverty in the sense that they may be moved to sites where the soils and resources might not be as good as in the current. In addition, many of the basic services like clinics, schools, and infrastructures may not yet be in place. Normally, no compensation is offered after relocation, for example, the case of Makuleke community in South Africa-KNP (Robins, and Van der Waal, 2008). To date land claims have since flooded the courts, for example, in 1998 the Makulekes pushed a restitution case which they won and finally got their land back.

Community Levy

Community residents spoke highly about the community levy initiative in which they acknowledged it had benefited them meaningfully. Respondents could point a wide gravel road which they said was funded by monies from the levy. In addition, there was also a classroom block which was well furnished and powered by a solar system which they also claimed came through courtesy of the community levy. However, one headman questioned the source of funds insisting that the funds which were used were part of a donation from one local community member who was angling for political office. The researcher could not independently verify this claim, however, it revealed that locals were not really sure whether such 'good developments' were indeed being funded by the community levy or it was a gimmick by park authorities to arm twist locals so that they support the peace park projects. Another narrative that came out was that the funds were donated by an international aid agency that had been working with the local community prior to the setting up of the park project. Further inquiries with the district

administrator (DA) confirmed that indeed the concerned local community had at one time submitted bids or requested for the grading and graveling of the road, and requested for an additional class room block through their local councillor a long time ago, and one development partner had shown interest to fund both the projects. Other locals argued that the community tourism levy was so insufficient that it could not fund the two projects. Community residents were quick to point out that they were not the ones who administer or decide which project to fund with the community levy casting doubt on the real source of funds.

The above study finding is not inconsistent to what was established by Whande (2010) that there was a 20 per cent community levy meant to benefit the community, however, the composition of the committee that distribute the revenue and decide on which projects to be funded did not include locals. Local communities got revenue from tourist hunting as well as from lodges. The money was shared by a community development trust to make sure that revenues went to projects that benefited the community as a whole. Examples of improvements made from this money were bringing electricity to villages, and building new schools. Resultantly, the development projects created 200 new jobs in the community. Whande (2010) pointed out that in KNP the Makuleke community members did get jobs to fence the Makuleke Kruger Contractual Park and build accommodation for game rangers.

Overall, respondents noted improvements in transportation, and communication due to erection of mobile network base stations, health and educational facilities, sewer and water systems, road side-walks, and electricity connection to the national power grid. Such improvements helped with the overall development of SADC countries. Park managers were reportedly sponsoring veterinary doctors from outside the country riding on the community levy to come and educate local people on good animal husbandry and crop production free of charge. The community levy treasurer succinctly outlined and defended that tourism development alleviates poverty through direct employment which leads to increased income, community programs sponsored by hotels, and donations made by hotels. It was elaborated that the community levy was used to sourcing drugs for animals and crops, seed and chemicals, construction of dip tanks for the local community, immunisation of cattle, construction of health facilities, social spaces for relaxation and entertainment. She also claimed that the community levy was instrumental in eliminating tsetse flies, their control through spraying, feeding schemes for primary school pupils, donations of books and computers to schools, blankets for locals health facilities and some essential drugs or medicines, roofing sheets, drilling of boreholes for schools and the community, rehabilitation of boreholes, donation

of solar kits for lighting to schools, clinics and household units, donations of mosquito nets, as well as spraying at homesteads to discourage mosquito breeding. All of which were refuted by the majority of community residents. They insisted that these noble initiatives were bank rolled by the donor and NGO community especially Care International, World Vision, Zimbabwe Peace Project, Heifer Project, Action Aid International, Action Faim, Danida among others. The writer sought independent verification with the National Association of Non Governmental Organisation (NANGO) and established that indeed these NGOs were actively involved on the ground in providing the services claimed to be funded by the community levy.

Recurrent Outbreak of Foot and Mouth Diseases

Respondents indicated that in a rural set up cattle or livestock was not only a symbol of wealth and but also of status. Locals complained bitterly that their only source of livelihood, in form of cattle, was being decimated by foot and mouth disease (FMD) whose source of origin was the buffaloes or wildlife in the park. Respondents revealed that the losses were so huge given the fact that the veterinary services personnel prohibited locals from consuming the carcasses of cattle which would have died of FMD instead they were told to burn the beasts. Parks authority could not accept the blame arguing that livestock at law were not allowed to be anywhere near or to enter into the park. It was the sole burden of cattle owners to see to it that they look after their cattle so that they do not stray, which again was a punishable offence. Diseases did not only affect cattle but also humans. On a positive note, though the locals highlighted that they got mosquito nets, their homestead were sprayed or fumigated, local clinic facility was donated some drugs courtesy of the efforts of the park officials who liaised with the international donor community. Surprisingly local clinic staff authorities refuted claims that they got drugs from the parks officials, insisting that it was solely the clinic's initiative in which they courted a donor who had no links whatsoever with the parks project. They simply dismissed the claims as unfounded emphasising that the locals were being misinformed or duped by parks officials so that they could perceive the park project in favourable light. One village widow intimated that she had lost over a dozen of her cattle which she had bought using her late husband's estate and now she had no single beast! She was now pinning her hope on the heifer project being spearheaded by an NGO Heifer Project. It was also revealed that the FMD in wild buffaloes being transferred to livestock resulted in prices of meat decreasing in comparison to the meat from FMD free zones. Local communities do not get responses nor compensation for the losses and hence psychologically traumatised.

Prioritisation of Ecological Conservation Ahead of Local Communities' Socio-Economic Needs

Results revealed that the ecological cum conservation needs of the parks were given first priority as opposed to the socio-economic needs of the displaced and affected locals. This was evident from the interactions the researcher had with the community headmen, political leadership and even with the DA. These authorities did not mince their words frankly saying that the chief reason why the TFCAs were established was primarily to preserve the natural resources especially wildlife given their economic value and significance to the country's economy otherwise everything else was secondary. Indeed the possibility of locals benefiting from the park projects was an after- thought objective. As long as the wildlife is safe and secure then the project is sounded as a success story despite the fact that local people would have been forcibly displaced, losing cattle to lions, and that livestock is affected by diseases necessitated by buffaloes, depriving them access to natural resources like wild fruits, manure for their gardens, nor harvesting of fish nobody would care even a hoot. Local community experiences and facts on the ground confirmed this. One university graduate who had become an unofficial community spokesperson impressed upon the researcher not believe anything favourable that had been said by park authorities. This particular respondent verbalised that the touted socio-economic benefits that are supposedly accrue to locals are but a mega phone public relations stunt by the project proponents in order for them to get approval or buy in from concerned stakeholders for such projects to get traction. However, according to him and the entire community the truth was local communities had very little if any to show off as a result of the establishment of the park. Actually they were worse off than they were prior to the establishment of the park. In the whole, they have got horrid miseries to recount ascribing the establishment of the park as the devil incarnate. In the final analysis, it is abundantly clear to the writer that the ecological needs pillar was the one that was being prioritised at the expense of the local community's socio-economic cum poverty alleviation pillar. It is therefore the contention of the writer supported by anecdotal evidence on the ground that the narrative of socio-economic emancipation and poverty alleviation through peace parks is all but an anathema on the part of local communities. Involuntary relocation, loss of social capital, deprivation of fertile agricultural land, denying access to natural resources like wild fruits, thatching grass, grazing land, and restriction to fishing run contrary to the ethos of socioeconomic justice therefore is a complete negation of the spirit and letter of poverty alleviation.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL/MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, it is abundantly clear that the preservation of natural resources is the major priority in TFCAs as opposed to the local people's aspirations and needs. In addition, the research laid bare that the TFCAs benefits are accruing to a very small section of the local community whilst the majority rue the day the TFCAs were established, and are very much frustrated as manifested through vandalism of perimeter fences, increased poaching activities, demonstrations, petitions via local and political leadership, sabotage and land claim lawsuits that are flooding the courts. It can then be concluded that there is too much rhetoric regarding the TFCAs since what is obtaining on the ground is diametrically opposed to what is presented at official platforms by NGOs, government and MNCs. As a way forward, it would go a long way if local communities are permitted to subdivide peace parks so that communities have what they can legally refer to as 'their own portion' where they can manage the resources without interference, nor hand holding by the politically powerful and economically well resourced NGOs, and other development partners. Whilst the idea of peace parks is noble, governments and development partners should be alive to the reality of climate change that has become a topical issue impacting on development and well being of rural communities. Recurrence droughts and floods are impacting negatively on TFCAs' ability to contribute to economic development and poverty alleviation by affecting biodiversity, agriculture, water and well-being of the people living in TFCAs.

It is the writer's considered view that there is need for the establishment of an independent body with representatives from local communities that will make a follow up in seeing that all displacements are compensated for, and that destruction or vandalism of crops by wild life is equally compensated. Governments need to be cognisant of the reality that for any conservation strategy to bear fruit the buy in of local communities is needed. In reality and in as much as local communities play a part in the destruction of natural resources, they are equally a party of the solutions towards achieving conservation of finite natural resources. An attempt to conserve natural resources in isolation of the local communities is a futile exercise that has not worked anywhere globally. Community buy in, involvement and empowerment arising from the utilisation of natural resources is some of the most successful ways through which natural resources can be sustainably preserved.

Equally the same, it must be borne in mind by governments that TFCAs must not be disruptive of the socio-economic livelihood base of local communities. Once other means of community survival are undermined and threatened like agriculture, hunting, and sand mining, and then in the long

run locals will be forced by circumstances to plunder the resources which will negate the well intentioned objectives of TFCAs. In Southern Africa, agriculture is the livelihood of most poor communities and expanding this area could improve conditions for farmers in many ways (Torres and Monsen, 2004). Tourism jobs can be emphasised in the off or lean season of farming as a way to keep a continuous income (Ashley *et al*, 2000).

After all has been said and done it is crystally clear that the conservation pillar is fulfilled, whereas the socio-economic pillar is not. Ironically, poverty alleviation rests on the socio-economic pillar. It is instructive therefore that tourism enterprises that are developed within the TFCAs should have a very strong linkage with the local community. In essence, this is the kind of tourism that is small-scale, taking place in the local community, and where tourist facilities are owned and operated by residents. This type of tourism is more likely to generate positive economic growth without sacrificing the natural environment.

Additionally, there must be a paradigm shift on tourism development models currently characterising the tourism sector wherein many private sectors provide accommodations for tourists whilst the locals are denied access and can only hawk their merchandise at the entrance or exit of these facilities as bemoaned by Ashley *et al*, (2000). Such an exclusionist model is retrogressive. Closely related to this, proper planning for tourism development is critical to avoid leakages which defeats the purpose of having local goods and services available. Leakage is when goods or services are imported from a foreign destination, causing the money to pay for those items to leave the local community. To go around this, locally produced products and employing local residents is the way to go. By hiring locals and buying goods from within the community leakages are minimised. Linkages should be made with the local community to keep the money continuously circulating within the destination.

In as much as trans-frontier conservation areas could be a panacea to achieve sustainable development through protecting Southern Africa's fragile environments and generating the much needed funds to improve the lives of the rural poor, the transformation initiatives have been littered with implementation pitfalls. Bhatasara *et al* (2013) lament that trans-frontier initiatives in Southern Africa have been characterised by serious governance complexities that saw the rural poor being sacrificed. Andersson *et al* (2013) weighed in by making an interesting observation that as these highly political projects take shape, conservation and development policy progressively shift from the national to global arenas and the local communities affected by TFCA formation tend to disappear from the view.

On the whole, the establishment of TFCAs has not been without negative consequences. It has actually escalated

human-wildlife conflict that has manifested itself in various ways like attacking or killing of livestock and humans by carnivores, destruction of crops, spread of disease from wildlife to livestock, and carcass poisoning (Thirgood *et al.*, 2005; Madden, 2008). Despite the fact that TFCAs have claimed economic, political and social legitimacy on the justification that local communities living within, adjacent and around the park will participate and somewhat benefit through tourism as noted by Spierenburg *et al.*, (2008); researches on TFCAs have produced results that are increasingly questioning the ability or potential of TFCAs as vehicles for socio-economic transformation of the rural poor folk. Muboko (2011) bemoaned that the establishment of TFCAs has actually exacerbated the human-wildlife scourge. Whilst Gandiwa *et al.* (2013) are of the view that TFCAs have seen the side lining of local communities in developmental processes. The current study findings have upheld this. The question now is once one has excluded the intended beneficiary from the development processes how then will you be able to know and address their socio-economic needs. This is a critical managerial question.

Results of the current study have shown that despite the establishment of these TFCAs for close to three decades now, the dominant livelihood sustainability strategies for most households have remained predominantly crop farming and livestock is rearing as compared to tourism. This flies directly in the face of earlier views suggesting a shift toward tourism as a key livelihood and poverty alleviation strategy (Peace parks, 2006). Local communities have openly shown their disdain of TFCAs; specifically they are riled by an opaque distribution system of revenue accruing from tourism activities, lack of representation, drowning of their voices and wishes, continued destruction of crops by wild animals, loss of livestock to carnivores, and contracting of diseases due to intermingling with wild animals-coupled with no compensation whatsoever to all these losses. This has resulted in resentment and growing calls for the disbandment of the entire project despite the millions of dollars which have been pumped in or sunk towards the development of TFCAs. In reality, rural communities adjacent, in and around the TFCAs have witnessed increased migration of able bodied men and women to South Africa as economic migrants, driven by biting and deepening poverty levels yet the park is there. The writer can therefore conclude that maintaining the status quo of top down approach in terms of the establishment and implementation of TFCAs is akin to tinkering with the deck when the poverty alleviation titanic is sinking. Evidence abound as shown by study findings that the script of marginalisation cum disempowerment ran high across the local residents. It is therefore the writer's qualified view that in the majority of cases, TFCAs have not accounted to much in the sphere of poverty alleviation and the writer can crudely conclude that the efforts have been tantamount to tinkering with decimal places.

Research Limitations and Positioning Further Research

The main limitation of the current research is that its results lack external validity outside the frame of Southern Africa. It may be necessary to replicate the study in other regions like East and West Africa to compare findings. It is also recommended that post community relocation and displacement studies be undertaken with a view of coming up with models which would lessen the trauma on local residents, and also examine the extent to which the youth and women can be genuinely empowered by TFCAs.

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