EXPLORING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM

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1. Introduction

One of South African government's immediate priorities when coming to power was to redress the imbalances of the past and in particular to improve the quality of life of the poor. The government aimed to achieve this goal through development policies that will have a positive impact on the poor by reducing inequality while at the same time creating opportunities for economic growth. This goal is clearly reflected in a number of policy documents including the government's integrated rural development strategy that aims to eliminate poverty and create full employment by the year 2020 (South Africa 2000). Rural people are said to be at the heart of this strategy and are thus expected to take charge of the development process in their own areas and participate actively in matters that affect their future (Kepe 1998).

As an integral part of economic growth, it is anticipated that the tourism sector will become one of the key drivers of economic expansion and employment creation in South Africa and southern Africa over the next decade (DEAT 1996). Hence the importance of active participation of local people in tourism initiatives.

A long-term vision for tourism (incorporating policy principles, strategic guidelines and a perspective plan indicating what type of product will be developed where) is a basic requirement for any country seeking to develop tourism. In South Africa, this vision is reflected in the 1996 White Paper for the development and promotion of tourism (DEAT 1996). However the detailed planning for, and implementation of, tourism development needs to be highly focused at local level, since this is where tourism takes place.

Literature on the subject of community participation in tourism refers to a number of issues that are central to the success or failure of tourism development initiatives. Of these many are cross-cutting and difficult to discuss in isolation. However, the following text is an attempt to isolate issues of importance in the tourism literature (though sometimes integrated) that need to be investigated and clarified to enable researchers to gain a better understanding of the complexities of communities in tourism development.

2. Defining the community

The stated aim of policy makers is to develop and implement policies that would have a positive developmental impact on the poorest of South Africans, especially those in rural areas. In policy documents 'communities' are regarded as central to achieving these goals. Kepe (1998) therefore asserts that using the term 'community' can have positive effects on the beneficiaries of developmental projects, including tourism and ecotourism initiatives. This is because the community, especially the local or rural community is seen as a pivotal element of the tourism system as tourists, and in particular ecotourists, are keen to experience the cultures of local/host communities. The argument is therefore that these (usually rural) communities should have a direct say in their own development and in matters affecting their future (Kepe 1998). This however raises the question of what exactly constitutes a (local) community.

Defining a community can be problematic. Communities are usually defined in terms of three basic characteristics, namely shared locale (i.e. sharing a geographical

location); common ties (i.e. sharing common economical interests or resources) and social interactions (e.g. family, friendships and traditions). De Lacy and Birckhead's (in Coetzee n.d.) definition of a community is somewhat different. They describe a community as the resident people that are actually indigenous to a specific ecosystem (i.e. the first people or original habitants of a piece of land) and have a close dependence on that ecosystem in order to survive (Furze, et al in Coetzee n.d.).

These definitions concur with Kepe's (1998) assertion that outsiders tend to see a local community as people who live in village localities in rural areas. The tendency is also to see them as a homogenous group who shares the same ideals and needs, which is often not the case. These definitions of community are vague and do not address the issue of boundaries and hence who should be included or excluded from a particular local community.

Although using the term 'community' can be positive when it helps to focus policy on the needs of poor people, it can be negative when it, for example, forces conflicting groups together in a manner which results in the rights of weaker groups to be trampled upon by the actions of more powerful groups (Kepe 1998). These imbalances within communities affect issues such as land (tenure) rights, decision-making power and benefits.

Policy makers and implementers should therefore address mechanisms of community representation that will exacerbate social inequalities (Kepe 1998). This is particularly true as land rights and economic benefits are closely linked within the policy framework of post-apartheid South Africa.

Kepe (1998) therefore argues that a detailed understanding of the social reality is essential in determining who and what constitute a particular local community. He further states that such a detailed understanding of social reality is also needed in order to avoid or resolve conflicting interests. Kepe (1998) believes that local interest groups should be given a major but not exclusive role in deciding who belongs to the community and who does not. Eliffe, Rutsch and De Beer (1998) concur with this viewpoint. According to them the Communal Property Association (CPA) Act 28 of 1996 clearly states that the onus is on the community itself to define who its members are.

However one sometimes finds the situation where new communities emerge and old ones disintegrate within the context of rapid social change and people's desire to be part of the beneficiary community. Sometimes there is a recall of past associations by groups to ensure that they are seen as part of the beneficiary community. For example, the proposed Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) at Mkambati in the former Transkei, has intensified disputes over who are the rightful owners of that particular land and hence should share in the potential benefits of the proposed SDI (Kepe 1998). The Khanyayo people made a strong case that emphasised their spatial (geographical), socio-economic and historical (traditional) ties with the land, claiming that Chief Jama from the Khanyayo people had legal jurisdiction over the land since the late 1800s.

However there is also the question of groups within larger groups, especially in the case of tribal authority boundaries. This raises the problem that of defining the

boundaries of a particular local community and hence who should be included or excluded from that community. The Khanyayo community is a case in point. They form part of the much larger Thaweni tribal authority. Despite their strong historical claims to land rights, they have a rather weak political voice (Kepe 1998). This has resulted in five other administrative areas also laying claim to that particular land, stating that because they and the Khanyayo all form part of the Thaweni tribal authority they are all entitled to the land.

This situation fortunately has been amicably resolved. The local structures from the surrounding communities were asked to form a representative committee, which would participate on their behalf in the SDI process. This not only proved useful in understanding the underlying dynamics in the area and the negotiations around land claims, i.e. the social reality, but it also enhanced the process of building the necessary relationship with the community to ensure effective implementation of the projects (Eliffe et al 1998).

3.   Community involvement/participation in joint tourism ventures

Due to the establishment of protected areas such as nature and game reserves, many local communities were moved out of these areas and relocated elsewhere, usually just outside the boundaries of these protected areas. This resulted in these communities being excluded from relevant ecosystems and the resources upon which they depend as part of their livelihood strategies, for example land (for subsistence farming, grazing of cattle, etc.), animals to hunt, firewood and water. In South Africa for example, a number of African families were moved from Ingwavuma during 1983 in order to establish the Tembe Elephant Park. They had been relocated outside the boundaries of the Park where there was no adequate water (Association for Rural Advancement, in Coetzee n.d.).

These measures, although beneficial to both conservation and the tourism industry, became a threat to the development and survival of displaced people (communities). Communities were not only excluded from benefiting from the natural resources in these protected areas, but were also excluded from benefiting from the lucrative tourism industry. Because of this, an imbalance occurred in the management and utilisation of natural, protected areas (Coetzee n.d.). This imbalance needs to be addressed and local communities need not only to benefit from these areas, but also need to be involved in how they are managed. Not only local communities but also the tourism industry will benefit from this. Coetzee (n.d.) argues that without the involvement and active participation of local communities, tourism ventures may not reach their full potential and may even fail.

Allowing the community to be an active partner in the management of projects concerning their immediate environment will give community members greater control over their own lives (Coetzee n.d.). This will involve access for community members to the resources of the land and an equitable share in its management. This raises the question of which community members should be participating in the management team and how they should be elected. Eliffe et al (1998: 8) believe that community participation should be balanced between open and closed debates, i.e. open forums for all interested stakeholders and closed meetings with the main representatives. Eliffe et al (1998) also stress that it is important to be aware of

different groupings such as civic organisations, youth groups, women's groups and traditional leaders. They also warn of the tension that still exist between traditional leaders and civic organisations in some areas and stress the importance of not appearing to favour one at the expense of others.

The best way to satisfy the needs of all parties interested in the management of joint tourism ventures, is to make use of allocation systems (Coetzee n.d.). This means that the management of resources, because they are going to be shared, should be distributed fairly among the majority of stakeholders operating the venture. The ratios used when setting up the allocation systems must be acceptable to all relevant parties.

Being involved in management therefore means the right to participate in decision making as equal partners. In order to do this, members need to receive the necessary education and training in their own language. It is also imperative that all forms of consultation and communications with community members occur in a manner that is culturally acceptable (Coetzee n.d.).

Coetzee (n.d.) believes that enhanced community participation will also increase community participation in conservation and result in community members being more willing to use natural resources in sustainable ways. Coetzee (n.d.: 8) states: 'Being active partners and reaping the benefits could in the end make communities sustainable.'

4.   Cultural issues

Tourists, especially ecotourists are primarily interested in the indigenous flora, fauna and cultural heritage of host communities. Through exposure to the cultural heritage of a local community, ecotourism can lead to an understanding of local knowledge among tourists and lead to an appreciation and hopefully respect for the culture of the host community (Pinnock in Coetzee n.d.). This in turn often encourages local communities to develop their cultural assets such as customs, handicrafts, architecture, food, theatre and dance (Coetzee n.d.). However when culture is made to serve tourism, it is being transformed into a market-oriented commodity, which may have varied consequences, both positive and negative.

It is true that the commercialisation of cultures and other impacts of tourism can have negative impacts on local communities. The biggest negative impact is one of cultural change. Butler and Hinch (1996 in Coetzee n.d.) states that although each culture is unique, it constantly evolves in the face of change. Despite the fact that cultures evolve in the face of change, especially modernisation, and would do so regardless of the advent of tourism, some feel that tourism, and especially ecotourism, accelerates this process. Questions of authenticity therefore become much more difficult to address in communities that are exposed to tourists (Butler & Hinch, in Coetzee n.d.).

Even though many tourists may revel in the cultural experiences of host communities, one finds at times that those cultural customs that have been preserved or rejuvenated may not necessarily be those which are highly valued by the local culture. The revival of ancient festivals and the restoration of cultural landmarks, in some cases, have emerged in ways that pose long-term threats to the existence of some cultures in their original form. In other cases however, this form of cultural awakening have resulted

in host communities becoming more aware of the historical and cultural continuity of their communities and thus created an enriching experience for all (Wright 1993).

In order to minimise the negative impact of tourism and enhance its positive effect, it is imperative that the developer and marketer of tourism, and especially ecotourism, is sensitive to the needs of both the tourist and the hosts. The diverse social, cultural and economic impacts of tourism therefore need to be spelled out to both tourist and host alike. It is also important that all involved practise good environmental management.

In order to avoid the occurrence of cultural change, especially negative cultural change, within a community exposed to tourism, it is imperative that prior to their visit, tourists be briefed about culturally acceptable behaviour. It is also important that tourists have a good understanding of their hosts' culture that goes beyond the simplistic or idealised (romanticised) notions. It is also essential that tourism facilities and systems be designed in such a way that local people will feel comfortable with the role they have to play and thus display natural behaviour. People should not be expected to behave in ways that would humiliate or ridicule them. Tourism excursions should also be planned carefully to avoid negative impacts, and structures need to be developed that will ensure that the localised effects of tourism are not destructive (Coetzee n.d.).

The following example, reported by Ashley and Jones (2001) illustrates how tourists and a host community can co-exist amicably in a way that is mutually beneficial. The Himba people of Namibia are most probably its most advertised cultural group and attract the interests of many tourists who are in search of an authentic cultural experience. Kaokohimba Safaris and the Himba communities of Marienfluss Valley have an understanding that is profitable to both.

The core cultural product offered by the safari company is a visit to a Himba village. These visits are equally divided between the two main settlements at Okapupa and Ombivangu. These village visits however are not guaranteed and need to be approved by the village elders. Because of the good relationship between the safari company and the communities, visits are usually approved. Tourists respect the daily activities of the Himba, with no 'performances' requested or conducted. Ongoing activities of the Himba are explained with as little interference as possible. Kaokohimba Safaris always take plenty of time to discuss issues and concerns that the community has and will not leave unless certain elder people have been greeted and matters arising have been satisfactorily discussed. Photos are taken only with permission from the community and this costs extra.

If tourists want to take photos or videos for commercial purposes, an additional payment has to be made to the Marienfluss Development Fund, a voluntary fund initiated by the Kaokohimbi Safaris and administrated by the Namibia Nature Foundation. The community usually selects a purpose for the money in the fund but the operator reserves the right of final approval to avoid unrealistic developments. Additional inputs from the safari company include a shop that sells basic supplies, road maintenance, rubbish collection and disposal, awareness raising among tourists, facilitation, health care provision, transport and communications. A large craft development project has also been initiated by Kaokohimba Safaris who, since 1995, have bought crafts and artefacts from the Himba which they sell elsewhere.

5.   Legal context

The legal context in which community participation in tourism takes place is often complex. Issues such as clarity on land ownership, legal representative bodies, definitions of who need to be included or excluded from a particular community need clarification before any resource-based tourism initiatives can be pursued (see defining community, p. 1).

Mahony and Van Zyl (2001: 43) for instance refer to uncertainty over land rights in the case of the Manyeleti tourism initiative that resulted in protracted delays in the implementation of the project due to conflicting interests associated with a land claim process. They also claim that investors are generally wary of becoming involved in initiatives unless the land rights issues have been concluded, or at least the expectation that the issue will be irreversibly finalised. It is also mentioned that clear arrangements that protect the rights of investors and communities can go a long way to expedite the development of tourism opportunities.

Tourism development on communal land or land held in trust by the state can also be complex and time consuming since any tourism operator has to obtain a PTO (permission to occupy) certificate from the state under normal circumstances. In some instances in Namibia and Zimbabwe, legal rights over wildlife, land and natural resources have been devolved to resident communities (Ashley & Jones 2001: 2). This opened legal avenues for communities to gain rights over assets such as wildlife and tourism concessions. These rights are often held and exercised by means of the establishment of a community trust, Section 21 company or CPA (Community Property Association).

Eliffe et al (1998) suggest that a community trust is established when a person (founder or donor) creates a legal entity that controls certain assets to the benefit of a person or persons. All the assets of the trust vest in the trustees in their representative capacity. Trustees can therefore not use or take assets to further their own personal gain. Immovable property held by the trust must be registered in the name of the trustees in their representative capacity. The creation of a trust to manage assets of a community can therefore be attractive due to the flexibility that such an entity presents because of minimal legal requirements that need to be met. However, there is no built-in protection against mismanagement and manipulation of a trust. Power accumulation by an elite is therefore a danger to marginalised people that are beneficiaries of such a trust.

The establishment of a Section 21 company is another option that communities can utilise to establish a legal entity to represent and manage joint-owned assets. Some critics nevertheless argue that trusts and CPAs are the only suitable vehicles to own land on behalf of a group. They contend that the Companies Act 61 of 1973 in terms of which a Section 21 company may be formed, is essentially a commercial piece of legislation and not designed for group land use and occupation. A number of legal and administrative formalities and requirements turns a Section 21 company into a more complex, time consuming and expensive structure than either community trusts or CPAs.

The Community Property Association (CPA) Act 28 of 1996 is specifically designed to enable disadvantaged communities to form juristic persons (CPAs) enabling them to acquire, hold and manage property in accordance with a written constitution. CPAs are required to be equitable, democratic, non-discriminatory and fully responsible to members (Eliffe et al 1998). An important provision of the CPA Act is the need to obtain approval from the Minister of Land Affairs before establishing a new CPA. Procedurally, establishing a CPA is of comparable complexity or even more so than that of establishing a Section 21 company.

Establishing a community trust seems to be the easiest and least complex route to take in establishing an entity responsible for managing property and other fixed community assets. However, a significant trade-off is the fact that trustees of a community trust are generally less accountable to their members than directors of a Section 21 company or a management committee of a CPA to their members or shareholders.

6. Institutional context

A major developmental goal for tourism is to plan and facilitate tourism development so as to ensure that tourism projects realise their objectives (Cleverdon 2002). The achievement of this goal is highly dependent on the active participation of the various actors in the tourism project. These actors may include government (national, provincial and local), private driven and community-based organisations.

6.1 Role of government

As the custodian of communal land, government often has an important role to fulfil in providing an enabling legal and developmental framework to assist tourism on communal land in South Africa. However, despite being in a position to create an enabling environment, this has not always been the case in practice. Poultney and Spenceley (2001: 3) reported that a number of national departments and authorities as well as provincial government departments attempted to influence tourism development. However, the different levels of operation of authorities often cause conflict that does not contribute to a conducive environment for private sector investments.

Currently national, provincial and local government departments are pursuing a number of initiatives in an attempt to draw tourism investment from the private sector. The best known are the Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) of the National Departments of Transport and of Trade and Industry which aim to unlock the under-utilised economic development potential of certain locations in southern Africa.

The Community-Public-Private-Partnership (CPPP) programme aims to revitalise the rural economy by facilitating investment targeted at promoting partnerships between communities, the private sector, and the state. The programme is designed to ensure that new investments benefit poor communities through sustainable growth, empowerment and the sustainable use of resources.

Mahony and Van Zyl (2001: 11) provide a prime example of typical government involvement in tourism development linked to SDIs. As part of government's drive to

commercialise its public assets, tourism concessions within the Manyeleti game reserve in the Limpopo Province was put up for tender to private sector investors. The main objective with this commercialisation process was to present an opportunity to investors, government and local communities to achieve policy objectives with regard to tourism development, employment creation, economic empowerment of poor communities and land reform. In this instance, the provincial government was the lead agent for driving the process and carried the responsibility to act as environmental custodian for land owned by the state. They also funded the initiative with some financial and professional backing from the Phalaborwa SDI.

However, many local administrations are reportedly in a state of crisis. Cleverdon (2002: 15) reports they have no regard for, understanding of, or budget to facilitate the development or promotion of tourism in many instances. Mahlati (1999) adds that many of the provincially and locally driven agri-tourism SDIs are often affected by the limited capacity of local authorities as many of the rural district/regional councils are new and still grappling with structural and capacity issues. This creates problems and threatens the sustainability of the projects. Cleverdon (2002) argues that institutional strengthening and capacity building at these levels are leading priorities for the short-to-long term, since without it many tourism development opportunities will not occur. The need is to generate knowledge and enthusiasm through creating a cadre of appropriately qualified tourism officials operating at the various levels of government. He also remarks that provincial and local governments have a vital and justified role on the grounds that tourism involves and impacts on so many entities and places demands on publicly provided infrastructure and amenities.

The problems experienced at local level are further exacerbated by the existing discourse between tribal authorities and democratically elected local authorities. This problem is mentioned by Kepe, Ntsebeza and Pithers (2001) who shows that, with both democratic rule and traditional authorities in rural areas enshrined in the Constitution, a fierce conflict has developed between the two, with traditional authorities opposed to what they call 'erosion' of the powers they held before. This conflict is heightened by the government's failure to clarify the powers, functions and legitimacy of traditional authorities.

Mahlati (1999) raises another important problem experienced at the local, national and provincial levels of government with regard to tourism initiatives. She indicates that there is often poor co-ordination of various interventions (governmental and non-governmental) at the local level. This problem often leads to manipulation by the few who have access and community conflict as a result of competition for, control of, and access to resources. The lack of co-ordination among the various actors at the local level often leads to institutional conflict and struggles for power. Such conflicts tend to divert focus away from local users, sidelining or rendering them invisible (Shackleton et al 2002). At national and provincial level, Mahlati (1999) argues that the lack of co-ordination among government departments is a major problem. She mentions that inter-departmental co-ordination is experienced in situations where a programme requires specific 'feedstocks' (local governance, environment, infrastructure, etc.) that fall outside the competency of the driving department.

Roe and Urquhart (2001) list a number of roles that governments can perform within support of pro-poor tourism. It includes consulting with poor residents when making

decisions about tourism, providing secure tenure for the poor over tourism land or assets and using planning controls and investment incentives to encourage private operators to make and implement pro-poor commitments within a framework of broader sustainability. It also involves encouraging dispersion of tourism to poor areas by means of infrastructural investment and marketing, ensuring that good policy is followed up with implementation through linking policy to budgeting cycles and building sufficient implementation capacity at the appropriate levels of government, as well as devolution of resources, promoting pro-poor enterprises and products in national marketing material, revising regulations that impede the poor in employment or small business, and integrating awareness of pro-poor tourism into growth strategies and small-enterprise strategies.

For effective collaboration and resource alignments at all levels, Mahlati (1999) points out that it is important to create an appropriate institution that will:

- drive the integrated strategy and facilitate collaboration
- co-ordinate and facilitate efficient operations with clear procedures (opportunities, procurement and liaison with communities)
- institute a sound communication process that can facilitate an ongoing flow of information between parties
- motivate officials and recognise their performance.

Inconsistency in participation by government departments will slow down and even undermine the project conceptualisation, packaging, adjudication and especially the implementation process.

6.2   Role of private sector

In the case of tourism development in the Manyeleti game reserve, the private sector acted as investor, developer, operator and principal risk taker. Private sector business was expected to provide skills and capital needed to establish and operate envisaged new initiatives. More specific details with regard to socio-economic roles and responsibilities of private sector investors also included the empowerment of local communities through employment, capacity building, training, involvement in planning and decision-making processes, and supporting local SMMEs. All of the roles above relate to direct tangible and non-tangible benefits that local community members might receive when participating in tourism development initiatives. Kirsten and Rogerson (2002: 32) mention that local indirect tourism opportunities might, among others, include the development of business linkages between established tourism enterprises and small local enterprises, which are an important part of upgrading local SMME economics. Private sector tourism developers can therefore make an important contribution to small local business development by outsourcing tourism-related opportunities such as supplying foodstuffs, handicrafts, laundry services, furniture production, transport services and guiding.

6.3 Role of NGOs and consultants

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are another important role player in tourism development. In a study on joint ventures between communities and tourism investors by Ashley and Jones (2001), it is mentioned that during negotiations between investors and local communities, various NGOs have an important role to play. A study of the setting up of the Damaraland Camp in Namibia revealed that the local NGO, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) played a significant role as facilitator, assisting the community to organise, consult and negotiate. A number of advisors with expertise in economics and legal arrangements were also brought in by the IRDNC. The community initially involved the IRDNC because they were of the opinion that they lacked knowledge on the workings of the tourism industry, its potentials and pitfalls and could not analyse or interpret financial statements. During the negotiation process, the private sector partner also reaped benefits from the IRDNC facilitation that was provided. It provided them with a better understanding of the needs and concerns of the community.

In two studies of devolution and natural resource management in three Asian countries and eight southern African countries, Shackleton (2002) found that NGOs played an important facilitatory and capacity building role in helping to bridge different views between local people and government agencies and manage conflict within or among communities. In some cases NGOs were used as project implementers or were the power brokers between communities and government. They showed greater commitment to empowering communities and worked better to integrate the development needs of local people. Furthermore, they offered training, provided technical information and promoted gender equity. However, the influence of NGOs was not always positive for local people because they sometimes sided with the state or created dependency rather than empowerment. As representatives of local communities, some NGOs pushed communities into decisions they might otherwise not have taken.

Sproule (2002) remarks that local NGOs can be valuable partners in the process of developing community-based ecotourism enterprises in almost any area. They can be sources for training, technical assistance, advocacy at the national level, and in some instances they can also provide financial assistance. In addition, these organisations often have members or constituencies that want information and guidance on ecotourism issues so as to be able to influence consumers of ecotourism.

7. Joint venture tourism models

In Mahony and Van Zyl (2001) two types of tourism empowerment models are referred to with regard to tenders received for the joint tourism development of the Manyeleti Game Reserve adjacent to the Kruger National Park. The first is an equity model allocating a percentage of equity to a separate community-owned legal entity. The second is a benefit model that allocates a percentage of turnover to a separate community-owned legal entity, making available training opportunities and investing in infrastructure.

Ferrar et al (1997: 42) shed more light on four typical models or variations available for communities participating in tourism ventures. The first is the landlord/tenant

model where the ownership and control of the tourism ventures are entirely in the hands of the tourism developer. Any package of benefits must be negotiated upfront as part of a lease contract and can in some instances only encompass financial compensation for leasing a portion of land.

The second model is referred to as the financial incentive model (similar to the benefit model of Mahony & Van Zyl 2001). This model usually takes the form of a bed levy, percentage of profit, annual rental fee, payment for community services or a combination of monetary benefits that accrue to the community.

The third model is a management-sharing model (similar to the equity model), which implies a full joint venture where both the tourism investor and the community contribute assets and share the associated returns proportionally. Economic and other non-monetary benefits accruing to the community are potentially higher than in other models as a result of the higher returns and wider distribution of benefits. The community representatives also share an increased responsibility as decision-making body.

Lastly, Ferrar et al (1997) refer to a community enterprise where local people are in full control of a business venture. Reportedly, financial returns are initially low because of capital, business expertise and communication skills that are limited. Community enterprises are nevertheless labour intensive, resulting in a relatively high economic rate of return with a significant empowerment potential. However, the risk factor of such an enterprise is usually large due to a high failure rate.

8. Communication

Information constitutes one of the most important links in the development process. Kepe (1999) argues, in his study of the Wild Coast SDI, that adequate information must be both given and received in the development process if any empowerment and participation is to take place. The employment strategy to be employed in a development project should facilitate information sharing among the various stakeholders, thus allowing them to participate in and embrace the development project. For example, planners and implementers need physical and social information about the geographical area of the planned intervention. On the other hand, social actors in that particular locality need as much information as possible about the project, both before and during implementation. Information to local social actors is even more crucial in cases where, like the SDIs, the project does not originate from a locality-specific need assessment.

Kepe (1999) identifies two categories of constraints to effective information sharing with people in the Wild Cost SDI development project. These include the message and the channel of communication. Although these constraints were applicable to the Wild Coast SDI, they could serve as important lessons for other similar tourism initiatives.

Kepe (1999) found that:
- Other than senior government officials, relevant project personnel and other consultants, very few people, including people tasked with informing or

consulting with people in the anchor project areas, knew much about the foundation and detailed plans of the SDI at first.

- The baseline reports on land, environment and tourism were to some extent technical and lacked basic information on the SDI. These reports were never widely available to the public.

- When specific plans about particular projects were eventually communicated to some people in the affected localities, further developments in these projects did not always reach the same people.

- In situations where the content of the message was detailed, it was quick, ill-placed in terms of process and with minimal follow-up.

- The presentation of the message was primarily in English with limited translation into local languages.

- Limited time was devoted to the presentations, resulting in people having to make hasty choices.

- In cases where information was detailed, it failed to serve the desired purpose because of poor planning and the inappropriateness of the channels through which it was provided.

8.1 Channels of communication

The channels through which any information is shared is crucial to the effectiveness of any communication strategy (Kepe 1999). However, the choice of the communication channel often depends on who is communicating what message to whom. In the case of the Wild Coast SDI, community facilitators were seen as key to the communication strategy for this development project by introducing the Wild Coast SDI to local people and to assist in the establishment of local committees to deal with subsequent SDI-related issues. To be able to achieve this, facilitators were expected to engage in face-to-face meetings with beneficiaries. However, a number of problems were experienced in this regard, namely:

The backgrounds of the facilitators were a constraint in several ways

- Besides knowing very little about the Wild Coast SDI, most facilitators were mainly from towns, often with only a limited understanding of local dynamics within the rural areas they were assigned to. This limited understanding resulted in many facilitators lacking the confidence to perform their duties to their best ability or being realistic about the nature of the rural societies and the capabilities of rural communities.

- The tension between local government officials, traditional authorities and the community made it difficult for facilitators to work in their assigned areas as they were viewed with great suspicion. This resulted in many facilitators not even attempting to visit the areas that they perceived to be hostile towards them.

- The distance from the localities and absence or scarcity of transport to many villages resulted in many meetings not being followed up.

Organisation of meetings

- Meeting announcement reached only a few people.

- Meetings were hastily organised with the message reaching only a few people.
- When meetings were advertised in advance, people would often wait for the entire day, only to hear sometime later that the meeting had been cancelled because of bad weather or lack of transport for the facilitators.
- Poorly planned meetings reduced the effectiveness of the entire consultation strategy.

Meeting attendance

- People rarely attended meetings, including meetings organised or held at the headman or chief's place or advertised on time.
- Meetings were attended mostly by men who had prior knowledge about and a vested interest in what was going to be discussed.
- Poor attendance of meetings was usually felt during the growing seasons when villagers spent most of their time in the fields.

Politics

Politics affected participation in meetings in various ways.
- In situations where political parties were used to organise meetings, people who belonged to opposing parties would either not be informed or feel excluded from the meetings.
- Some community facilitators were forced to lean towards favouring the dominant group in order to gain favour and credibility, thus further alienating those from other parties.

Given the above-mentioned problems related to the communication strategy, it is important to view development as a continuous process where allowance is made for review and adjustments. For information exchange to have positive effects at any stage of the process, proper planning and careful utilisation of available information on local dynamics need to be seriously considered. It is also important to realise that these constraints will not vanish overnight but require a unified effort from both local and external social actors.

9. Benefits provided to local communities

The promotion of the tourism sector by governments and donor organisations at an international level has aimed at encouraging private sector investment, macroeconomic growth and foreign exchange earnings without specifically taking the needs of the poor into account (Mahony & Van Zyl 2001). The assumption was that government intervention is unnecessary, as the benefits of growth in the tourism industry would eventually trickle down to the poor. However, pro-poor tourism strategies express a counteraction to this approach as they emphasise the importance of introducing mechanisms for ensuring that both the economic and non-economic benefits of tourism growth also flow to the poor (Ashley, Boyd & Goodwin 2000). The importance of pro-poor strategies are reflected by Brayshaw (1999) who indicates that 'local communities receiving benefits from protected areas are very much at the fore of any partnership between rural communities and protected area staff, as these will render the initiatives useful and worthwhile to the community'. These benefits need to be meaningful and appropriate to the receiving communities.

The literature on a number of case studies (eg. Shackleton et al 2002; Mahony & Van Zyl 2001; Coetzee n.d.; Brayshaw 1999) indicates that benefits that local communities gain from development projects can be divided into tangible and non-tangible benefits.

9.1 Tangible benefits

According to Brayshaw (1999), tangible benefits need to flow to communities so that they could support conservation operations thus making conservation an affordable option for beneficiary communities. Tangible benefits may take various forms, including the following:

9.1.1 Employment

Employment is often seen as one of the greatest benefits communities receives from tourism initiatives. Considering that unemployment is one of the major problems facing most rural areas in South Africa today, employment opportunities can impact positively on rural communities. However, Brayshaw (1999) argues that the employment created by protected areas is often limited in numbers in relation to the number of unemployed people in a community. In addition, the employment offered is often of an inferior nature with little opportunity for advancement. What is therefore required, Pimbert and Pretty (in Brayshaw 1999) argue, is to use employment as a chance to train local community members in conservation practices and management positions so that in the future they can take over activities in a meaningful manner. This facilitates empowerment rather than simply creating employment at the lowest levels. In the case of tourism development, Mahony and Van Zyl (2001) alert us to situations where providing employment to staff members from the local and neighbouring communities can result in tension between the local community and those located further away as they might feel excluded from securing employment.

9.1.2 Economic benefits

Mahony and Van Zyl (2001) found that local communities could use the revenue generated from tourism activities to maintain the initiatives. The income provided could be used to initiate development projects that benefit the whole community. In the Makuleke case, revenue generated from hunting was used in development projects, such as the construction of a clinic and school.

Profit sharing of the monetary turnover of a tourism initiative is important in maintaining good relations between communities and the tourism initiative. This gives the community an incentive to support the activities of the tourism initiative, as its success will have direct implications for the community. Brayshaw (1999) argues that the amount should be calculated between stakeholders and should be transparent and acceptable to all.

9.1.3 Small business development

Tourism initiatives should be structured in such a way that they are able to generate opportunities for local small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) to enable them to provide products or services of an acceptable standard and at a competitive price. To ensure that the local community is able to take up such SMME opportunities, various training programmes should be initiated (Mahony & Van Zyl 2001).

Direct benefits are very important in sustaining the short-term viability of a tourism initiative. Communities need to receive tangible benefits in order for them to perceive tourism initiatives as worthwhile. However, the benefits that the community receives need to be expanded by more long-term and empowering benefits for the project to be sustainable. These direct benefits are important in keeping good relations with the community and play a vital role in the economic development of the area, but should not be the only form of benefits as direct benefits often create dependency and do not facilitate an empowering process (Brayshaw 1999). Intangible benefits are therefore also needed.

9.2 Intangible benefits

Benefits can also be of a more intangible nature involving more indirect benefits. Brayshaw (1999) argues that indirect benefits can induce a sense of ownership and allow communities to exercise some form of control. This gives communities an opportunity not to be passive beneficiaries of a stream of benefits, but become actively involved in the decisions that impact on their lives.

9.2.1 Capacity building and training

According to Brayshaw (1999) benefits should lead to empowerment, thus leading people to control their own lives. Capacity building and training is one of the key elements of empowerment to ensure that the community takes advantage of the various opportunities that arise (Mahony & Van Zyl 2001). The empowering benefits can include entrepreneurial development, education and awareness, and should result in communities attaining capacity to control their total environment. Brayshaw (1999) argues that this must be developed through a process of education and training, both formal and informal, skills transfer, improvement of skills and knowledge, information dissemination, provision of support and resourcefulness, building collective community confidence and the acceptance of responsibility, accountability and the principle of self-reliance. However, Mahony and Van Zyl (2001) point out that capacity-building initiatives should be ongoing to allow the community to assume full control of the initiative.

9.2.2 Participation in decision making

Participation in decision making is a key element of the empowerment process. Through the tourism initiative, communities will have a chance to come in contact with various external institutions and participate effectively in development activities and decision-making process. This could lead to the empowerment of communities to mobilise their own capacities, manage resources, make decisions and control activities that affect their lives (Coetzee n.d).

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9.2.3 Social and cultural benefits

According to Mahony and Van Zyl (2001) the tourism initiative can create several positive social and cultural benefits for the local community. Culturally, the tourism initiative can provide a market for locally produced arts and crafts, thus fostering the community's traditional skills and cultural identity. These authors identify a number of issues that need to be considered when providing benefits to receiving communities:

- Be realistic about the impacts of the tourism investment on rural development and economic growth. Investment should not be regarded as the cure for rural development, but rather as a component of a larger rural development programme.

- Demonstrate short-term benefits to the community while waiting for the longer-term development programme to unfold, for benefits from tourism development are slow to materialise.

- All stakeholders need to agree on a clear plan for distributing communal benefits at an early stage of the project implementation, because the magnitude of benefits in relation to the size of many rural communities is often very small.

- Put in place specific measures to target marginalised or vulnerable community groups in order for them to benefit from the tourism initiative.

- Develop good corporate governance in institutions responsible for the management of benefits to ensure an equitable and sensible allocation of benefits to the community.

- Ensure that strong institutions and effective monitoring mechanisms are in place to monitor and enforce compliance.

10. Quality of life

According to Odendal and Schoeman (1990) tourism can enhance the development of rural areas on an ecological and economically viable basis and improve the quality of life of the rural poor. Measuring quality of life however is not an easy task as it is largely a subjective concept. Aside from a direct enquiry as to an individual's level of contentment or lack thereof, there is no clear way to determine whether a person has a good or poor quality life (Nedlac n.d.).

Despite the subjective nature of the concept quality of life, there are certain key indicators that can be used to assess how issues external to an individual can make life easier or more difficult for that person (Nedlac n.d.). These factors are largely practical and material, and can be measured and rated. Zimmerman (2002) agrees with this statement. According to him, the rural poor have identified unemployment, powerlessness and a lack of services as signs of poverty and lacking a good quality of life. They further expressed a need for water, electricity and education as ways that will improve their quality of life.

Service delivery and the provision of infrastructure therefore remain central to alleviating the daily hardships experienced by millions of South Africans, especially the rural poor. Infrastructure should therefore form the basis upon which most development programmes are built (Mbeki 1998). Development however is only real if it makes our lives better and among other things, contributes to a long and healthy life and meets essential needs for jobs, food, energy, water, etc. (DEAT 1996).

Through the various public works programmes government has over the last few years ensured that the provision of infrastructure takes place in a manner that enhanced job opportunities for the unemployed and provided essential services. Despite these efforts, however, the majority of the rural poor still live in under-served areas.

Odendal and Schoeman (1990) state that tourism can enhance the development of rural areas and thus improve the quality of life for the rural poor. One should however keep in mind that the societal impacts of tourism present mixed results. Although an improved standard of living may occur for individuals in communities dependent on tourism, especially ecotourism, the overall effect on culture and language may not be in the best interest of local communities and may even contribute to the homogenisation of societies, and for example, cause an erosion of indigenous languages (Mathieson & Wall 1982).

The display of prosperity amid poverty, for example rich tourists staying in five-star hotels and lodges and mingling with poor local people in the host community may cause resentment. Contributing effects also include the overcrowding of infrastructure, accommodation, services and facilities which tourists have to share with the host community. Other negative impacts include the increase in activities deemed to be undesirable, such as prostitution, gambling, alcohol and other substance abuse, crime and the breakdown of social networks.

On the positive side, however, tourism can change people's access to assets and expose them to more livelihood options (Ashley, Boyd & Goodwin 2000). It can generate funds for investment in health, education and other assets and provide quality infrastructure, which is a prerequisite for successful tourism ventures. Tourism can also stimulate development of social capital, strengthen sustainable management of natural resources and create a demand for improved assets, especially education. Access to disposable income has, for example, resulted in local people buying more consumer items, which in turn stimulate the local and other retail trading opportunities.

The poor is not a homogenous group, however, and the range of impacts, both positive and negative, will be distributed unevenly amongst them. Impacts also differ between men and women. The poorest of the poor will be the most affected by reduced access to natural resources, for example. Women can be the first to suffer a loss from such natural resources (eg. access to firewood). On the positive side, however, women may be the first to benefit from physical infrastructure improvements such as piped water. On the other hand sexual exploitation will also affect the poorest women, girls and young men the most (Ashley et al 2000). The most substantial benefits, particularly jobs, may be concentrated amongst a few only, thus increasing the social inequalities among locals.

Where local elite does not exist, migrants may move in to exploit the new opportunities. The poverty impact of this depends on whether the migrants are poorer than the locals and would be willing to work for lower wages or whether they are skilled entrepreneurs seizing new opportunities before local skills have a chance to develop (Ashley et al 2000). This may lead to situations where outsiders are employed in managerial positions, earning high salaries, whereas locals are employed in unskilled or semi-skilled positions, which carry low wages.

11. Conclusion

Many tourism authors regard the participation of local communities in tourism initiatives as a precondition for sustaining such initiatives. However, involving communities in tourism initiatives is a long, time consuming and in many instances difficult process with many pitfalls. One of the most basic stumbling blocks is often to define the community or communities that need to be involved in such a process. Communities are also heterogeneous entities with many vested interests and affiliations. This might complicate matters during negotiations between communities and other stakeholders. Involving more than one community can also complicate negotiations when rivalry and competition for benefits occur.

Legal issues such as establishing legal entities to represent communities as well as issues with regard to land ownership can also be problematic. Possible tourism investors place a high premium on secure tenure arrangements. Land tenure insecurity may therefore be one of the main deterrents to tourism investment in communal areas. Land ownership disputes can also be a major deterrent.

Management processes is also sown with pitfalls. Miscommunication and misinterpretation of information has the potential to sour relations between stakeholders, which may lead to irreparable damage and failure of initiatives.

The rewards of involving communities in tourism initiatives are clear but are not without its pitfalls. A word that perhaps best describe the rewards of successful community participation in tourism initiative is empowerment. Various degrees of social and economic empowerment have been achieved in tourism initiatives that embraced the participation of communities as various case studies under discussion testify.

Joint venture models of co-operation between investors, communities and other stakeholders have also proven to be important tools in either the success or failure of initiatives. It would seem as if different models might be applicable to different situations in ensuring the sustainability of initiatives. More research is nevertheless needed to determine the conditions that will favour particular models.

To conclude, community participation in tourism initiatives have the potential to benefit local communities significantly. However, it should be remembered that the rose garden is sewn with thorns. The numerous pitfalls highlighted in the text shows that success does not come without much patience, mutual understanding and respect between stakeholders.

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