

Community-based natural resources management: Experiences and lessons linking communities to sustainable resource use in different social, economic and ecological conditions in South Africa

Stephen Turner, Steve Collins
and Johannes Baumgart



SCHOOL of
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UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE



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Programme for Land
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Tel: +27 21 959 3733; Fax: +27 21 959 3732; E-mail: plaas@uwc.ac.za
Website: www.uwc.ac.za/plaas

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Abbreviations

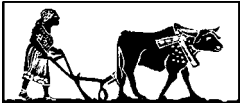
BOT	build, operate, transfer
CBNRM	community-based natural resource management
CPA	communal property association
CPPP	Community-Public-Private Partnership programme
Danced	Danish Co-operation for Environment and Development
DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
DLA	Department of Land Affairs
EDA	Environmental and Development Agency
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German Agency for Development Co-operation)
IDP	integrated development plan
JMB	joint management board
KNP	Kruger National Park
LDOs	land development objectives
MPC	management plan committee
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
NRM	natural resource management
OOP	Opleidings- en Ondersteuningsprogram [Training and Support Programme]
PLAAS	Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape
ROT	renovate, operate and transfer
SANParks	South African National Parks
SDIs	Spatial Development Initiatives
TLC	transitional local council
TRC	transitional rural council
TRANSFORM	Training and Support for Resource Management programme



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Chapter 1: Introduction

TRANSFORM (Training and Support for Natural Resource Management) is a joint project of the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and GTZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German Agency for Development Co-operation), funded by the government of Germany.

The project, which started in 1996 in partnership with the South African Department of Land Affairs (DLA), supports communities that have a stake in nature conservation areas through ownership, or a claim to ownership, of part or all of a park or reserve. In its first phase, which ended in 2000, it worked with the community owners of the Richtersveld National Park, with the Makuleke people as they regained ownership of the northern tip of the Kruger National Park (KNP); and with three communities living in the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve. In its current, second phase, TRANSFORM continues to work with the Richtersveld and Makuleke, and has expanded its support to other parts of the country, mainly in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga provinces.

TRANSFORM is an exploratory project. It aims to help rural communities living in or close to nature conservation areas to develop viable ways of enhancing their livelihoods through community-based nature conservation and ecotourism and the sustainable use of the natural resources in these areas. Building on the experience of the first phase, one of the objectives of the current phase (Box 1) is to support the development of policy for this sector by the dissemination of the lessons the project has learned. In this way, the project hopes to support a broader range of rural people than those with whom it works directly. Indeed, there are many communities in the communal areas of South Africa who live far from any formal nature conservation

areas, but to whom many of the principles and opportunities of community-based nature conservation and ecotourism may be relevant.

The Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape has been contributing applied research and monitoring services to TRANSFORM since 1998. This has been one of the activities of the PLAAS Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) unit, and has resulted in a number of other papers and publications (Turner 2000a, 2000b; Isaacs & Mohamed 2000; Turner & Meer 2001; Mohamed & Turner 2001). Drawing on PLAAS observations and on TRANSFORM experience as a whole, this document presents a summary of the lessons that the project feels it has learned so far. These lessons focus on how community-based nature conservation and ecotourism can help enhance the livelihoods of rural people in South Africa. They outline some of the opportunities and obstacles that TRANSFORM has identified in working towards this goal, and sum up some of the steps that the project believes have to be taken if sustainable progress is to be made in this sector.

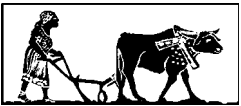
Although these lessons are drawn from project experience in South Africa, they are likely to be relevant to those working on similar initiatives in other countries of the region, and further afield. At the same time, however, they do not try to replicate the more academic, generalised statements of principles for success in common



Box 1: Objectives of the TRANSFORM project, Phase II

- The communal area of the Richtersveld becomes a better developed tourist destination to the benefit of the community.
- *The jointly-managed contractual park of the Makuleke region in the Kruger National Park is improved for the benefit of the community.*
- *Park Committees/Joint Management Boards are established and functional in three other areas.*
- *Relevant experience of TRANSFORM is offered to rural projects in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and other selected projects.*
- *Community-based natural resource management institutions are assisted in reviewing and formulating policies that include lessons learned from TRANSFORM.*

property resource management or CBNRM that authors like Elinor Ostrom and Marshall Murphree have drawn up. Nor are they a cookbook recipe of steps to be taken to achieve success. The challenges in this sector are complex, and are not amenable to simple checklist solutions. All these lessons can do is indicate some of the experience that TRANSFORM has had, and set out the ideas and principles that the project has developed on the basis of its work so far.



Perhaps especially in South Africa, it is also important to recognise that some of the circumstances in which initiatives like TRANSFORM take place are changing fast. Each of the six chapters was written in August 2001, so readers should keep in mind the period to which it refers. Policy relevant to community-based nature conservation and ecotourism is evolving, and the details of project experience on the ground are developing quickly. Some of the detail of this document will therefore have been overtaken by events. But this should not detract from the general issues, ideas and principles that are set out here, which are likely to prove durable.

Our first set of lessons (Chapter 2) is largely concerned with clarifying what this sector is all about. It outlines the various scenarios in which initiatives like TRANSFORM can help build sustainable livelihoods, and the key concerns and principles that need to be kept in mind if

such initiatives are to be effective. It is important to realise that opportunities for community-based nature conservation and ecotourism in South Africa are not limited to the existing conservation areas and adjacent areas on which TRANSFORM has focused. There are many other areas in the former homelands where nature conservation, ecotourism and associated sustainable resource use can make valuable contributions to rural livelihoods, and where it may therefore be useful to consider the lessons that TRANSFORM has learned.

Chapter 2 also introduces one of the key themes running through all the lessons learned by TRANSFORM: the need for realism. 'People and parks' programmes have been the focus of more donor and media attention than most kinds of rural development initiative in recent years. But it is important to assess their comparative value and prospects soberly. For example, the likely net benefits of such projects are often not compared rigorously enough with the benefit streams that other types of rural land use would generate. Realism is also needed when participants anticipate the benefits of community-based nature conservation and ecotourism. Not surprisingly, the rural poor want quick returns. Donors are not well known for their patience, either. In reality, as TRANSFORM and its partners have learned, it takes long periods of

negotiation, investment and capacity building before benefits are achieved. When the benefits do flow, they will not turn rural poverty into riches.

This is why these lessons refer repeatedly to the need to integrate such initiatives with the broader planning and management of rural development (Chapter 5). TRANSFORM has learned that such integration is rarely easy, but that it can make a significant difference to the prospects and institutional empowerment of rural communities in the development process. Putting all one's eggs in the 'people and parks' basket is never wise. At the same time, TRANSFORM experience also shows that the operational and institutional links between local priorities and the formal structures and procedures of official development planning are often tortuous. After an intensive flurry of policymaking and institutional reform in the second half of the 1990s, South Africa has most elements of a supportive framework for rural development in place. But it will be a long time before that framework functions efficiently. Moreover, key elements are still lacking. An overarching rural development policy exists in theory. But the national Integrated Rural Development Programme (launched in 2000) seems more virtual than real so far (Turner 2001).

Most crucially, an enabling framework of rural resource rights still does not exist in the communal areas of South Africa. The lessons learned by TRANSFORM emphasise a core principle for any sort of sustainable development: people must have clear rights over the land and resources whose use is meant to underpin their livelihoods. In the former homelands of this country, those rights are still anything but clear. In its first phase, TRANSFORM focused largely on two rather special cases – the Makuleke and the Richtersveld – where rural people do have clear ownership of nature conservation areas. In most of the former homelands (including TRANSFORM's third, less successful pilot area, Kosi Bay) these clear

rights do not exist. Resource management initiatives are therefore more vulnerable to formal and informal challenge. Until the tortuous tale of South Africa's tenure reform efforts reaches a successful conclusion, there will be real constraints on what initiatives like TRANSFORM can achieve for the majority of the rural poor.

TRANSFORM has also had important experience in comparing ways for rural communities to deal with the outside world. As far as dealings with government go, the project's Phase I pilot areas included two very different approaches. The Makuleke were opportunistic. They identified key points of interaction with relevant government agencies, often at quite high levels. They bypassed many of the emerging formal structures of local and provincial government. In the Richtersveld, on the other hand TRANSFORM supported a much more formal and structured interaction between local aspirations, CBNRM interests and the new system of integrated development plans (IDPs) at municipality level. Both cases were pioneering, in different ways. As Chapters 4 and 6 show, both offer important lessons about ways for the rural poor to engage with the resources and systems of their local and national governments. For the time being, the unfortunate reality for most of the country may be closer to the confused and dysfunctional situation prevailing around the third pilot area, Kosi Bay.

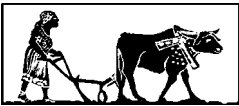
TRANSFORM's experience certainly does not suggest that dealing with government is straightforward yet in South Africa.

The project and its partners also had useful experience in dealing with the private sector (Chapter 4). The Makuleke, in particular, have done ground-breaking work in developing procedures and capacity for bringing outside investors into their programme. In addition to the brief summary provided in this document, TRANSFORM has supported a separate manual that goes into more detail on the steps that communities may need to take as they design, tender and contract



external investments in ecotourism on their land (Koch 2001).

Not surprisingly, TRANSFORM also has lessons to offer on making interactions with nature conservation agencies succeed (Chapter 7). Such interactions were central to all three of the project's Phase I pilot areas. During that phase, the project was operating in a time of change for South African National Parks (SANParks) and provincial conservation agencies as they sought to shift their stance and engage with local residents as equal partners. These challenges were particularly focused in the contractual national parks which formed two of the three TRANSFORM areas, the Makuleke and the Richtersveld. While there remains much to be done and learned about how to make co-management work in this country, it is still possible to make a number of suggestions about key principles in Chapter 7. In its current phase, TRANSFORM is extending its collaboration with SANParks as the agency develops its concept of park committees for interaction between non-contractual parks and neighbouring communities.



The sustainable use of natural resources in protected areas remains a key concern in all such interactions between South African nature conservation and the rural poor. Although progress on this front was a key objective in the first phase of TRANSFORM, the policy progress of SANParks towards such use has been slow. It remains to be seen whether new legislation and evolving relations in park committees and the joint management boards of contractual parks will achieve a stronger contribution from park resources

to local livelihoods during the project's second phase.

One of the strongest lessons that emerges from the work of TRANSFORM, as from all similar initiatives, is that effective, democratic governance and institutional capacity are key to success in CBNRM (Chapter 5). Given its history, South Africa faces major challenges in achieving these conditions. Guided by their country's new Constitution, the rural people with whom TRANSFORM works have been making rapid progress in building their local institutions and capacity. The core governance challenge in community-based nature conservation and ecotourism can be tackled successfully. Once again, however, it is clear that time, patience and dedication will be needed to build the necessary human resources and experience for local institutions to function efficiently. It remains a priority for TRANSFORM and similar initiatives to support this institutional capacity building, so that the sector's potential for sustainable livelihood development can be realised.

In publishing these lessons learned, TRANSFORM and PLAAS hope to have made a useful contribution to enhancing rural livelihoods and to building positive debate about how rural people can benefit from community-based nature conservation and ecotourism. What follows is certainly not a definitive set of answers to these issues. There is much more to be learned, and much other experience to be presented and reviewed. We hope that readers will respond critically and positively to the ideas presented here. TRANSFORM and PLAAS hope to hear from you.

Chapter 2: What community-based nature conservation and ecotourism have to offer

Community-based nature conservation and ecotourism have become an increasingly popular rural development strategy in southern Africa. They have been the focus of TRANSFORM's efforts in South Africa since 1997.

Introduction

The project has learned a number of lessons about what this strategy can really offer in rural development.

It is important to begin by recognising the various scenarios in which this strategy may be appropriate:

- community involvement in nature conservation and ecotourism within an existing protected nature conservation area (such as a national park or nature reserve)
- community involvement in the establishment of a new protected area, and in nature conservation and ecotourism within that area
- community involvement in nature conservation and ecotourism in formally established or informally recognised zones adjoining protected areas, such as the buffer zones currently planned along the western border of the Kruger National Park
- community involvement in the preparation of IDPs for their respective municipal areas
- community involvement in nature conservation and ecotourism away from formal protected areas:
 - in communal areas, that is, the former 'homelands'
 - on freehold land that the community owns, such as farms purchased through the land reform programme.

Where a formally-protected conservation area is involved, the community is likely to engage in some form of co-management with the relevant nature conservation authorities.

Elsewhere, more direct forms of community-based natural resource management are likely to apply. In both cases, elements of community involvement, ownership and authority are desirable because:

- this accords with the current constitutional and political spirit of South Africa, with its commitment to participatory processes
- it can generate material benefits that can meaningfully contribute to alleviating poverty
- it can generate intangible benefits that are important in rural livelihoods, such as institutional development, local empowerment and an enhanced natural environment
- it may enhance the efficiency of local economic growth and of biodiversity conservation.

What the strategy involves

The practice of community-based nature conservation and ecotourism comprises at least five core activities. It is unlikely that the ultimate goal – enhanced livelihoods for the rural poor – will be achieved if these are not practised in an integrated manner.



Control over land and resources

The exercise of effective control over the areas in which nature conservation, sustainable resource use and ecotourism are to be practised involves:

- defining an area of land (and/or water) that is to be subject to natural resource conservation and management
- controlling access to the defined area, by both local residents and those from further afield
- most likely, a differentiated set of rules for locals and outsiders, controlling access to and harvesting of the natural resources in the defined area
- enforcing the above three kinds of regulation.

Thus, clearly defined rights of use and proprietorship over the land and its resources are important.

The conservation of nature

This is the central natural resource management activity upon which all the other components depend. It comprises a range of technical interventions that need to be set out in coherent planning and management frameworks and that require a range of technical skills for their performance. These interventions include the introduction or culling of various plant and animal species; the determination of sustainable levels of resource offtake; and the design, construction and maintenance of infrastructure required by the conservation and ecotourism functions.

The operation or licensing of ecotourism activities

The operation or licensing of ecotourism activities is an increasingly important part of the integration of nature conservation, sustainable resource use and rural development towards which TRANSFORM and other South African initiatives strive. These activities may need to be harmonised with other forms of sustainable resource use – such as the harvesting of veld products – which may also make important contributions to livelihoods.

Sustainable resource use

There may be several kinds of sustainable resource use in nature conservation areas.

They include consumptive and non-consumptive uses by (eco)tourists and by local people. They span activities of non-material, cultural importance, resource uses that help sustain livelihoods at subsistence level, and resource uses that can generate substantial revenues for the group owning resource rights in the conservation area.

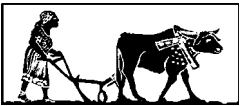
The management and distribution of revenue

The management and distribution of revenue from ecotourism is both an ultimate purpose and an enormous challenge in this whole venture of integrating nature conservation and rural development. If revenue is not generated, the venture has failed. If revenue is generated, complex challenges must be faced in developing the robust local institutional arrangements needed to ensure transparent, consensual distribution of the money. A related challenge is the need to balance distribution of revenues with investment in maintenance of the natural resource base and ecotourism infrastructure.

TRANSFORM experience

During its first phase, TRANSFORM worked to promote community-based nature conservation and ecotourism in and around three formally-protected nature conservation areas:

1. At the northern tip of the Kruger National Park, it worked with the Makuleke community as they regained ownership (through land restitution) of the Pafuri region of the KNP. The Makuleke have engaged in a number of processes of negotiation, planning, institution building and capacity building as they acquired the land rights, developed co-management arrangements for the Pafuri region with SANParks, secured a range of donor and private sector funding, and designed and launched various ecotourism enterprises.
2. On the northern coast of KwaZulu-Natal, TRANSFORM worked with the people of Kosi Bay – one of the few



groups which successfully resisted removal after a nature conservation area (in this case initially a homeland nature reserve, now a provincial one) was declared on their land. A number of institution building, training and enterprise development initiatives were attempted, but TRANSFORM ultimately withdrew after realising that it was making little progress. The uncertain local rights framework, the marginalisation of local people, and complex local political disputes and rivalries that manifest themselves around the control of donor resources and tourist income were among the key causes of the disappointing experience at Kosi Bay.

3. In the far north west of the Northern Cape, TRANSFORM worked with the small and widely scattered population of the Richtersveld. They own the Richtersveld National Park, a contractual park for which SANP pays an annual rent to the community. Institution building and capacity building have been major challenges. Arrangements to build genuine co-management initially made little progress. But there were a number of successes in the broader region, developing community-based ecotourism enterprises, planning wider nature conservation areas and activities, and setting nature conservation and ecotourism as cornerstones of the IDP for the Richtersveld.

TRANSFORM has always had to recognise the many ways in which its three far-flung Phase I focus areas were unrepresentative of broader South African conditions. Nevertheless, it has gained important experience in these areas that is relevant to the rest of the country – in particular, the communal areas or former ‘homelands’. Clearly, its experience is most directly relevant to other cases where rural populations live in or near formal protected areas, and want to enhance their livelihoods by engaging in nature

conservation and ecotourism – possibly through co-management arrangements with the conservation authorities. But, especially in the Richtersveld, its experience of linking nature conservation and ecotourism into broader rural development efforts can be instructive for other communal areas.

In its second phase (starting in 2001), TRANSFORM started to work with a wider range of protected areas and neighbouring populations, in Limpopo province, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape. Its experience in these areas is still at a very preliminary stage, however, so the lessons it offers now are drawn mainly from the first phase.

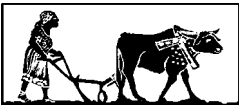
Lessons learned for rural development

It is important to appreciate and assess the potential livelihood benefits of wild natural resources and of alternative land uses. Typically, the flows of revenue from uncultivated land and its plant resources are underestimated (Shackleton et al. 2000). In communal areas throughout southern Africa, people harvest medicinal plants, fuel wood, construction materials and fodder. Gross direct use values of these resources were estimated at US\$194–1 114 per household per year in a range of seven studies across South Africa (Shackleton et al. 2000:2). The common assumption is that nature conservation and ecotourism will benefit the local economy more than these forms of wild resource harvesting. Revenues from commercial hunting can indeed be high, if a community’s land has attractive species to offer and various contractual and regulatory hurdles can be overcome. The apparent prosperity of many commercial ecotourist lodge operators suggests that these ventures, too, are desirable forms of land use.

The truth is usually more complex, and is rarely assessed adequately. The opportunity costs of sacrificing existing benefit streams in favour of ecotourism are



rarely calculated. Nor is enough attention given to ways in which community resource harvesting can be integrated with conservation and ecotourism uses. As TRANSFORM has learned, there are still major obstacles to negotiating community resource use within protected areas. This is an issue that requires more serious and committed attention by conservation authorities, and more dedicated facilitation by development agencies. More generally, it is important not to simplify the options into either/or scenarios. Furthermore, as TRANSFORM has repeatedly learned, it is essential to consider the likely net benefits of alternative land uses and not be dazzled by the supposed attractions of ecotourism enterprises. For example, ranching game species may be more profitable than commercial hunting operations. There may even still be situations in which conventional beef ranching and/or other agriculture may yield better returns than dedication of community land to nature conservation and ecotourism. It is evident that sound analysis of opportunity costs is needed before decisions are taken on land-use alternatives.



It is also important to understand the types of economic activity and the types of livelihood benefit that may be involved if a community engages in nature conservation and ecotourism. Key types of economic activity are:

- the nature conservation process itself, which generates employment and stimulates other economic activity such as the operation of roads, vehicles, fencing and other infrastructure
- ecotourism activities such as transporting and guiding visitors, operating educational, scientific and cultural facilities like visitor centres and hiking trails, and – in rather limited instances – commercial hunting
- the hospitality industry, that is, the operation of lodges, guest houses or hotels. This is a labour-intensive activity that is commonly seen as a major source of local employment
- the production and retail of crafts and

other tourist-oriented goods. Often these activities depend upon wild resource harvesting, whose sustainability must be carefully assessed

- a range of other retail and spin-off activities, such as the provision of food and laundry services to ecotourist facilities, in which the maintenance of quality and adequate volume have often proved problematic.

Understanding this range of economic activities helps us to appreciate the types of economic benefit that can accrue from this type of rural development strategy.

They all need to be assessed realistically:

- direct employment in the sector, notably by conservation agencies, the hospitality industry or the transport sector
- indirect employment, in enterprises that derive most or all of their revenue from servicing nature conservation and ecotourism
- self-employment, through which many people may be able to increase their incomes through full- or part-time activities such as guiding, craft production, food production and supply to lodges or retail
- creation of small enterprises providing services related to conservation management such as fence and track maintenance, fabrication of construction material or construction itself.

In addition, it is important to recognise the broader livelihood benefits that community-based nature conservation and ecotourism can generate. Many of these relate to intangible social, cultural or institutional enhancements. The benefits the Makuleke have reaped, for example, go beyond simple land ownership and initial hunting revenues. They have achieved significant institutional and social empowerment. The Richtersveld IDP experience has made very little economic difference to the area so far, but again it has had an empowering influence on people who often considered themselves marginalised and powerless.

An issue that TRANSFORM now realises has received insufficient attention in its focus areas is the differential impact that alternative rural development strategies may have on women and the very poor. Typically, wild resource harvesting generates more direct economic benefits for women than for men (unless the resource is marketed on a large scale, or is harvested by hunting) and is most significant for the poorest sector of rural society. Overall, not enough is known about whether the types of activity that flow from community-based nature conservation and ecotourism benefit the poor more or less than those who are slightly better off. Preliminary indications from Makuleke and the Richtersveld are that those best placed to benefit from expanding employment opportunities in this sector are not among the poorest people. The gender differential seems to vary from one socio-economic setting to another, although affirmative action to further women's participation in the sector is always needed. In interactions with rural communities, it is always important to discuss and challenge traditional male control of natural resources that (apart from hunting) are in practice mainly used by women.

From a poverty perspective, the key question is how much sustainable wild resource harvesting can be negotiated within protected areas. More effective action in this regard would help achieve better poverty alleviation in community-based nature conservation and ecotourism initiatives.

Conditions for success

Based on its pilot experience and its broader assessment of South African conditions, TRANSFORM has identified 12 sets of conditions that need to be met if community-based nature conservation and ecotourism are to be a successful component of sustainable rural development.

A conducive policy environment

However firm our emphasis on local structures, roles and responsibilities, a

conducive national (and sometimes provincial) policy environment is essential if progress is to be made. The South African policy framework is broadly favourable to locally-based nature conservation and ecotourism. However, we identify several significant shortcomings in the current South African policy framework:

- there is still no clear policy on reforms that will lead to clear tenure of land and natural resources in the communal areas (the former 'homelands')
- planning for nature conservation and sustainable resource use should be integrated with broader rural development plans and programmes, including land reform. But, at least until the publication of the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy in 2000, South Africa had no coherent policy framework for rural development. This has made it very difficult to achieve the necessary integration so far
- South Africa has no policy on community-based natural resource management, which ought to be at the heart of community-based nature conservation and ecotourism. Many elements of CBNRM policy can be found in other, sectorally-based approaches and strategies, but there is no clear view of a coherent CBNRM approach. As a result, many initiatives in this sector are poorly targeted and ineffective.



An appropriate natural resource base

Clearly, nature conservation and ecotourism are non-starters if there is no suitable natural resource base for them to conserve and exploit. Despite the depredations of colonialism, apartheid and economic growth, these biodiversity resources are still widespread (although unevenly distributed) in South Africa. This appropriate natural resource base is not located only in protected areas. Important biodiversity and ecotourist attractions are widespread in many parts of the country.

People who care about nature

Locally-based nature conservation and ecotourism will not get far if local people do not care about the preservation of nature. Over its hundred-year history, official nature conservation in South Africa did much to alienate the rural poor from this sort of concern, and to marginalise them from their indigenous heritage of environmental knowledge and care. Despite this history, there are significant numbers of rural people who are still prepared to commit themselves to nature conservation if given a chance. They retain access to substantial reservoirs of indigenous environmental knowledge. Significantly, young people seem keen to work for environmental protection, and will sometimes do so voluntarily.

Adequate potential for locally-based conservation and ecotourism as a livelihood strategy

The extent to which this condition is met will obviously vary from one area to another. In all cases, those working in this sector need to take the time to investigate local livelihoods and assess them in the light of local potential for nature conservation and ecotourism. The initial assumption should be that these activities can be the sole source of employment for very few people. The initial question should be whether they can form a useful extra strand in the bundle of multiple livelihood strategies on which most rural people depend for their subsistence.

'Communities' or effectively constituted groups exist

True 'communities' are so rare that it is better to assume that they do not exist unless proven otherwise. A more useful way of phrasing this condition is to say that effectively constituted groups exist. That is to say, there are groups of people who have come together to assert a common interest and identity through institutional and legal structures that effectively bind them together and enable them to interact with the outside world. The divisive experience of apartheid

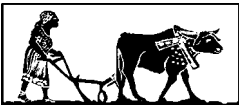
makes this condition particularly difficult to fulfil in South African society. Keys to success are the quality of leadership and genuinely representative public structures and processes. These in turn depend on the elusive social qualities of tolerance, transparency, democratic understanding and solidarity.

Empowered and effective institutional capacity is in place

This leads to the all-important criterion of effective institutional capacity. The lack of institutional capacity is one of the severest current constraints on locally-based nature conservation and ecotourism in South Africa. The types of local institution for which rural people need to build capacity are almost all new, having been developed during the 1990s to match the emerging opportunities and criteria of the democratic dispensation. There are no quick fixes for this problem. Important institutional progress has been made with developments at Makuleke, where a communal property association (CPA) now operates (Chapter 5). But these initiatives are still in their infancy, and it would be premature to describe them as models of best practice.

People have an appropriate range of technical skills

Clearly, rural people need a wide range of technical skills in natural resource management and business if they are to succeed in nature conservation and ecotourism. While technical training is easier to accomplish than institutional capacity building, very little of it has so far been achieved in the communal areas of South Africa. This is one of the key areas in which realism is needed as we assess the prospects of this sector. One of the clearest recommendations that can be made from TRANSFORM's pilot experience is that much more systematic effort needs to be devoted to training programmes for rural people – especially young people – who want to make a future in nature conservation and ecotourism. This should be done as an integral part of



government's drive for national skills development.

Relevant authorities and agencies are appropriately transformed

The kind of involvement of the rural poor in nature conservation and ecotourism that TRANSFORM is trying to promote is not part of the heritage of the nation's conservation, planning and development agencies. To play their part in making this venture a success, these agencies must achieve a substantial revision of their social and political attitudes. So far, despite genuine efforts, these transformations are still at an early and sometimes superficial stage. However, there have been encouraging recent developments in SANParks, including an evaluation and redrafting of the National Parks Act as well as a range of initiatives aimed at bringing the agency into line with the new South Africa.

Genuine co-management takes place

Successful and sustainable locally-based nature conservation and ecotourism require a genuine sharing of power, responsibility and knowledge between state agencies and rural people. South Africa has not made much progress yet towards this genuine co-management. Rural people typically lack the human resources and institutional capacity to make such coequal relationships easy. The resources available to public sector conservation agencies are dwindling, so that their efficacy as co-management partners is under threat as they suffer staff turnover and retrenchments.

Co-management between rural groups and the private sector is an option that deserves consideration. So are the community-public-private partnerships that are advocated by some analysts in South Africa. For the time being, co-management looks good on paper, but is hard to find in practice, although once again the Makuleke experience is encouraging (Chapter 7).

Ecotourism enterprises are adequately marketed

Marketing is the Achilles' heel of small ecotourism enterprises, whether they are

run by entrepreneurs or by groups of rural people. The challenge of building and maintaining adequate market contacts is consistently underestimated. Most people trying to promote locally-based ecotourism do not even understand the dimensions of the problem, let alone have the skills or experience to address it. This is one of the most crucial issues in the whole venture to which TRANSFORM and its partners are committed. 'Route tourism' strategies may be starting to bear fruit. These initiatives (such as the South-North Tourism Route in the Western and Northern Cape) basically try to promote community initiatives through the framework of regional tourism.

However effective the nature conservation, and however professional the ecotourism enterprises associated with it, revenue will not be generated and rural development will fail if these enterprises are not aggressively and professionally marketed. In this respect, co-operation with professional private sector partners, who are already well-established in the market, has shown considerable success.

Effective integration with other rural/local development planning

Locally-based nature conservation and ecotourism are unlikely to succeed if they are planned and operated as isolated islands, without linkage to the rest of the rural economy and the development plans that are being made for it. Just as these activities should be approached and planned for as integral parts of multiple household livelihood strategies, so on a larger scale they should be developed as integral parts of the spatial economies of areas, districts or regions. The evolution of the South-North Tourism Route Association is a model of how synergy can work, although it creates co-ordination problems for most of the partners. Several other such routes are emerging, such as the Thunga Thunga route in the Eastern Cape, where there are potentially effective institutional arrangements to support small rural businesses based on tourism.



More equitable access to resources and authority between women and men

It is essential to promote greater equality between women and men in land and resource rights, in relation to sustainable resource use, with regard to the distribution of benefits, and in relation to planning and governance. From both equity and efficiency considerations, gender disparities which result in women's marginalisation from resource access and governance need to be redressed. While there can be no blueprint for achieving this, given differences from one locality to another and given the complex and deeply personal authority relations that are being addressed (husband/wife, father/daughter, sister/brother, woman citizen/chief) the following are some guidelines for how one might proceed:

1. A first step in this direction would be to address conceptual shortcomings through developing the concept of gender as linked to conservation and sustainable resource use within local settings. This might entail sensitisation and training.
2. A subsequent step would be to analyse local situations in order to develop a sound understanding of existing gender relations and the extent to which these shape women's and men's roles, responsibilities and access to resources.
3. A third step would be to develop action plans on the basis of the analysis, taking into account what is realistically possible in the immediate term given women's and men's attitudes and willingness to change ingrained ideas and practices regarding their respective roles.

As we have noted, the rationale for a gender perspective lies in the efficiency and equity that it can achieve. Projects based on full information have a better chance of success. Without full understanding of women's starting point in relation to men, there is no guarantee that women will receive a fair share of development resources, and the project

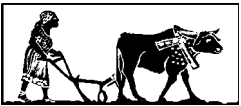
will unintentionally perpetuate gender inequalities.

Gender relations determine household security and many aspects of rural life. Failure to take gender relations into account leads to unsuccessful projects. No blueprint can be drawn up for addressing this issue. Implementation of a gender approach depends on the gender relations in the country in question, on anti-discrimination policies of the national government, and on existing civil society initiatives. A gradual approach may be necessary.

Conclusion: the need for realism

With regard to the overall contribution of community-based nature conservation and ecotourism to rural development, the central lesson that TRANSFORM has learned is the need for realism. This is best illustrated by the case of the Makuleke. So far, they seem set to be the best success story in the sector. Now that a number of projects – including a hunting programme, the development of a lodge economy on their land in the Kruger Park and a number of training projects – have come on stream, a number of new challenges are emerging related to the delivery phase. These include effective governance, a social plan to ensure that new revenues flow to the poorest of the poor, and sound management of finances.

The challenges and complexities of the sector make it likely that few other communities or areas will develop such good prospects of sustainable income streams and effective conservation as the Makuleke. But the Makuleke Communal Property Association, which comprises the owners of the protected area who are thus entitled to benefit from ecotourism there, has about 1 400 member households. The first lodge, now under construction, will offer at most 40 jobs. Assuming no household gets more than one job, that implies jobs for less than 3% of the membership. If there are ultimately three lodges in the Makuleke's protected area, they would be unlikely to provide jobs for



more than 10% of the households belonging to the CPA (who are themselves only some 60% of the total Makuleke population).

Another way of assessing the significance of conservation and ecotourism to the Makuleke economy is to consider the likely revenues from the sector and compare these with the community's approximate total income. Koch and Massyn (1999) estimated that if all the anticipated Makuleke ecotourism developments came on stream, they would yield about R1.7 million per year to the CPA, and would generate R3–4 million in wages. Available data is very scanty. If we assume that people in Makuleke live at the September 2000 South African poverty line of R800 per household per month, and that R3.5 million per year accrues to them as wages from ecotourism, then the annual incremental income from these wages (for an estimated total 2 300 households) would be in the order of 15%. Of course, a limited amount of existing income would be foregone in order for these new income streams to be secured. Conversely, it can be argued that calculations like this do not adequately recognise the local economic benefits that will accrue from rentals, lease fees, hunting, wages in spin-off enterprises and small business/cultural activities linked to the main tourism economy. It is clearly important to ensure that local people capture as much as possible of the total wages paid by lodges set up on their land. This requires training and skills development so that local people can move into the higher echelons of the industry.

The treasurer of the Makuleke CPA will be doing research soon to develop a more accurate understanding of what nature conservation and ecotourism can earn for that community. However crude or conservative the estimates presented here may be it is clear that, even in the best of scenarios, locally-based nature conservation and ecotourism do not spell riches for rural communities. This emphasises the importance of bundling

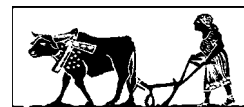
multiple forms of sustainable natural resource use into local development strategies, maximising the number of sustainable benefit streams that can be captured.

For the first time since 1986, South African tourism growth in 2000 was below the global rate of increase. In particular along the western border of the KNP, there are signs of oversupply in the ecotourist market.

Kepe et al. (2001:3), reviewing the experience of the Wild Coast Spatial Development Initiative in the Eastern Cape, argue that:

Radical shifts in the patterns of ownership and benefits are required if pro-poor tourism is to be achieved... Communities face numerous obstacles to their effective participation in tourism, which are not being addressed by the [SDI] programme. These include the very nature of up-market tourism developments, the slow pace of return on investments, the low skills base, the reduction or loss of access to natural resources, and local power relations... Without substantial human resource development, the low skills base of the targeted areas is likely to translate into primarily low-status, low-paid jobs with poor prospects for advancement... Long-term sustainability depends upon building capacity for community members to take up positions at all levels of tourist operation. Without greater attention... to local power dynamics, it is likely that elites will disproportionately capture any employment and other benefits.

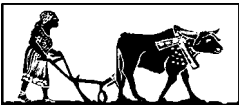
TRANSFORM has been aware of many of these challenges, and the Makuleke in particular have worked hard on capacity and institution building. The leadership have done their best to promote realism among the general public, and to emphasise that the economic benefits will be incremental rather than revolutionary. Despite this, they face dissatisfaction in the



community about the slow pace of progress, and in particular about the delays before jobs appear. Given this scenario in the case where progress towards sustainable community-based nature conservation and ecotourism is most promising, the lesson for more typical rural settings is clear. This is a rural development strategy worth pursuing, but it needs to be weighed carefully against the alternatives. Above all, community leaders and development agencies must avoid creating unrealistic expectations about what this strategy can achieve.

Given the significant but modest role that community-based nature conservation and ecotourism can play, TRANSFORM draws a further important lesson from its pilot experience. This is that such

initiatives must be integrated into broader rural development strategies (Chapter 6). The Richtersveld is an example of how this can be done through the formal channels of an IDP, drawn up under local government legislation, and its associated land development objectives (LDOs), drawn up under the Development Facilitation Act. In other cases, like the Makuleke, it may be less feasible or appropriate to pursue integrated planning through formal municipal channels – especially since the municipal units have recently been enlarged. But it remains essential to link nature conservation and ecotourism in with other strategies so that co-ordinated and effective livelihood enhancement can be achieved.



Chapter 3: Motivation and training

There is a fundamental tension at the root of much external support for community-based nature conservation and ecotourism. The basic motivation for most outside funding agencies' contributions in this sector is environmental.

Motivation

Over the years, such agencies have learned that environmental conservation goals will never be achieved if the interests of people in and near conservation areas are not adequately promoted. The conservation motive has thus come to be clothed with many – sincere and well meant – socio-economic motives for 'people and parks'-type projects. Economic and social empowerment thus comes to be listed as the leading objective of such interventions, although their roots lie in a concern to conserve biodiversity.

On the other hand, the strongest motive that rural people have for involvement in nature conservation is economic. Most of them live in poverty. However real their concern at a more abstract level for biodiversity, they cannot afford for this to be a leading component of their livelihood strategies. People need to be able to make money out of nature conservation. These economic benefits can be achieved in two ways:

1. The restoration, maintenance or enhancement of existing or recent benefit streams from natural resources, such as grazing for livestock, fuel from local forest resources, or medicinal plants from the local veld for onward marketing in urban areas. This incentive for nature conservation can often lead to strategies to promote sustainable resource extraction within protected areas. Such sustainable use was one of the key original objectives of the first

phase of TRANSFORM. It remains an important target. But TRANSFORM learned that South African National Parks still finds such resource extraction difficult to contemplate. (Another previous TRANSFORM partner, KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife, takes a much more proactive approach to the issue.) Sustainable resource use within national parks has slipped down TRANSFORM's list of priorities, because of the difficulty of finding other income-generating modes of sustainable use besides tourism. This does not mean that TRANSFORM will not promote sustainable resource use in other types of protected areas where a broader range of resources can be used. It is still considered to be a key strategy for motivating people to commit themselves to partnership with nature conservation authorities. Its importance will vary from one area to another, depending on local economic and environmental circumstances.

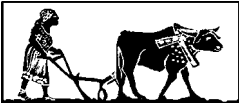
2. The building of new benefit streams from ecotourism is the most obvious and popular incentive to rural people considering a deeper commitment to nature conservation. The apparently lucrative and clearly growing formal ecotourism sector, which operates on the doorstep of the rural poor in places like Limpopo province and Mpumalanga, serves as a beacon of economic hope for communities living close to protected areas and seeking



viable ways to enhance their livelihoods. But, as TRANSFORM has learned (see Chapter 2), it is essential to be realistic about just how much economic benefit such initiatives can achieve.

Money is not the only way to motivate rural South Africans to engage in nature conservation and ecotourism. A number of other incentives play a part in their decisions and should be built into project strategies:

- Even if they do live in poverty, many people feel a concern for nature and its conservation. This concern may combine aesthetic, spiritual and cultural feelings that the biodiversity and beauty of the local environment are something worth maintaining and enhancing for present and future generations, along with appreciation of nature's real contribution to livelihoods in the form of clean water, fuel wood, building material and so on. Perhaps surprisingly, the less material sentiments about nature are easily awakened in young people (see below), who may be among the most enthusiastic in the community when it comes to unpaid environmental initiatives.
- Sometimes linked to the feelings just described are political motives for committing oneself and one's community to nature conservation. These incentives may link to the planned political achievement of regaining or reinforcing one's land rights after generations of apartheid dispossession, as in the Makuleke and Richtersveld cases with which TRANSFORM has worked. They may also relate to broader prospects of empowerment that the implementation of conservation and ecotourism initiatives may be felt to offer. Conversely, however, being seen to cooperate with conservation officials can sometimes destroy a local leader's political aspirations, especially if there is a history of conflict between the community and conservation authorities.



While expectations of increased incomes are likely to be the strongest incentive for poor rural South Africans to engage in nature conservation and ecotourism, they are thus not the only motive that should be taken into account. TRANSFORM has learned that another factor that must be considered is the timing of benefits. People have far too much experience of development promises not being kept. However strong initial public commitment to such initiatives may have been, it will soon dwindle – and may turn into opposition – if early, tangible results are not achieved. Although the Makuleke leadership have made impressive progress with a number of ecotourism initiatives, the general public are becoming increasingly critical of the delays in creating jobs and yielding economic benefits for the community. To be sustainable, initiatives in this sector must offer a schedule of economic benefits that kicks in early with at least some tangible revenues. As is often pointed out, people cannot eat plans. Their motivation has to be sustained by early results.

Youth

As was noted above, young rural South Africans often show interest in local environmental initiatives. They are often willing to group together in voluntary efforts to clean up their local environment, to engage in nature conservation or to develop local ecotourism initiatives. Not surprisingly, there are usually many applicants for training programmes that may lead to formal employment in the sector. TRANSFORM has experienced several instances of this:

- One of the most striking aspects of the Makuleke ecotourism initiative over the last few years has been the training programme that local leadership developed for the youth of the community (see below). Youth have responded enthusiastically to this programme, not least because of the economic promise that it offers.

- In the Richtersveld (particularly in Eksteenfontein and Kuboes), young people have shown interest in TRANSFORM and related nature conservation and ecotourism initiatives. They have put themselves forward for training programmes (see below) and also for office in local representative structures. Older Richtersvelders are starting to respect their commitment and potential capacity in these representative roles.
- Around the Addo Elephant National Park (a focus of TRANSFORM's recent Danced-funded sister project in SANParks), a voluntary 'Enviro Boosters' youth group was active for a time (Khanya Consultants 1999:13).

In other contexts, too, TRANSFORM is aware of youth commitment and initiatives in the environmental sector. In the Herschel district of the Eastern Cape, for example, the Environmental and Development Agency (EDA) has worked with youth groups committed to greening their local environment through initiatives like tree planting.

TRANSFORM's conclusion from this experience is that stimulating youth interest in nature conservation and ecotourism should be a leading component of strategy to stimulate community interest as a whole.

Training

TRANSFORM has not been surprised to learn of the enormous need for human resource development and institutional capacity building in the nature conservation and ecotourism sector. The lack of institutional capacity is one of the most critical constraints for the advancement of locally-owned and managed nature conservation and ecotourism in South Africa. Human resource capacity is a prerequisite for institutional capacity – and this prerequisite is generally not met in the communal areas. But, even if the skilled people were available, effective institutions

could not emerge overnight. It will make many years for the necessary breadth and depth of institutional capacity and experience to be built (Turner & Meer 2001:63).

There are thus two overlapping forms of training that need to be provided to promote community-based nature conservation and ecotourism in South Africa:

- training in skills that will enable local people to work in the sector – for example, as nature conservators, tour guides or lodge staff – thus building viable conservation and ecotourism enterprises and maximising local economic benefits;
- training in the skills needed to make local institutions effective as owners and managers of these enterprises – for example, in negotiation, accountancy and conflict resolution.

There are also two overlapping ways in which this training can be provided:

- through (typically longer-term) courses of study, usually with outside training bodies, that lead to formal qualifications like diplomas. These courses may combine home study with periods at the training institution and/or in-service training, for example with conservation agencies or tourist lodges
- through shorter-term courses and workshops, which can often take place locally.

It is clear from TRANSFORM experience that co-ordinated attention needs to be given to these various forms and modes of training from an early stage in any effort to promote community-based nature conservation and ecotourism. A participatory training needs assessment should be followed by a structured training programme – again designed and managed with strong community input – that responds to the identified needs and monitors progress. In the TRANSFORM focus areas to date, this co-ordination has been inadequate. The Makuleke have managed their own formal diploma training programme for some 25 young



Box 2: The need for human resource development

An obvious conclusion from the TRANSFORM experience at Makuleke and elsewhere is that the systematic building of the requisite human resources is a prerequisite for successful local governance of nature conservation and ecotourism. While most components of the Makuleke 'blueprint' are not easily replicable, this one is. The second phase of TRANSFORM, or some other appropriate programme or agency, should develop systems, structures and resources that make training programmes a routine part of interaction with rural groups aiming to undertake this sort of rural development. The challenge that lies ahead – for the Makuleke and everywhere else – is to ensure that the majority of those trained actually stay with their local conservation and ecotourism enterprises, rather than leaving to work in the private sector (Turner & Meer 2001:63).

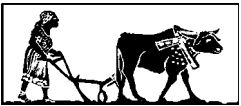
people well. Not surprisingly, other training needs at Makuleke have been identified and addressed in a less systematic manner. In the Richtersveld, there has been much less co-ordination of training activities.

From training experiences in its focus areas and from its collaboration with other agencies, TRANSFORM has learned a number of additional lessons:

- Incentives and roles for trainees need to be clear. If people are trained – as happened for prospective tour guides in the Richtersveld – and subsequently there is little work for them to do in the field for which they have been trained, the exercise will obviously have little value. Morale will decline, and newly-acquired skills will be lost again. Of the first group of field guides trained in the Richtersveld, only one still (occasionally) works in this role. A new group was trained in 2000.
- Active monitoring and support need to be provided for community trainees on longer term, more formal courses towards diplomas and similar qualifications. Study conditions are difficult, and guidance from supervisors on distance learning courses is not always adequate. People fail exams and have to sit them again. Distance learning is rarely easy. After some five years, none of the Makuleke trainees has completed the course yet, and

people are starting to ask whether they ever will. The Makuleke do have one valuable component of success, which is a village centre where trainees can study and use computers. But even in their case, more active local tutoring and other support would enhance the prospects of success.

- In the context of institution building, isolated training inputs have little value. They must be part of a long-term process of coaching and support, linked into a structured evolution whereby local people and their institutions gradually take more (or full) responsibility for nature conservation and ecotourism. Among the Makuleke, this approach of institution building by facilitating locally-owned processes of institutional upgrading for the CPA and local development forums has had clearly positive results. It has led to better understanding and management of the essential parameters of institutional development. For TRANSFORM and its predecessors, the Richtersveld has been a terrain of frustration in this regard. Many training events have been held for those involved in the Management Plan Committee (MPC) and other local structures, yet the development of local institutional capacity remains extremely slow. There is little trace now of the work of the OOP (Opleidings- en



Ondersteuningsprogram) training project, which supported the Richtersveld MPC in the mid 1990s.

- Part of this long-term, structured institutional capacity building must be the progressive promotion of those who are trained. If training events proceed over a number of years but participants do not achieve greater responsibility and higher incomes, sustainable institutional capacity is unlikely to be achieved. This is particularly important when community trainees are working within large organisations like SANParks.
- Capacity building in democratic institutions is a very long-term challenge. Office holders may change with successive elections. While one might hope that voters would choose candidates with the training for their posts, they are certainly not obliged to do so and are often influenced by other factors when they make their selection. So those who are trained for institutional roles may no longer be in office a couple of years later. New cycles of training then become necessary. This long-term training burden is largely inevitable, although it can be somewhat reduced if institutions like CPAs and local councils have permanent staff positions. Staff in those posts can then be trained to provide continuity as elected office holders come and go. To address this problem, the management plan for the Richtersveld provides for elections for community representatives to be staggered, so that when new representatives are elected they will at least have time to work with 'older' representatives who can give them orientation. Furthermore, the elections for community representatives to the Joint Management Committee will only be held every five years.
- Training providers and beneficiary institutions need to manage the image of the training process carefully. If training develops a 'gravy train' image

as a series of enjoyable and undemanding trips to comfortable venues for short workshops, it can become an unnecessary cause of tension within a community.

Knowledge usually means power. In rural development contexts it can often mean money, too. So competition for training opportunities is inevitable and, to some extent, healthy. But training should not come to be seen as a perk for the privileged elite.

TRANSFORM has learned many other lessons about the appropriate character and quality of training and capacity building, but these are more typical of general rural development experience and do not need to be mentioned here. One exception is the obvious need to ensure gender equity in training opportunities – and in some cases to promote affirmative action in this regard.

Conclusion

With regard to motivating the rural poor to engage in nature conservation and conservation, the core lesson from TRANSFORM's experience is that economic incentives are by far the most effective. But they must be designed and structured in such a way that they convert to early results and sustainable income streams. Furthermore, economic incentives will function within a broader range of perceptions and concerns about the natural environment. However essential it may be for them to put economics first, rural South Africans feel a broader concern for their natural environment and its biodiversity. These feelings are often especially noticeable among young people. Capturing the enthusiasm of the youth for environmental initiatives can often be a valuable part of a strategy to motivate rural communities.

With regard to training, TRANSFORM's experience underlines the need to assess carefully what the technical and institutional training needs will be for a community-based initiative. It is important to build a community-managed training



plan from this assessment; to ensure that those being trained receive thorough local support; and to arrange for successful trainees to put their new capacities to work. Finally, it is worth repeating the truism that the training process does not end on the last day of the course. Follow up support to trainees is essential. They

may need help to find the employment for which they have been trained. They may need guidance during an initial period of service. Refresher training may be needed later; and the ongoing experience of nature conservation and ecotourism initiatives is almost certain to throw up new training challenges.



Chapter 4: Interacting with external agencies

In many parts of South Africa, community-based nature conservation and ecotourism are increasingly interesting as potential components of rural development strategy.

Introduction

If communities engage in nature conservation and ecotourism initiatives, they are likely to find themselves interacting with a wide range of external agencies. These will probably include:

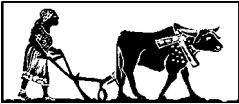
- **government departments**, at national, provincial and/or local levels. For example, the national Department of Land Affairs may be involved if a land claim or land redistribution project forms part of the initiative. Or, as TRANSFORM has found, the IDP process of the local municipality can provide a useful framework within which to structure community-level projects
- **parastatals**, such as South African National Parks and/or provincial conservation agencies. These may be the lead partners in community-based nature conservation and ecotourism initiatives. Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) are sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry but are co-ordinated by parastatal agencies. 'Agri-tourism' SDIs such as that along the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape place particular emphasis on interaction with this kind of community initiative, although the results so far are mixed (Kepe et al. 2001)
- **the private sector**, which is well established in the South African ecotourism industry, and is increasingly involved in joint ventures with communities. While SDIs and other agencies often promote community-

- public-private partnerships, TRANSFORM has experience in the Makuleke case of simpler bilateral arrangements between a community and an outside investor (see below)
- **donor agencies**, many of which have sought to support community-based nature conservation and ecotourism. As African governments have long been aware, it is a major task to co-ordinate donors, make sure that they all pull in the same direction, and make sure that the direction is one chosen by the beneficiaries. This can be true at community level, too. The Makuleke, for example, have funding agreements with GTZ (the German agency executing TRANSFORM); the Ford Foundation; LeGambiente (an Italian agency working on trans-frontier conservation); the Endangered Wildlife Trust; and the Maputo Corridor Development Company. They must co-ordinate not only their interactions with these direct partners, but also contacts with other funding agencies that may seek information or propose financial support
 - **NGOs and charitable bodies**, which may function much like donor agencies. Alternatively, such bodies may seek to provide voluntary support, or to involve communities in their publicity or advocacy campaigns
 - **research agencies**, which may be linked to any of the above bodies. They may propose structured research or



monitoring relations with communities, or they may just provide background support to individual researchers who want to engage with community processes for academic purposes. Like donors, researchers need to be carefully managed by communities if the benefits of the relationship are to outweigh the costs.

It is clear that the local community stage can be crowded with a daunting range of external actors if rural people decide to engage in nature conservation and/or ecotourism initiatives. Local people need to have clear and effective structures and strategies to co-ordinate their relations with all these outsiders. Otherwise they are likely to be overwhelmed by them, and their locally-determined development priorities are likely to be drowned by those of the outsiders. They must also learn to make themselves and their priorities understood, as most of these external agencies often have their own approaches and objectives to pursue.



The prerequisites

In its experience at Kosi Bay, Makuleke and the Richtersveld, TRANSFORM has seen various modes of interaction and co-ordination between community initiatives and external agencies. It is clear from this experience that the interaction cannot succeed in the interests of local people if certain prerequisites are not met:

- The community must have strong, locally legitimate leadership that is not intimidated by powerful outside agencies and is able to represent local priorities forcefully to them. 'Locally legitimate' means that the leadership must be endorsed by the community as their representatives. This implies a transparent, democratic selection process, although traditional leaders who are genuinely accepted and respected by their constituents can also play a valid role (as at Makuleke). Transparency is also essential in the dealings of the leadership with outsiders, which will often be complex

and may come to involve large-scale financial transactions.

- Local leadership is much more likely to fulfil all these conditions if it operates within strong, well-resourced local institutions. Building the capacity of these institutions – such as a local council, trust or CPA is one of the highest priorities for programmes promoting community-based nature conservation and ecotourism. Leadership must be able to operate democratically and transparently in the debate, formulation and execution of community policy, in the ownership and management of community assets, and in the articulation of relationships with outside agencies, some of which will be contractual in nature. Without a local institution that serves as the legitimate (and preferably legal) voice of the people, community relations with external agencies are unlikely to serve the community's interests.
- A third prerequisite is a clearly-defined rights framework. If a community does not have clear rights over the resources whose sustainable use it wishes to plan, manage and profit from, it is unlikely to be able to secure its interests to best advantage in its interactions with government and parastatal agencies, other communities and the private sector. Clear rights, such as those enjoyed by the community owners of the Makuleke Region of the Kruger National Park and parts of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, do not guarantee respect and straight dealing from other parties. But they provide the necessary legal foundation on which communities can stand to fight for a fair deal.

Scale and structures

Assuming that these three prerequisites are met, there is still a spectrum of possibilities for co-ordinating relationships between communities and external agencies. TRANSFORM has experience of relatively

successful arrangements at the two ends of this spectrum, and of arrangements that were attempted at various points across it. The spectrum represents the degree of interaction with local government structures in articulating outside links. South Africa emphasises the developmental nature of local government. So, in theory, local government ought to provide communities with the structure, resources and opportunities for planning and operating linkages with donors, NGOs, national government and so on. But this depends very much on the scale of local community initiatives, which depends partly on the nature of local geography.

Very often, communities involved in nature conservation and ecotourism will have to take primary responsibility themselves for their external development linkages, with the formal municipal structures playing only a subsidiary role. This is partly because most of the new municipalities are not prepared to take a role in environmental management, still less in natural resource management. Also, following the most recent demarcation of local government boundaries, most communities now find themselves in larger municipalities whose headquarters and officials are far away (Chapter 6). This is the case, for example, with the Makuleke. But where local geography and the scale of the rural development intervention permit (as in the Richtersveld), the opportunities of building external links via municipal structures and processes should always be carefully reviewed.

Ways of dealing with government

There are basically two ways for communities to deal with government agencies and programmes at the various levels described above:

- The informal and opportunistic way in which the community's representatives, agents or supporters forge links at

whatever places and levels in national, provincial or local government may be necessary. This is how the Makuleke have operated. For their core purposes of nature conservation and ecotourism, they have worked more often with agencies of national government in Pretoria than they have with provincial or local government departments in Polokwane or Thohoyandou.

- The more formal way, in which much greater use is made of official channels and standard procedures. This is how the people of the Richtersveld have promoted their cause with government during TRANSFORM's first phase, which coincided with the early years of democratic local government. (Previously, the Richtersvelders had boycotted most formal structures and went straight to the top in their quest for appropriate community ownership of nature conservation.)

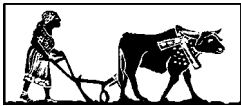
There is an obvious tension between these two approaches. Given the immaturity of most local government and development planning institutions and procedures in South Africa at present, the first approach may be the only way to get anything done. Trying to work through official channels risks interminable delays when those channels are still learning how to operate. But working outside the official frameworks does nothing to help build them for the future. And most local communities lack the resources, leadership and outside connections to make the first approach feasible. The Makuleke have succeeded with it, but this was because of exceptionally strong and focused leadership, combined with unusually able outside supporters who were able to channel contacts and motivate action at the appropriate high places in government machinery.

TRANSFORM has also experienced what is likely to be a more typical situation, at Kosi Bay. There, a host of nature conservation and development planning initiatives (including an SDI)



were unfolding above the heads of marginalised local communities, who were not well-led and who had no special access to government at any level. These initiatives were framed within a hierarchy of modern and traditional government authorities, whose interactions were often confused, rarely transparent and hardly conducive to community interests. TRANSFORM efforts to promote co-ordination of these various initiatives and agencies so as to clarify the prospects for community-based nature conservation and ecotourism were largely unsuccessful. The people of Kosi Bay remained marginalised – primarily because the two prerequisites mentioned above were not in place.

TRANSFORM experience suggests that, for the time being, a judicious combination of the two approaches must be used as communities build their linkages with government. As far as possible, they should work through formal channels and procedures of local government. Rural development interventions should be ready to tackle the major capacity-building challenges that this approach implies. But where early results in community-based conservation and tourism are the objective, communities and programmes that support them must be ready to build more direct working links with specific agencies within government at all levels, giving less attention to the ‘developmental local government’ procedures that the nation is slowly building.



Ways of dealing with parastatals

There are two main types of parastatal with which communities are most likely to deal in conservation and ecotourism initiatives.

The first is the national and provincial nature conservation agencies – SANParks and bodies like East Cape Nature Conservation. This sort of interaction is the subject of Chapter 7.

The second is the SDIs. Although these programmes are explicitly intended to tackle rural poverty and to promote

community participation in development enterprises, their track record with regard to community interests and participation has not been encouraging so far (Kepe 2000; Kepe et al. 2001). In TRANSFORM’s experience, there have been helpful contacts between the Makuleke and the Maputo Corridor SDI (funding or co-funding of feasibility studies, drafting of management and commercial plans and tendering processes) and largely unproductive contacts between the people of Kosi Bay and the Lebombo SDI. It is clear that communities need strong leadership and strong outside support from impartial advisers in order to be able to deal on equal terms with SDIs and ensure that their interests are not overwhelmed by the urgent rush for SDIs to get results on the ground.

Ways of dealing with the private sector

We can start with a lesson on how not to deal with the private sector. In the Kosi Bay focus area from which TRANSFORM later withdrew, there were several instances of a local traditional leader apparently making private deals with outside investors who wanted to set up small-scale ecotourism enterprises. The rest of the community received little or no information about these contracts. Ultimately, the traditional leader sold the community tourist lodge to an outsider. It was never very clear what was to happen to the money the investor paid.

Clearly, communities need to be vigilant with regard to outside entrepreneurs, be they small-scale business people or large international companies. Both types of investor may resort to corrupt dealings with local leaders or officials in order to secure tourist rights, land or other advantages. It is obvious that all approaches from the private sector should be channelled through transparent local structures and procedures. At Kosi Bay, there was no institutional framework for this to happen. The Richtersveld, too,

has had its share of unscrupulous outsider ecotourism operators. Local geography means that many of them can exploit Richtersveld resources without referring to local leaders or communities at all. Gradually, however, local institutions and organisations are being built to control and co-ordinate ecotourism in the Richtersveld. In association with the municipality, these bodies are steadily increasing the amount of community benefit that accrues from externally-based ecotourism operations. The lesson from this experience is that local community-based ecotourism operations must group into a united front if relations with external operators are to be handled successfully.

If caution is the first principle that communities must apply in their dealings with the private sector, realism is the second. Despite the luxury image that ecotourism often projects, most ecotourism operations are comparatively small businesses. As Chapter 2 emphasised, attracting private sector investment into community-based ecotourism may reinforce the local economy, but it will not transform it.

It should already be apparent that the three prerequisites for outside dealings that were mentioned above – strong leadership, strong, transparent institutions and a clearly-defined rights framework – are critically important in community relations with the private sector. Clear community rights can be crucial. If a community does not have clear rights over the resources whose use it wishes to negotiate with outside investors, those investors are unlikely to be interested – or will discount community dividends to compensate themselves for the perceived risk. The clarity of the Makuleke's ownership rights in their region of the Kruger National Park has been a strong advantage in their attraction of investors for joint ecotourism ventures, although the Kruger administration has not always respected these rights.

South African rural communities are likely to have two main types of link with

the private sector in developing ecotourism activities. The first is less common, because of the distribution of wildlife resources and the rights to those resources. It comprises the periodic negotiation of hunting rights with commercial hunters, whose clients will pay large fees to shoot certain species. (Most people would feel that this activity is hardly 'ecotourism'!) The second, more common arrangement is the negotiation of rights for tourist lodges or other ecotourism in community-owned areas, along with associated ecotourist activities like game drives and photographic safaris. The Makuleke are among the few communities in the country currently or potentially able to engage in both types of commercial linkage. Not surprisingly, they do not believe it wise to operate both simultaneously. So their current, highly lucrative commercial hunting contracts will be phased out as ecotourist lodges come into operation.

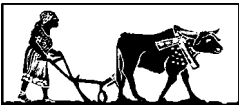
In developing both kinds of commercial relationship, it is essential for communities to have appropriate legal and technical advice. On rare occasions, as in the case of the Makuleke, some of this support may be available from voluntary sources, or NGOs that charge low fees. More often, it may have to be commercially procured. This can be an important field for donor contributions.

Where communities decide to seek commercial ecotourism links with the private sector, they would do well to apply some basic principles. One is to ensure that the human, social, cultural side of ecotourism is emphasised. This is what will distinguish such ventures from the purely commercial ones operated by the private sector alone, and will help build a sense of community ownership. A second principle is to negotiate maximum community involvement in the commercial ventures – not only to maximise employment revenues, but also to build community capacity in the sector. Such capacity may ultimately be used in ventures that are wholly owned and operated by the



community. Not surprisingly, a third principle is to aim for the highest possible financial returns to the community. This can be done partly through training programmes that increase the number of qualified local people who can be employed in the venture(s).

There are various options for joint ventures between communities and the private sector in establishing and running ecotourist operations like lodges. Drawing mainly on Makuleke experience, TRANSFORM and the Community Public Private Partnerships (CPPP) programme have commissioned a manual that includes an outline of these options (Koch 2001). These models share the basic principle of retaining ultimate community ownership of the land and improvements that are involved in the venture. For example, the Makuleke's first contract with a private lodge operator (signed in 2001) is based on the BOT/ROT principle (build, operate, transfer/renovate, operate, transfer). After 15 years, the investor hands over the lodge to the Makuleke CPA, as ultimate owner of the property.



It is clearly important for communities to consider the commercial options carefully before committing themselves to any particular programme of action. The available resources and opportunities must be carefully assessed from an ecotourism perspective in order to develop strategies that maximise the community's comparative advantage in this highly competitive sector. As we have stressed, it is essential that the community take impartial, professional advice in this planning process. Makuleke experience suggests that it is best for this advice to be independent of state or donor agencies. Although either type of agency is usually operating in good faith, experience shows that they do not always succeed in putting the necessary distance between themselves and other parties whose interests may conflict with those of the community.

The manual referred to above outlines the following activities in which the Makuleke engaged to launch their

engagement with the private sector:

- a series of strategic research and planning studies to identify opportunities and requirements, including training needs, marketing strategies and potential sources of capital [It is clearly important for these studies to develop estimates of the income streams and employment opportunities that the proposed activities will yield for the community. These estimates should be refined as plans are developed and negotiations proceed.]
- site inspection with a professional advisory group (tourism developers and operators) to refine ideas and come up with optimum development strategies
- preparation of cultural resources and activities that will be needed, for example cultural guides
- development of planning frameworks, an environmental management master plan, bid documents and tender evaluation procedures
- establishment of a bid evaluation committee
- preparation of a code of conduct for commercial operations in the Makuleke area
- production of a commercial prospectus setting out the development opportunities and calling for expressions of interest from the private sector
- advertisements
- review and short-listing of expressions of interest
- invitation to shortlisted companies to submit tenders
- tender evaluation
- negotiation
- contract award.

Further details on these ways of dealing with the private sector are available in the manual (Koch 2001).

TRANSFORM has experience of community contact with private sector operators who pretended to be investors, but were in fact only investment brokers, acting as intermediaries with other parties.

Such arrangements clearly reduce community income because of the fees deducted by the brokers.

TRANSFORM has also learned lessons about community interaction with a very different facet of the private sector. This concerns companies who run, or wish to run, operations on community land that have nothing to do with conservation and ecotourism. These activities may indeed clash with the environmental care inherent in conservation and ecotourism. The case in point is the long history of the mining industry in and around the Richtersveld National Park. It is a particularly difficult sector to deal with because of its protection by legislation that considers the national interest before local interests, and because of the enormous environmental damage it can cause. In all such cases of commercial involvement in sectors other than conservation and ecotourism, the best mechanisms for co-ordination and control are those provided by official procedures. The only prospect for the rural poor to interact effectively with these other commercial sectors is through involvement in municipal processes to prepare LDOs and IDPs (supported where necessary by higher planning and control measures). In most cases this remains a prospect rather than a reality, as local institutional capacity to make these measures effective remains extremely limited. In extreme cases, legal action can be contemplated if it is professionally advised and adequately resourced. This is conflict rather than co-ordination but, to borrow a phrase from a rather different context, it is sometimes the only language that the private sector understands.

Ways of dealing with donors

Like African governments, African communities are likely to find that donors – however willing and well-intentioned – are difficult to co-ordinate and harmonise. But if this is not achieved, their activities may duplicate or contradict each other, and locally-felt development priorities are

likely to be subordinated to those of the donor agencies. The basic principle to be applied – predicated as ever on the prerequisites of strong leadership and institutions – is that donors should be presented with the community's plan and asked to contribute to specified parts of it. If the community has no preconceived strategy, donors are more likely to impose their own.

As outlined above, there are two ways in which such a strategy may be developed, depending on scale and structures. In many cases, a community may have to develop its own independent strategy, although this should whenever possible be nested into broader strategies such as the local municipality's IDP. Alternatively, the IDP itself can be the strategy within which donors are asked to contribute to specific projects.

TRANSFORM's experience in this regard has mainly been with the Makuleke's use of the first option. The Makuleke decided at an early stage that they would build their development strategy independently of donors. They used some of their independent advisers (the 'Friends of Makuleke') in this process. Their approach was then to discuss with individual donors what support they could provide to specific aspects of the community strategy – much as a government might negotiate with various donors to fund projects that play agreed roles under a national development plan. The Makuleke's approach in this regard actually evolved from early experience with TRANSFORM and GTZ. Involvement of this project and agency in initial strategic planning processes led to misunderstandings about donor motives and a period of considerable mistrust of TRANSFORM by the Makuleke. Although these misunderstandings have long since been resolved, both sides learned the lesson that it is better for communities to do their own strategic planning and then co-ordinate donor inputs accordingly. TRANSFORM has facilitated the strategic

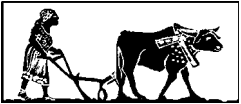


planning process in the Makuleke CPA, which subsequently enabled them to call all the donors to a co-ordination meeting in April 2001. At that meeting, all issues of past and future co-operation between the various parties were discussed.

Nevertheless, as most rural communities do not have the capacity for this sort of strategic planning, it remains appropriate for donors to fund independent facilitators and advisers to support the process.

In the Richtersveld, there has been some experience with donor co-ordination on the official local government platform

of the IDP. Again, this experience is not entirely typical of South Africa, being based in a municipality and IDP process that were better resourced than most. As at the community level, major questions of capacity arise with regard to donor co-ordination by municipalities. Nevertheless, the conservation and ecotourism sector is an attractive one to many donors, and in municipalities where this sector is prominent the development of donor co-ordination capacity is important. It is something to which donors themselves can contribute.



Chapter 5: Experience with group structures

TRANSFORM's analysis of its first phase experience concluded that 'the lack of institutional capacity is one of the most critical constraints for the advancement of locally-owned and managed nature conservation and ecotourism in South Africa' (Turner & Meer 2001:63).

Introduction

In this chapter on lessons learned by the project, we focus on the most important area where this institutional capacity has to be built: the group structures that communities usually have to set up in order to engage in the conservation and ecotourism sector. We refer particularly to the structures that have been established in two of TRANSFORM's first phase focus areas: Makuleke and the Richtersveld.

Roles, options and conditions

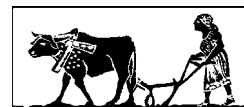
We are concerned with group structures here because of the communal nature of the ventures that TRANSFORM and other rural development initiatives seek to support. The natural resources on which the community-based conservation and ecotourism sector depends are not owned by individuals. Breaking down the confusing amalgam of state and 'communal' ownership that the apartheid system created, rural people now need to establish clear ownership of natural resources by group structures that represent community interest. Similarly, ecotourism ventures launched on behalf of the community cannot be owned by individuals, although individual investors may be involved as private sector partners (see Chapter 4). Instead, group structures established for these purposes of resource ownership and business ownership must function as legal persons on the community's behalf.

Success with any kind of group structure depends on three interrelated preconditions:

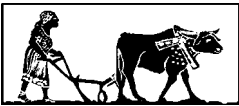
- strong, effective leadership by democratic representatives of the group or community
- a clear mandate for the leadership, as public representatives, from the group or community
- efficient and democratic channels for communication between the leadership and the community, so that the leaders know the people's needs and views and the people receive feedback about what the leaders are doing.

In addition to the two key functions of owning resources and owning businesses on behalf of the community, group structures may also perform other functions. These include the management of conservation and ecotourism ventures, in the narrow, operational sense – and the broader, more political function of governance. Governance implies oversight of community affairs and ventures, the setting of strategy, the monitoring of performance, the resolution of disputes and a range of other social and political functions. Originally, many of these functions were vested in traditional authorities (usually a chief and his council). Now, the emphasis is on democratically-formed and operated governance structures, although chiefs still play a constructive role in some cases.

TRANSFORM and the CPPP programme have produced a manual for



community training purposes that sets out the range of options that rural South Africans have usually considered in deciding what sort of group structures would best suit their purposes (Koch 2001). Trusts, Section 21 [charitable] companies and communal property associations are among the options that the manual compares. The CPA model was created by the Communal Property Associations Act of 1996, with the specific intention of providing a mechanism for groups of land reform beneficiaries to own the land that they acquired or that was transferred to them. As such they have been supported by the Department of Land Affairs as a legal entity that is often appropriate for group land ownership. But many communities, notably in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, have instead chosen trusts as their group ownership structure. This may be because traditional leaders, who are often strong in those provinces, find it easier to exert influence through the trust structure (Turner & Meer 2001:36).



Whatever form of legal entity communities have adopted since 1994 for group land-owning purposes, many problems have arisen. Pienaar, M (2000) argues that 'there is a clear and urgent need to restructure failing institutions and to improve the way in which new institutions are structured'. She points particularly to insufficient planning to cope with the social conflicts that erupt when groups of people find themselves the owners of land. The land-holding entities are often set up with unrealistic objectives, which leads to frustration and conflict. It is in any event always unrealistic to view a land-holding group as a united community. She also points out the common ambiguity about what role traditional leaders will play in these new group ownership structures.

Whatever group ownership structure is selected, there is an obvious prerequisite that nevertheless needs to be emphasised. The group must have something to own, and a clear way of owning it. As has become clear in the experience of the

Makuleke (Chapter 4), communities cannot achieve much in nature conservation and ecotourism if their resource rights are not clear. In most of South Africa's communal areas, lack of clarity over land tenure reform means that neither individuals nor groups can yet have clear title to land. The Makuleke are an exception because, like most of the groups that have established CPAs, they are land reform beneficiaries who have acquired clear title through a government procedure. So far this opportunity is restricted to those participating in land restitution or redistribution, and not to the rural masses in the communal areas.

TRANSFORM's experience with group structures has been largely restricted to CPAs, and it is on these bodies that the rest of this chapter will concentrate.

Communal property associations

CPAs as entities for land ownership

As is pointed out above, the CPA is a form of legal entity especially created by land reform legislation to enable groups of beneficiaries to own the land they receive under the programme. The Makuleke thus formed a CPA to take ownership of their Pafuri Region of the Kruger National Park, which they regained through a successful land restitution claim. In their case, the CPA had comparatively deep roots, having evolved from a 'Tribal Authority Executive' that was itself a union of the (unusually popular) traditional authority with local civic structures. Recently, and in some haste, a CPA was also formed in another TRANSFORM focus area, the Richtersveld. Again, the primary purpose of this CPA was to take ownership of the land that the Richtersvelders hoped to acquire through a major land claim that they were pursuing. It is also expected to serve as the legal owner of the vast areas of the Richtersveld still held in trust by the Minister of Land Affairs pending imminent transfer to the community, including the Richtersveld National Park and the areas

which the community plan to make into a conservancy. So far, the land claim has not been successful and the transfer from the Minister remains to be finalised, so the CPA remains a representative structure without title to land.

One of the major tasks to be tackled when a CPA is formed is to establish and agree on who its members are. For large or far-flung communities like the Makuleke and the Richtersveld, some of whose members may be working in cities hundreds of kilometres away, this is a complex and expensive task. It may also be necessary to adjudicate the rights of all those who want to be members.

Establishing the membership is only part of a detailed process that communities must work through in order to set up a CPA. A constitution has to be drafted on the basis of detailed public consultations that ought to achieve widespread understanding and consensus about how the CPA is to be structured, how it is to operate, and what its objectives and responsibilities are. Once drafted, the constitution has to be adopted by the members, and registered by the authorities, under procedures specified by the CPA Act.

Far too often, CPA constitutions have not been prepared on an adequately participatory basis. The consultants involved have not understood the details of the local social and economic situation, and have tended to use standard constitutions that are ill-suited to local requirements, as well as being written in highly legal English that most people, even if they know that language, cannot understand. Fortunately both the Makuleke and the Richtersveld CPAs were prepared more thoroughly than most, and are more likely to be sustainable from the narrow perspective of land ownership. Even in cases like these, however, it is clear that formation of such group structures must be accompanied and followed up by detailed training processes for CPA office holders and the general membership. This training needs to cover the constitutional and

procedural aspects of the CPA as a land owner, and broader issues such as the role of the CPA in other public functions and in relation to other public institutions. It is worth re-emphasising that the training and support should not stop when a CPA is registered. They need to continue for some years into the life of the CPA, with refresher activities undertaken periodically for new office holders and/or members.

Analysts of CPA experience have urged that it is essential that these group structures establish tenure security for their members and function effectively as land ownership bodies before they start to take on other roles (Macdonald 2000 – see Box 3). It is important to recognise that CPAs were designed for the relatively simple purpose of land ownership. Not even this purpose is sustainable, however, if CPAs are not given long term advice and support. Little of this support has been available, as DLA has often assumed that the job was done when land title was transferred to the CPA.

CPAs as development planning and management agencies

So much effort goes into establishing a CPA that it is hardly surprising that communities intending to undertake projects on their land should seek to use the same body as their public agency for planning and managing such developments. This was the natural tendency that the Makuleke followed, for example. Blessed with strong leadership, comparatively strong community consensus, clear focus and good outside advice, the Makuleke quickly built up their CPA for this purpose. In their case, however, it was relatively simple to build the CPA on the strong institutional foundations of their Tribal Authority Executive, which already had an executive arm in the form of an implementation office. This office was transferred to the CPA, and TRANSFORM subsequently funded part of the running costs and of the salary of the implementation officer. The CPA has an executive committee, chaired by the chief. Various sub-committees of the



Box 3: CPAs and ongoing support

...policy and implementation should focus attention on the processes of asserting, justifying and realising claims to property rights, rather than just the property rights themselves... Additional functions for common property institutions to fulfil (especially development oriented functions) should be considered... after the land holding entities have been established and processes for tenure security supported... One of the major problems... [is] the construction of legal entity establishment as a milestone in the achievement of land reform objectives. At this point engagement between state officials and beneficiary communities tends to taper off quite suddenly... tenure security is an ongoing process of negotiation and contestation and... this should be seen as a process which requires ongoing support through an effective and accessible administration system (Macdonald 2000:25–6).

executive committee have been established under the CPA, such as the bid evaluation committee (see Chapter 4). The executive committee delegates four members to represent the Makuleke on their Joint Management Board with South African National Parks (Chapter 7).

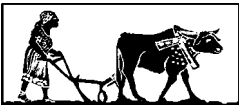
The Makuleke CPA has been comparatively successful in planning and managing the various nature conservation and ecotourism initiatives that the community has taken since regaining its land. But this does not make it a model for other CPAs and community initiatives. As we stressed above, it is essential that CPAs not try to 'run' into development planning and management before they can 'walk' with land ownership and administration. The Makuleke CPA could 'walk' quickly because of its strong institutional foundations, its unusually strong base of community consensus, its unusually strong leadership and the amount of quality outside support and advice it had attracted. These were exceptional circumstances. Even then, many problems can arise (see Box 4). Furthermore, the Makuleke CPA had a very simple land ownership and administration task. It was not dividing its land among various users, or resolving disputes among those users. Its land formed a single administrative block. The Makuleke CPA does not own or manage the land on which the Makuleke live,

which is far from the Pafuri region that the CPA does own.

Even the exceptional Makuleke CPA had major capacity-building needs. It has undergone many training sessions over the last few years. For rural development planning more generally, the question is whether training in development planning and management should be aimed at community-level institutions like CPAs, or at municipalities, as the local government bodies that have formal responsibility for this function. Municipalities can certainly soak up all available training capacity in this field for years to come. Although TRANSFORM's experience is limited in this regard, it suggests that the decision be based on the type of rural development initiative that is envisaged. Community-level interventions are more appropriate in sectors like nature conservation and ecotourism, but impose heavy capacity-building demands. For broader rural development planning purposes, the municipality is the agency of choice. The challenge then will be to ensure that capacity and planning in municipality offices actually achieve livelihood improvement on the ground for the rural poor.

CPAs and business ventures

If communities seek to engage in business ventures – and they often will if they are promoting ecotourism on their land – they



Box 4: Issues to watch as CPAs develop

It takes a long time, and much awareness raising and training, to enable the general public to understand fully what a CPA is for, and how it works. It also takes time for the public and CPA management to understand and commit themselves to the democratic principles of the new South African Constitution, as enshrined in the CPA Act and required in CPA operations. Gender is a key area where adherence to these principles needs to be carefully nurtured and monitored. One major area of confusion may be the relationship between the CPA and other structures in the community, such as civics or traditional authorities. On its side, the CPA leadership (or executive committee) always has to remember that it is not the only structure in the community. It has to work hard to build constructive relations with other bodies. Linked to these concerns is the constant issue of communication between the CPA leadership and the community. Usually this is inadequate (as it is between many other public bodies and their constituents). CPA executive bodies have to work hard to keep the public informed. If a CPA decides to establish an executive office with employed staff, tensions may arise over the relationship between these staff and the elected office bearers of the CPA. Who does what? How much autonomy do the staff have? Another thorny issue that arises in CPAs, as in many other community structures, is whether office holders (chairpersons, committee members) should receive any sort of payment for their services. They often work long and hard, and feel they deserve some remuneration. In the case of the Makuleke, this has been donor-funded. But it seems to be accepted that, now that Makuleke ecotourism ventures are starting to yield substantial revenues, the community's own funds should pay any such honoraria. Donor input for this purpose will no longer be appropriate.



need a public structure to represent their interests in these ventures. Such a structure must be a legal person capable of owning all or part of the rights in such a venture, making financial commitments and managing the funds of the business on behalf of the community. One possibility is that this should be the CPA. The Makuleke, for example, have used their CPA as the body through which to launch their first joint venture in developing an ecotourist lodge with a private investor. The CPA called for expressions of interest and later tenders, and negotiated and finally contracted with the selected bidder (Chapter 4).

However, there are both legal and operational restrictions on how far and how effectively CPAs can operate in a business environment. They are prevented by law, for example, from owning shares in a company. CPAs are not legally allowed to access capital in the way that

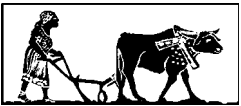
local government bodies can, and if they engage in business for profit they could contravene the Companies Act (Pienaar, K 2000). On the operational side, CPAs were not designed for quick decision making. Formal decisions involving the CPA's assets were expected to be rare events involving the basic function of land ownership. Detailed consultation with the membership is required for most significant CPA decisions, and this is far too cumbersome a process for the business environment.

The leadership in the Richtersveld recognised these problems from the outset, and their advisers pointed out during the establishment of their CPA that its constitution would forbid it from engaging in commercial ventures. They are therefore already setting up a 'Richtersveld Development Company', with a director from each of the four Richtersveld

villages. One of the mining companies active in the Richtersveld has offered to fund this new venture with up to R1 million of initial capital, which raises interesting questions about what the future relationship between the mining company and the CPA might be. The Makuleke, too, have recognised that it is not viable for their CPA to continue as a business entity. Furthermore, DLA has required them to create a trust to hold and manage a grant from the department. They are establishing a separate trading trust that will engage in the community's business ventures.

CPAs and local politics

It would be naïve to suppose that CPAs, or any other legal entity set up by a community to promote its rural development objectives, would not become an arena for local politics. Politics are a fact of life, and local politics are a major determinant of whether local legal entities survive or disintegrate. Conflict resolution is a major area of capacity and training that such legal entities and their outside supporters must consider.



In TRANSFORM's experience, the CPA also plays a political role with regard to the outside world. For the Makuleke, it clearly made sense to create a CPA as their bastion of independent dealings with government, SANParks and other outside forces. In the Richtersveld, the options have been more complex. As long as a Richtersveld Transitional Local Council (TLC) operated from Lekkersing, it was easier to see the TLC as representing the Richtersvelders' interests, and conceivably becoming the owner of the national park and other community land when these are transferred to the people under the Transformation of Certain Rural Areas Act. Now that the TLC has been subsumed under a broader 'Richtersveld' municipality that actually includes Port Nolloth and a much wider area, Richtersvelders no longer feel confident that local government will represent their interests fairly. This led to renewed interest in the idea of a CPA,

although the CPA was actually formed to cater for a successful outcome of the current land claim (see above). Richtersvelders now hope that their CPA will be a bastion to defend their interests against outsiders, possibly including the municipality to which they belong. In cases like theirs, one can think of three scenarios. First, the municipality is competent, and the people of a community trust it. They may then not see the need to establish a CPA to promote or protect their local interests. Secondly, however competent the municipality, people may not trust its motives. Thirdly, regardless of its motives, the municipality may not be competent. In either of these latter two scenarios, communities are more likely to want to set up local legal entities to represent their interests and possibly to own their assets.

In the Richtersveld, TRANSFORM has undertaken to assist the community (represented through the municipality) and the municipality to define their roles and to join forces in the integrated planning and management of the land, regardless of who the land owner will ultimately be. This facilitation process is well under way but will still take some time to complete.

Conclusion

TRANSFORM's experience shows that a great deal can be achieved with local legal entities, set up to promote community rural development initiatives. But this experience has been gained in rather special, well-resourced circumstances. Perhaps TRANSFORM's experience at Kosi Bay was more typical of national conditions. There was never much prospect in that politically uncertain and institutionally impoverished situation of successfully creating a CPA or similar body.

The broader principles for group structures in rural development are clear. Communities and planners must be realistic about the capacity building challenges that local legal entities impose. They must realise that there is little point in

setting them up unless the local resource rights framework is clear and there is something for the legal entity to own or have management control over. CPAs should not contemplate moving beyond simple land ownership and management

tasks into development ventures until they are fulfilling their basic role competently. Finally, CPAs are not the bodies for business. Communities should look to other publicly-owned structures for that purpose.



Chapter 6: Co-operation with local government

Many current rural development initiatives in South Africa, including TRANSFORM, focus on communities. 'Community' is a dangerous word because it assumes homogeneity that rarely exists. It is also vague as to scale, but is usually thought to mean very local groupings of people at the scale of a village – at most, a few thousand households.

Introduction

Of course, community-focused projects may deal with several communities in similar or integrated ways.

Community-based natural resource management has been a particular focus for many of these rural development initiatives, including TRANSFORM with its emphasis on community-based nature conservation and ecotourism. CBNRM requires many interactions with government or parastatal authorities responsible for conservation and the environment. This interaction hardly ever happens at the purely local level of the community. It typically involves regional, provincial or national offices of the relevant authorities.

Meanwhile, however, the democratic Constitution of South Africa emphasises the developmental role of local government. As the recent White Paper on Spatial Planning and Land Use Management emphasises, 'local government is the sphere of government at the coalface of land development'. The challenge that faces rural development initiatives, including TRANSFORM, is how to structure relations between local government authorities and communities so that rural livelihoods are most effectively enhanced.

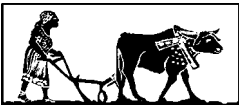
In this chapter, TRANSFORM comments on its experience regarding

linkages between communities and local government, particularly in the field of CBNRM.

The structure of local government

TRANSFORM's experience has spanned a period of change in local government structures. The initial, and only partly successful, period of experimentation with transitional representative councils (TRCs), transitional local councils and assorted other arrangements ended in 2000 with the passing of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act. On the basis of this Act, the Municipal Demarcation Board has restructured local government authorities and redrawn their boundaries, producing a more uniform system across the country. The net result for many rural people, including those at Makuleke and in the Richtersveld with whom TRANSFORM has been working, is larger local government areas ('category B municipalities': see www.local.gov.za/DCD/policydocs/whitepaper/shortguide/sqsecd.html). Local government is less local than it was before. But it is hoped that it will become much more effective than the previous, somewhat smaller scale TRCs and TLCs. Many of those bodies had no executive role in rural development and local government, and next to no capacity for even the most basic functions.

The lowest level of effective local government development planning and



co-ordination is thus the municipality. The municipalities typically cover extensive areas and many communities. The Municipal Demarcation Board's statistical norm for a local, category B municipality is 80 000 people and 3 500km². The Makuleke community now forms part of a municipality that includes the town of Thohoyandou, covers 2 966 km², contains about 537 000 people and includes 36 wards (www.demarcation.org.za). The Makuleke (who probably number about 14 000 people) form part of Ward 9, along with about seven other villages. Ward 9 is represented in the municipality by one councillor. Because it includes a substantial town, the Makuleke's municipality has an exceptionally large population. But it is clear that, if a rural development intervention is working with one or just a few communities the size of Makuleke, the scale of formal local government structures is too large for easy interaction. The municipality is likely to be too high and remote for individual communities to work with it easily. The wards into which municipalities are divided so far serve only electoral purposes.

Of course, a rural development programme may have a larger area of intervention, in which case it is highly appropriate to structure the intervention so that it matches up with municipal boundaries and structures. This will make it easier to lock participatory rural development planning and external relations into the IDP process (see below). In the usually densely-settled geography of former homeland areas in provinces like Mpumalanga, Limpopo province and the Eastern Cape, it often makes sense for rural development programmes to intervene at the scale of the local municipality and the IDP. But individual components of an IDP, such as a community conservation or ecotourism project, may concern only smaller areas and populations within a municipality, as at Makuleke. In that case, they will have to

handle much of their planning and their external relations independently of the municipality.

In exceptional cases, population densities are so low that intervening with just a few communities means intervening at the scale of the municipality. This much simpler situation has been TRANSFORM's experience in the Richtersveld, where progress was made in integrating community-based nature conservation and ecotourism initiatives with the local IDP, and in articulating many of the external linkages through the municipality. However, most of this progress was made before the recent restructuring of local government boundaries. Richtersvelders must now adjust their plans, and the external relations they incorporate, to the realities of a larger municipality that includes the local town of Port Nolloth. The chances that the Richtersveld view on land use and economic planning will be maintained in the final municipal IDP are very good.

Ways to collaborate and communicate

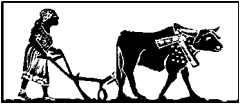
The first principle that community-level rural development interventions should follow is that community initiatives should not be promoted in a vacuum.

Communities and projects should stimulate interaction with local municipalities at three levels:

- information transfer about what is happening at the community level, and about planning processes in which the municipality may be engaged
- consultation between the two levels, so that both are actively aware of each other's activities and express their views about them
- participation and integration, where real links are built to nest community-level initiatives within the municipality's development plans, and where each level is more formally represented in the other's decision-making processes.



At all three levels, one way that outside agencies can help is by promoting face-to-face communication and information exchange. If significant rural development initiatives are occurring in certain communities, councillors and staff of the local municipality should be able to see them for themselves, and discuss them with community representatives. If a municipality is undertaking an IDP or other planning or resource management process, it should have formal structures and procedures for the representation of affected communities. Again, however, outside agencies can help by providing the resources for these interactions to happen adequately and effectively – perhaps by funding capacity building or more frequent visits and meetings. Like many rural development projects, TRANSFORM has learned the enormous value of face-to-face interaction between stakeholders. The most important task for a project in this respect is to facilitate this interaction and thus improve the understanding of the various parties of each others' strengths and weaknesses.



The TRANSFORM focus area with the best record of success so far is Makuleke. But this is a community that has had little communication or interaction with its local government authorities (either the old TRC or the new municipality) about its conservation and ecotourism initiatives. There were some good reasons for this. They are factors that will weigh heavily in any attempts to promote interaction between communities and local government:

- The circumstances of a community initiative may mean that interaction with other agencies and levels of government is much more important than links to the municipality. This was the case for the Makuleke, whose priority was to negotiate a way forward with South African National Parks and the Department of Land Affairs.
- Communication and collaboration with local government is very time-consuming and will often not be very

fruitful because of a lack of motivation and funds on behalf of local government. The Makuleke did not have the time. Many other communities will also be impatient to push their programmes forward.

- Making communication meaningful and collaboration effective will often necessitate capacity building in local government. When capacity building at community level is already a substantial task, this extra burden may seem too heavy.
- Trying to promote community-level initiatives in collaboration with local government is a complex proposition. Many communities will see it as increasing the risk of failure. Local government will have its own ideas on what communities are trying to do. It may try to interfere, or impose its own priorities. If external funding is involved, local government may try to divert it. All these challenges become stronger as collaboration becomes more formal or as community initiatives come to be included officially in a local government's IDP or other plans. Understandably, community leaders may prefer to keep their heads down and avoid all these problems.

Despite the success to date of the Makuleke model, and the cautions set out above, there can be little doubt that community initiatives should link as closely as is feasible to those of the municipality. Where the municipality lacks capacity or is not yet engaged in any significant development planning, it is still important to promote communication between it and local communities about what community-level projects are trying to achieve. Where the municipality is building its planning capacity and/or working on an IDP, communities will gain more in the long run by feeding their initiatives into the IDP process. There may even be cases in which communities committed to development initiatives can group together to push their local municipality into starting work on an IDP.

External rural development agencies can then support the processes at both levels.

Communities should also bear in mind that, in terms of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, the IDP is a compulsory part of the local government process. In theory, at least, IDPs will now be drafted across the country, whether communities are on board or not. There is a significant risk that communities may see their priorities or interests sidelined if they are not proactive about contributing to their local IDP processes.

TRANSFORM's basis for these arguments is the Richtersveld IDP experience that it has supported (see Box 5). The remainder of this chapter focuses on IDPs as a vehicle for collaboration between communities and local government in CBNRM. It refers particularly to what has been achieved in the Richtersveld.

Integrated development plans

Experience in the Richtersveld

During 2000, TRANSFORM supported facilitation of an IDP process in the Richtersveld. The rationale for this has been suggested above, and the opportunities an IDP presented are summarised in Box 5. Despite its sparse population, the Richtersveld attracts considerable outside attention as the scene for a range of potential (rural)

development initiatives. Some are more potentially beneficial for local people than others, but benefits for the Richtersvelders were certain not to be optimised if the local interest were not asserted through a co-ordinated planning process that they controlled. It was clear to TRANSFORM, too, that an IDP offered a way to concentrate and rationalise the many development ideas and initiatives that were floating around the Richtersveld, while helping the local TLC to comply with the new official requirement that it produce such a plan. The interim IDP showed a clear focus on CBNRM and ecotourism as a potential economic motor for the region.

Although the TLC and its Chief Executive Officer were proactive in launching the IDP process, it was clear that local government lacked the capacity for this task. TRANSFORM therefore funded a team of consultant facilitators, who played an essential role in getting the draft Interim IDP completed by the end of 2000. Because these consultants discounted their rates substantially, the total cost of their input was about R110 000. TRANSFORM covered 90% of these costs, which exclude the resources devoted by the TLC from its regular budget and the enormous amount of unpaid time contributed by many Richtersveld citizens. It is clear, then, that a modest but successful IDP exercise like that of the Richtersveld comes at a substantial cost. It also takes a



Box 5: The Richtersveld and the IDP process

The participatory, community-driven integrated development planning (IDP) process that has just been initiated in the Richtersveld through a series of community meetings and workshops provides an ideal opportunity to set local development objectives, identify priority areas and develop an integrated vision for the Richtersveld. It is therefore critical that conservation plans be integrated into this process. This could be a unique opportunity to ensure that the national park, that remains an important asset for the Richtersveld, can be linked to proposed community conservation initiatives, such as a community 'conservancy' that will link the park to a provincial conservation area. Limited opportunities for the expansion of stock farming and the decommissioning of the mines in the future point to the need to investigate other land use options (Isaacs & Mohamed 2000:15-6).

considerable time. The Richtersveld process took about a year, but was based on extensive previous consultation. A properly participatory IDP process would take longer in an area without the tradition of organised public debate that now exists in the Richtersveld. It was quite difficult to get the different communities together to exchange views because of the precarious transport situation in the area. However, it was striking that the process could be structured in a way that produced a high degree of consensus among the Richtersvelders about the priority of CBNRM-oriented development goals.

The Richtersveld IDP process has resulted in a strong public commitment to conservation objectives, and identification of various conservancy initiatives by the communities themselves. These can become models for community-owned and managed protected areas. Seen in this broader context, the output of the IDP effort seems to be well worth the investment that was made. It opens a wide spectrum of development opportunities, although to exploit them successfully the people and their local government will need to co-operate to procure substantial human and financial resources.



The Richtersveld IDP process was built around intensive, repeated rounds of information, awareness raising, consultation and definition of the roles of the different players. In addition to several series of public meetings in each of the four towns in the area, letters were written to every Richtersveld resident to explain the process and to brief them on progress. Besides broad consultations with the general public, a range of more focused consultations took place with key role players, such as SANParks and the mining houses that are active in the area. Furthermore, local capacity to conduct public meetings and manage conflict was strengthened.

The core planning process, built around these consultations, was to:

- agree a development vision for the Richtersveld

- identify development priorities
- filter the vision and the priorities through a situational analysis of the area, which helped to assess how much was feasible
- devise development strategies
- adjust these strategies in the light of the LDOs, which were also drafted (as required by the Development Facilitation Act) as part of the public process
- prepare the IDP through a series of drafts, including an initial working plan which was submitted to the provincial government for review
- following approval of the IDP by the TLC, send it to provincial government for approval.

CBNRM initiatives were central to the Richtersveld IDP debate and the plan that finally emerged. These included the national park itself, and broader ideas for a Richtersveld conservancy or community heritage area. The IDP process is well-suited to the development of CBNRM initiatives, since both require extensive consultations and participatory approaches to planning. By building their CBNRM plans into the IDP and linking them to LDOs, the people of the Richtersveld were able to reinforce those plans with the status and protection that these official processes afford.

The Richtersveld IDP (Richtersveld TLC 2000) was concluded at about the time that the TLC was disbanded and replaced by the new, larger Richtersveld municipality. This means that a new IDP now has to be drawn up for the new local government area. Much of it can, of course, be drawn from the existing plan. A first step that was required of local governments was the production of a short concept note on the 'current reality' in each municipality. This was completed for the Richtersveld in 2001. The role and content of IDPs has been restated by the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act of 2000. This has converted the LDO requirement of the Development Facilitation Act into a requirement for a 'spatial development framework'. The previously separate requirements of two different Acts for IDPs and LDOs respectively have now been combined into one process.

IDP tips and traps

Although TRANSFORM is not aware of any formal evaluation of the IDP experience in South Africa having taken place yet, it has picked up a number of ideas from experience in the Richtersveld and elsewhere:

- There is a risk that established economic interests in the area will not become fully involved in the IDP process. Facilitators should work hard and strategically to bring them in to community advantage. (There is a real risk in the Richtersveld that the conflicting objectives of mining and conservation are resolved to the disadvantage of the latter. This could conceivably happen if the CPA becomes the land owner and mining companies buy in to community development activities in ways that benefit the companies. The objectives of sustainable natural resource management may be damaged by the processes of rapid economic benefit in which mining companies may be more interested. This dilemma will have to be addressed in the final version of the Richtersveld IDP, and monitored closely during implementation).
- Donors supporting IDPs should not use them as an opportunity to push particular kinds of interventions that they favour.
- The two core components of an IDP are enhanced service delivery and development initiatives. While pursuing these, planners should avoid overloading the area and its local government with more projects than they can handle.
- IDPs can be misused, for example if interest groups hijack them to give special emphasis to their own priorities. Watchdog functions need to be built in and strengthened to reduce this risk.
- There is little point in proceeding with an IDP process if local government is not adequately organised for the task.
- Facilitators should never push ahead too fast with an IDP, or upstage local people in the consultations and planning.

- At the outset, facilitators should not only consult broadly with the general public at open meetings. They should also identify and work with key local interest groups, and lobby strategically to establish their concerns and get them committed to the process.
- Although it will slow the process, IDP preparation should not depend too heavily on external facilitators. It is better to build the capacity of a planning team within the municipality.
- Consultant planners should not be allowed to disempower local people in the IDP process. It should be clear when and how they will be phased out of the process. This is why it is important to give careful attention to capacity building in communities and in local government.

IDPs can easily create expectations that cannot be met. This can lead to frustrations and disillusionment later. Realism must permeate the whole IDP process.

Costs, risks and benefits of the IDP process

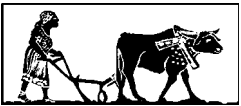
The costs in time and money of an IDP process have already been spelt out. They clearly have to be weighed against the potential benefits of the process. The key risk, as just mentioned above, is that they do not ultimately turn out to be justified by the benefits. It is easy in any planning process to be carried away with fine ideas for the future, without enough sober analysis of what is actually feasible. While efforts were made in the Richtersveld IDP not to create undue expectations and to keep the plans modest, it remains to be seen what practical results the IDP will achieve. Many of these results depend on actions by higher levels of government, and other external agencies, that lie outside the Richtersvelders' control. Matters are complicated by the recent restructuring of local government. Before it can carry much weight, the existing IDP will have to be built into a new IDP for the new, larger municipality; that IDP will have to be approved; and the new municipality will have to apply the necessary capacity to implement the plan.



Despite the high costs and (so far) uncertain results of an IDP, some clear benefits can already be identified:

- at least in the case of the Richtersveld, the IDP process had a unifying effect on the people of the area
- the process also had an empowering effect for the communities of the Richtersveld and for the TLC – local facilitation capacity has been strengthened
- the priorities and commitments of the people of the area have been more clearly expressed
- this statement of local policy has official status, having been expressed in a municipal plan that is required by law.

This last benefit links to the strongest overall advantage of an IDP from the perspective of TRANSFORM. This is its official status. If communities engage with an IDP proactively, they can gain influence for their point of view. The status of the IDP reinforces it as a co-ordination mechanism for the various stakeholders and ideas that may be seeking a role in local development. The IDP has provided a framework within which a range of development proposals can be tested and endorsed in the ways that make best overall sense. It is an instrument that communities can use to demand delivery from government, although they should also consider it a commitment on their side.



Now it will be the task of local government and communities to make use of the improved co-operation processes and facilitation capacities. They are now in a position to go ahead with the necessary implementation and the sourcing of funds, either locally or from outside funders. Both parties should make good use of the facilitation and mediation capacities they have acquired whenever problems and dissent arise.

Conclusion

Given that the Richtersveld IDP experience seems to have been so valuable, we need to ask why similar processes did not occur

at TRANSFORM's other two Phase I focus areas? The reasons are clear. Even before the recent restructuring, the Makuleke formed only a small part of the TRC area for which an IDP might have been prepared. Furthermore, their development plans were focused partly on a separate area (the Makuleke Region of the Kruger National Park) that fell outside the TRC's jurisdiction. Most fundamentally, there was no sign of the capacity in the TRC that would have been needed for an IDP to be attempted. Using external consultants would have been a much more artificial process than it was in the Richtersveld, where there was substantial local capacity with which the facilitators could engage. Kosi Bay, too, was a small area within a very much larger local government unit – there having been no primary-tier local government bodies in KwaZulu-Natal until 2000. So there was no prospect of producing an IDP there either.

The Richtersveld IDP is one of a handful of genuinely participatory IDPs that were generated in the communal areas of South Africa prior to the local government restructuring of 2000. It also had a high CBNRM content. As such, it provided valuable experience for that area and for the country as a whole. Rural development initiatives in more populous provinces like the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo should help municipalities and communities work towards the benefits that IDPs can offer. This will be a challenging task, because of the weak capacity of many municipalities in the communal areas. But it offers the best channel for co-operation between communities and local government in CBNRM and other rural development initiatives. The IDP offers a platform for rural development interventions that span a number of local areas and communities. It may often be appropriate to support capacity-building processes for community and municipality leaders jointly, with a meaningful IDP as the shared goal.

Chapter 7: Making co-management work

In the context of rural development, co-management means joint management of natural resources. It comprises the usual natural resource management (NRM) functions, for example conserving certain species, deciding off-take rates and methods, and defining users, but it implies that these functions are shared between two or more parties.

What is co-management?

Conventionally, these two parties are the state or other official, public agencies, and local people who use, own or have other (potential) interests in the natural resources. Recently, there has been increasing interest in co-management by more than two parties, typically through the currently fashionable community-public-private partnership arrangements. Usually, the resources being managed are demarcated and/or have some sort of protected or specially-managed status, such as a forest reserve, a national park or stocks of a certain fish in South African territorial waters. But the concept can also apply to less specifically demarcated or protected resources, such as the communal grazing lands of a district. Co-management has emerged as a useful concept in the middle of the spectrum of participation in NRM. The spectrum ranges from total state control (as in South Africa's national parks during the apartheid era) to total control by local user-owners. But it is important to define where co-management lies in the middle of this spectrum, and what conditions need to be fulfilled to make it work. It is more than consultation or collaboration. It does not just mean local/user group participation in NRM that remains under the final control of state authorities. It involves a formal sharing of powers and responsibilities, and a strong motivation for common understanding.

Isaacs and Mohamed (2000) point out that in South Africa, as elsewhere, co-management takes two forms. One, which falls more in the realm of TRANSFORM experience, 'is based on a localised coherent community having responsibility for "their" resources, either in co-operation with central state agencies or by having delegated responsibilities'. In the second form of co-management, 'we find the co-operative tradition, where government is co-operating with functional groups, representing the fishers, the processors etc... In both cases we are discussing user group participation, but in the first instance it is based on territory while in the second it is based on function' (Isaacs & Mohamed 2000:4).

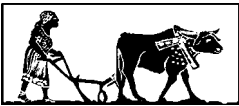
The basic reason for co-management arrangements is that neither the state nor local users or functional groups are felt to be able to manage natural resources optimally by themselves. For example, state conservation agencies are commonly under pressure and lack the resources to manage protected areas as effectively as they should. Rural people in countries like South Africa, whatever their economic or aesthetic concern for the natural environment, similarly lack the resources to do the whole job well. Both parties may also have institutional or political constraints. In South Africa, for example, the idea that the state should control significant parts of the national



environmental heritage without involving the people is no longer politically acceptable. Similar arguments apply to the involvement of the private sector. It may have ample resources for many NRM functions, but be unable to gain local legitimacy or achieve effective NRM on the grounds that it does not share management functions with the people who live in or around the areas it controls. For many reasons, therefore, joint approaches have to be developed.

Key principles of co-management, according to Isaacs and Mohamed, include power sharing, empowerment, organisational capacity building and improved NRM. This is thus much more than participation, consultation or collaboration. Real resource management, they argue, requires an explicit intention to manage resources; an agreed understanding that specified management measures will lead to defined environmental results; and practical management on the ground, not just in policy or plans. Real co-management requires, in addition, that local users or functional groups have real influence on management decisions. 'Defined as strongly as this, there are not many examples of resource co-management in South Africa today' (see Box 6).

This is not to say that other arrangements on the management spectrum have no value. Measures to consult local people on the management of protected resources, or to promote their participation in NRM, can be empowering for rural populations and efficient for conservation authorities. But it helps us to understand and promote both co-management and these other arrangements



if we can distinguish which is which. We now outline what TRANSFORM's experience has been in this regard, and indicate where various South African resource management arrangements fall on the spectrum.

TRANSFORM's experience

Two of TRANSFORM's three Phase I focus areas have been the subject of efforts to develop genuine co-management of protected nature conservation areas. Both the Makuleke Region of the Kruger National Park and the Richtersveld National Park operate as contractual national parks. South African National Parks has growing experience with the contractual national park model, having first established one in part of the West Coast National Park in 1987. According to Reid 2000:

Central to the idea of a contractual national park is the drawing up of the joint management agreement in which the rights and responsibilities of the landowners and South African National Parks are laid out. The terms of the joint management agreement are dictated by the joint management committee, which consists of democratically elected members of the group of landowners and representatives from the conservation authority. This formalising of dual responsibility for management and administration puts the landowners in a position of power, which will in theory facilitate true co-management and enforce high levels of participation.

Box 6: How equal is 'partnership'?

Equal partnership between local communities and National Parks becomes an elusive concept, because the relationship is at best unequal as the control of resources rests with National Parks officials. Those involved in programme development and implementation exercise considerable power over communities. The nature of the relationship between the community and park needs to change fundamentally (Dladla 1998:7, quoted by Isaacs & Mohamed 2000:17).

The Richtersveld National Park

The Richtersveld National Park remains the only one in South Africa that is wholly contractual. It came into being when the then National Parks Board signed a contractual agreement with representatives of the people of the Richtersveld in 1991. The people of the Richtersveld are accepted by the agreement to be the owners of the park (although technically this remains to be finalised in terms of the 1998 Transformation of Certain Rural Areas Act). Terms of the agreement include:

- payment of an annual rental by SANParks to a trust set up in the name of the people of the Richtersveld
- continuation of a defined amount of traditional livestock grazing within the park by local people
- continuation of long-established mining activities within the park
- management of the park by SANParks in terms of a management plan to be drawn up by a Management Plan Committee, comprising four SANParks representatives and five representatives of the people of the Richtersveld
- overall guidance and authority for park management to be provided by the MPC.

In terms of this contract, SANParks has day-to-day responsibility for the technical management of the park, but the co-management body (the MPC) retains overall authority and strategic oversight. It could be argued that this is somewhat less than true co-management, but the intention to share responsibility between the resource owners and the conservation agency is clear.

The Richtersveld's experience of co-management has not been very successful so far. This is mainly because of institutional difficulties surrounding the MPC. Although a management plan was drafted some years ago and has guided SANParks' technical activities, it has never been finalised and approved by the MPC. Relations between the two parties on the MPC have sometimes been poor. More

significantly however, the MPC has not served as an effective representative of its Richtersveld constituents. Feedback from community members of the committee to the general public has been poor; the public have often shown little interest in what the MPC was doing, and the result has been a spiral of apathy. Extended capacity building programmes for community representatives on the MPC have achieved inadequate results (partly because representatives were elected for periods that were too short), and analysis of MPC meetings suggests that community members of the committee do not make a strong management input (Reid 2000).

There have been recent signs of renewed public interest in the park, for several reasons. These include the IDP process (Chapter 6); a major claim for land currently held by diamond companies, in which the community is currently engaged; and the interesting development potential created by the establishment of a 'transfrontier park' connecting the Richtersveld National Park in South Africa with the Fish River Canyon/Ai-Ais National Park in Namibia. This last initiative creates an even stronger need for an effective understanding of how to make co-management work. TRANSFORM has made new efforts to facilitate final agreement of a revised management plan for the Richtersveld National Park in 2001. These stand a good chance of success, because of the strong commitment of both sides to co-operate. The management plan and its implementation require revised institutional arrangements for a new MPC.

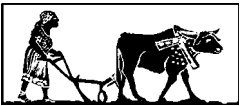
The Makuleke Region of the Kruger National Park

The Makuleke people were forcibly removed from the Pafuri area in 1969 so that the Kruger National Park could be expanded to include their territory. They regained ownership of the land in 1999, following three years of difficult negotiations within the framework of the land restitution process. One of the conditions of the ultimate agreement was



that the land may only be used for conservation purposes. The Makuleke will continue to live in the Ntlaveni area to which the apartheid-era government had removed them.

The Makuleke's agreement with SANParks is more complex than that for the Richtersveld National Park. It comprises both co-management provisions and agreement of exclusive ecotourism rights. The Makuleke Region remains part of the Kruger National Park. As in the Richtersveld, day-to-day technical NRM in the area remains the responsibility of SANParks, although the agreement anticipates that the Makuleke will gradually take over this role as community members gain the necessary training and qualifications. A Joint Management Board (JMB) has been established, comprising three representatives each of the Makuleke CPA and SANParks. This has overall authority over the area, with SANParks acting as its agent in carrying out resource management there. For more frequent interaction, a Joint Management Committee has been set up under the JMB, comprising two people from each side.



At the same time, the Makuleke have exclusive cultural and commercial rights in the area, although decisions taken in this regard must fall within the conservation and environmental guidelines of a Master Plan that the JMB has agreed. As outlined in Chapter 4, the Makuleke are already well down the road to commercial ecotourism developments on this land. They sent ripples through the South African conservation fraternity in 2000 when they licensed their first commercial elephant hunt in the Makuleke Region. There were protests and queries from various quarters in South Africa, but it was soon clarified that the Makuleke were entirely within their rights in this regard.

Both constitutionally and operationally, co-management arrangements by the Makuleke have proved more robust and more effective so far than those in the Richtersveld. The questions of

representivity and legitimacy that have plagued the Richtersveld co-management body have not yet been an issue for the Makuleke. The JMB is proving an effective forum for the exercise of joint management authority and decision making, and for often contentious debate about management strategies. An encouraging recent development concerned renewed controversy over a second proposal by the Makuleke for commercial hunting, in 2001. SANParks representatives in the JMB opposed the plan, as they were entitled to because of the conservation dimensions of the issue. This time the JMB could not reach agreement. The dispute resolution mechanisms provided for by the contractual agreement were set in motion. Although they took time, they did lead to an agreement, and the hunt will now go ahead.

In various ways, TRANSFORM has supported the development of co-management arrangements in these two contractual national parks. Experience so far shows that genuine, effective co-management can be made to work in South Africa. But it also shows that making it work is a substantial challenge. Many institutional, social and political problems can frustrate co-management efforts, as the Richtersveld experience shows all too clearly.

Other consultative and collaborative arrangements

During the time that TRANSFORM worked in the Kosi Bay area of KwaZulu-Natal, there was little sign of consultative and collaborative arrangements between the local people and the provincial nature conservation authorities. There was still less prospect of effective co-management ever emerging. More recently, however, KZN Wildlife has been active in promoting 'local boards'. Kosi Bay actually falls within the area covered by one of the initial four local boards that were established in October 2000. These bodies

play a consultative rather than a co-management role, but do have the important function of compiling and monitoring the implementation of management plans for protected areas (see Box 7). Members of local boards are nominated by the provincial Minister of Agricultural and Environmental Affairs following a public consultation process, and include representatives of traditional authorities, agriculture, business and KZN Wildlife itself. Although it is clear that KZN Wildlife retains strategic and management authority for the province's nature conservation areas, these Boards are an interesting step towards co-management in a province where this sector remains particularly active.

TRANSFORM has had more active involvement in SANParks' development of a comparable concept, the 'park committee'. The idea is that there would be one such body for each national park (possibly several for the Kruger National Park). Their function is to serve 'as a consultative body to represent local stakeholders in the national park concerned in advising park management and to assist with the compilation and periodic review [as well as monitoring the implementation] of the Park Management Plan'. They are intended to 'represent local stakeholders in the ... National Park so that park management can consider their inputs in Park Management Planning' (SANParks 2000). More broadly, they are expected to provide 'a platform for a sound relationship between South African National Parks, the ... National Park and

the local stakeholders with interests in and around the park so that the park can be managed for the benefit of the nation whilst taking the views of local stakeholders into account; and [to promote] co-operation and mutual trust between SANParks and local stakeholders' (SANParks 2000). Members of a park committee will be appointed by the Chief Executive of SANParks, after taking advice from local stakeholders. These local soundings would be part of an area scoping process that would identify independent, unbiased people who could be appointed to the committee, and would also find out what key issues the committee would need to address.

TRANSFORM is working with SANParks to develop the park committee concept during its second phase. KZN Wildlife's local boards remain at an early stage. There are few clear lessons to be drawn from these emerging bodies at this point. It is at least clear that consultative and collaborative mechanisms are going to play an increasingly important role in South African nature conservation, alongside more robust co-management arrangements. Returning to co-management itself, however, we can use the rest of this chapter to outline some key conditions that must be met if co-management is to work effectively.



How to make co-management work: Some key conditions

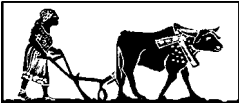
This list of key conditions for making co-management work relies heavily on the

Box 7: Powers of 'local boards' in KwaZulu-Natal

...the objects of the Local Boards are to promote local decision-making regarding the management of nature conservation and heritage resources within protected areas as well as to promote the integration of the activities of the protected area into that of the surrounding area. The powers of the Local Boards are circumscribed by the policies, norms and standards determined by the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Board, ... The most important mechanism whereby the Local Boards will influence decision-making is through their power to compile and monitor the implementation of management plans for protected areas (KZN Wildlife 2001).

work of Hannah Reid (2000 and personal communication), who researched the issue during the first phase of TRANSFORM. Her study sites included the two contractual national parks (Richtersveld and Makuleke) where the project has been working. On the community side of co-management, a number of these conditions are similar to those that apply to successful common property resource management:

- **Rights to the land and resources** to be co-managed must be clearly defined. In South Africa so far, this has meant community ownership, and clarity about who the owners are, has not always been easy to achieve. It would also be possible for the state to retain ownership but enter into a substantive co-management arrangement with local people. In either case, successful co-management requires a definition of the ownership rights and responsibilities of owners, and of the corresponding rights and responsibilities of the partners in the arrangement.
- Part of this clear set of definitions must refer to **resource use rights**, again including careful statement of who may enjoy these rights. This was an important part of the Richtersveld agreement. The hunting controversies in the Makuleke Region have shown the value of clearly stating what resource extraction rights the owners have in that co-management arrangement.
- Devoting land and resources to the purposes set out in a co-management arrangement should offer **clear prospects of profit and economic sustainability** to the land owners (typically, in South Africa, a defined local community). These purposes typically focus on nature conservation and ecotourism, which are likely to be a new and uncertain economic proposition for rural people. Calculating the economic sustainability of such ventures is not easy, but every effort must be made to do it thoroughly. This includes calculating the opportunity



costs – for example, of forgoing crop and livestock production in favour of ecotourism. Whatever the uncertainties, it is clear that the rural poor will not support co-management if they do not see it increasing their incomes.

- Forsaking former management models for the more complex co-management format must be sufficiently **attractive for the state or other conservation agencies** who are to be the community's partners. It may not seem economically attractive, since revenues now have to be shared with another party, and the co-management process is likely to consume more management time than previous arrangements. But conservation authorities are likely to realise that, in time, communities can make valuable economic inputs to co-management, as well as providing their own increasingly skilled technical and management personnel. Changing political realities are also likely to be a strong incentive to co-management in modern South Africa.
- All parties to co-management arrangements have to apply a **proactive, constructive and realistic attitude**. In South Africa, these parties usually come from a history of conflict and confrontation, which may have been real and hostile during the drafting of co-management agreements. (This was certainly true of the Makuleke and the Richtersveld). Co-management can only work when the parties are prepared to set these attitudes behind them and work together in good faith. As members of the Makuleke JMB have found, the results can be empowering and stimulating.
- On the environmental side, co-management of natural resources must be able to **maintain or enhance the biodiversity and ecological integrity** of the area in question. Unless any ecotourism or other economic ventures have an environmentally-robust natural resource base on which to operate, they will be unsustainable.

- On the community side, **structures of representation and authority must be transparent, democratic and legitimate**. This also means that, when benefits are to be distributed, the distribution must be equitable. Questions about representivity and legitimacy have helped to retard the co-management process in the Richtersveld. If the community is divided or not committed with regard to co-management, the process will fail.
- Underlying these requirements is the condition that the **general public in the area understand the co-management arrangements** and what they can and cannot deliver in terms of better livelihoods – as well as the obligations that the agreement will place on them.
- The same conditions apply to **other parties in co-management**. They need to be clearly and equitably focused, and broadly committed to the agreements that have been made. The Makuleke co-management agreement has sometimes been hindered by dissent within SANParks, whose management is less than unanimous about the policy directions being taken.
- On both sides, therefore, it is clear that co-management needs **those responsible for joint decision making to have the necessary authority** from within their organisations or constituencies.
- **Institutional capacity** among all co-management partners is a major prerequisite for success. Research on the first phase of TRANSFORM concluded that it was one of the three most important issues that had to be

addressed if this type of rural development is to be viable (Turner & Meer 2001). The capacity building needs of public authorities or private sector organisations may be less obvious than those of rural communities. But they are also very real. Co-management with rural people is a very different process from the kinds of management with which the public and private sectors are familiar.

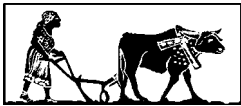
- Co-management agreements must incorporate **viable conflict resolution mechanisms**. This is also a key area of capacity that needs to be built among all parties to co-management agreements.
- Public authorities at the national, and especially the local, levels need to be provide a **supportive policy environment**.
- **Adequate external facilitation and support capacity** must be available to co-management partners from the government and NGO sectors.
- **Co-management must be given time to grow**. Successful co-management arrangements cannot be set up in a hurry. All parties must be patient.

This is a long list. It reminds us how much of a challenge successful co-management is in South Africa (or anywhere else). But, as this chapter has shown, TRANSFORM has enough experience to convince it that co-management is a viable and profitable way for rural people and public and private sector agencies to work together in nature conservation and ecotourism. As economic, political and institutional conditions in South Africa evolve, its importance will grow.



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