



# Report on the First African Leadership Seminar, People and Conservation

12 – 19 August 2006



*Gill-netter – Maputo Special Reserve, Mozambique*



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*Seminar Participants at Ponta Mamoli, Mozambique*

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Siyabonga kini nonke

Professor Rob Fincham  
**Seminar Leader**

Duncan Hay  
**Seminar Manager**



## Foreword

As we will strongly insist elsewhere in this report, the aim of this *First African Leadership Seminar – People and Conservation*, is to contribute to the successful integration of conservation into the material and regional agendas in Africa, and, through that process, impact on a yet wider constituencies. One does not propose such a stern agenda without acknowledging the historical context in which contemporary conservation functions in Africa and the nature of the future that leaders on the continent are trying to create for the people of the continent.

Conservation is about contested territory. It is about the commitment to biodiversity conservation and the welfare of people both inside and outside of conservation institutions. In striving to achieve these ends, confrontation has often been the outcome. Confrontation will not disappear but how we tackle it is the critical issue, we need to build on the growing wisdom of conservationists who see themselves as African leaders, integral to the political, social, economic and environmental imperatives that drive the agenda for change on the continent. Nurturing that leadership will depend on learning to live and deal with complexity: confronting the unacceptable dilemmas of inequality that exist between the poor and the elite and between regions and their resource bases; acknowledging the roles of politicians, bureaucrats, the private sector and ordinary citizen in contributing to improved and sustained livelihoods for the poor; and to foster the natural life support system that supports people and their activities. It is about imagining and visioning a better future and how to take us there. It is a tall order but one that is essential to pursue.

It is an order and an agenda that is by its very nature transdisciplinary. It is tied to the excitement of making learning focused on solving societal problems, that are themselves many faceted, rather than uni-disciplinary. Leadership within this context is, amongst other things, about perseverance, moral commitment, promoting dialogue and to commit to decisions on the basis of the convictions that come out of working with others for that better future.

In this report we wish to share our excitement at hosting a group of conservation leaders and the outcomes from what we consider to have been an enabling environment that emerged on the Seminar in which to debate critical concerns facing these leaders. The heart of the report consists of three sections. The first sets out the purpose of the Seminar while the second concentrates on issues which we put forward for debate, as well as the outcomes from our deliberations. The third section sets out a synthesis and framework that should further the process of networking and debating the issues into the future. We also provide the names and contact details of participants in a final section of the report.

## Purpose of the Seminar

*People and conservation cannot be separated: conservation is a process established by society to achieve outcomes desired by society. It is no longer a question of whether there is a link between the two, whether ordinary people should participate in conservation, or whether conservationists should work with people. The real issue is how we strengthen, use constructively and manage the myriad of connections between people, societal wellbeing and wildlife conservation. Without an appreciation of these connections, conservation efforts in Africa will fail. We do not intend to fail. Rather, our aim is to contribute to the successful integration of conservation into the material and regional agendas in Africa and further afield.*

### Facilitation Team

Centre for Environment, Agriculture and Development (CEAD), University of KwaZulu-Natal, and The University of Montana.

### Background

Conservation in Africa is increasingly being challenged to realise concrete benefits for society. In line with this, it is now commonly acknowledged by policy-makers, practitioners and researchers that successful conservation on the continent is necessarily as much about engaging local communities, accommodating their interests, and promoting their quality of life as it is about managing conservation areas *per se*. Yet despite this widespread recognition of the fusion of people with conservation, precious little progress has been made with moving from understanding to practice. With a few isolated exceptions, the fact remains that decades of conservation in Africa have yet to produce management strategies which realise equitable and sustainable social benefits, particularly at the local level. This is untenable, and indeed poses a grave threat to conservation efforts, on a continent which is plagued by the most extreme socio-economic deprivation. Inequalities between the wealthy and the poor and moving to greater equity in terms of human wellbeing are key challenges that face us over the next fifteen years. Against this background, there is an urgent need to take stock and consider who has learned what so far, what



*For many rural people conservation is outside their daily ambit. How can these children benefit from conservation?*

background, there is an urgent need to take stock and consider who has learned what so far, what

still needs to be learned, and how we might better learn together. Equally important, of course, is how we can begin to transform isolated local successes, lessons and ideas into more widely applicable and distinctly African policies and management solutions. What kinds of collaborations and partnerships might help us to achieve these ends? What training and research is necessary to facilitate a more people-centred approach to conservation in an African context?

### Overview of the Seminar

It is these and allied issues which were addressed by the African Leadership Seminar in People and Conservation. The inaugural Seminar, which was modeled on a similar programme run by a consortium of universities in the USA, brought high profile experts and researchers together with senior conservation policy-makers and managers from a range of Southern African countries for an intensive programme of interaction and shared learning. Held over an eight day period in August 2006, the programme blended visits to exemplar conservation sites in South Africa and Mozambique with lectures and workshops by conservation and other specialists with a wide range of pertinent experience and expertise. In order to sustain this focus on learning and innovating from African experience, and simultaneously to build a 'People in African Conservation Movement', further seminars will be conducted on an annual basis in Southern Africa. The inaugural Seminar in 2006 is thus very much the beginning of a long-term process of advocacy and facilitation intended to promote multinational collaborative learning and to build the kind of integrated, people-centred and transdisciplinary approach to conservation so desperately required in Africa. It also offers us the opportunity to take our growing understanding from our learning and networking into an international context.

### Aims of the Seminar

The inaugural Seminar in 2006 served as a forum through which leading conservation managers in Southern Africa exchanged experiences and insights, and began to analyse – with the support of researchers and other experts – some of the key challenges that lie at the interface between people and conservation. Specific aims were to:

- Inform decision-makers in the Southern African conservation sector about



*The Seminar – a collective and structured conversation*

new thinking in relation to people and conservation, so promoting concerted movement towards more people-centred philosophies and methodologies;

- Encourage the development and introduction of policies and management practices which are sensitive to, and take account of, the critical nexus between local communities and conservation;
- Provide a basis for ensuring that research and professional training are responsive to the particular challenges faced by the African conservation sector; and
- Build a Southern African network for sustaining the dialogue which is initiated at the Seminar, both across international boundaries and between conservation leaders, researchers and training bodies.

## Focus and Outcomes of the Seminar

To begin fostering a more holistic and people-centred approach to conservation, the Seminar focused on five cross-cutting themes which are at the interface between conservation practice and quality of life. These were HIV and AIDS, commercialisation of conservation resources, co-management of conservation resources, transfrontier conservation and cultural heritage. During the key-note address by Professor Zacharias, at the outset of the Seminar, the theme of leadership was very strongly articulated and so reflection on this issue is also included as part of the outcomes. This section focuses on the themes and also on the broader outcomes of the seminar: relationships and networks, learning and re-awakening, and conservation in action.

### Context and Leadership

In his key-note address at the commencement of the seminar Professor Pete Zacharias of the University of KwaZulu provided two challenges – the challenge of context and the challenge of leadership.

In Africa 80% of the population is dependent on agricultural and rural economies. Furthermore, this largely peasant population comprises 70% of those in Africa who are officially classified as extremely poor and undernourished. The World Bank considers Africa's agriculture as "backward and undercapitalised", despite limited reforms. A clear understanding of this harsh reality is required when addressing people and conservation issues. Also, agriculture 'controls' about 85% of global land area compared to conservation's about 10%, so it is agriculturists rather than conservationists that are the custodians of the planet's natural resources, especially so in Africa. As such, we need to develop sustainable partnerships to ensure the agricultural economy is built on practices in the most environmentally sustainable way possible; to pay constant heed to the dangers of over-use of land; and to balance the short-term needs of humans, like profit, with the long-term interests of



*Conservation leaders – Morris Mtsambiwa and Sikhumbuzo Dlamini*

the continent. We also need to participate actively, but constructively, in debates around just policies of land redistribution, the impact of globalisation on resource-based agricultural and other production and trade in the developing world. And at the heart of all these issues, is the

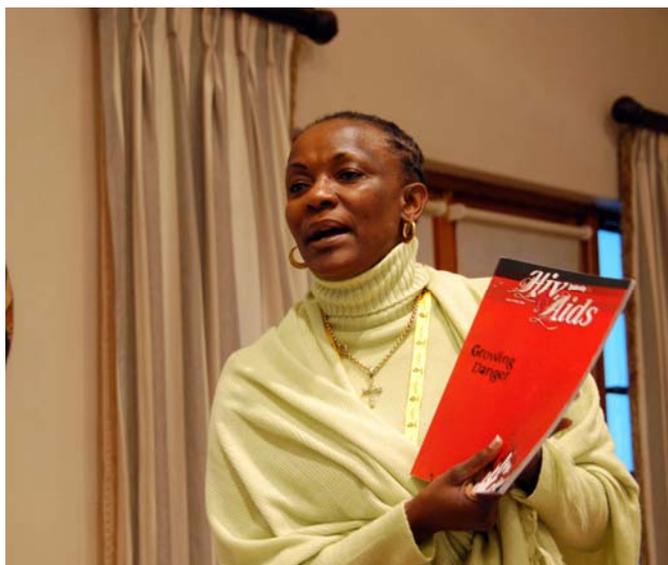
obligation to meet the most fundamental of human requirements: the need for food and shelter. These are as much a conservation debate as they are about sustaining livelihoods.

Addressing these challenges requires leadership but what is leadership? In a single word leadership is accountability! More specifically it means “I am accountable.” So leadership is about self-organization and personal accountability and ownership of ones deeds and actions. To have sustainable collective governance one needs to have individual accountability. Leadership comes with management and decision making (i.e. control) and administration (i.e. service). As a leader one should rather make 100 decisions and get more than half wrong, than make none at all. To make no decisions, or even delay them, is far worse than making many that turn out wrong. It is only by doing that we will learn what works on any particular occasion. Many conservation agencies now lead the world in understanding this through participatory adaptive management. As far as administration goes, the service to others is having the restraint not to get involved in the task assigned to others, even though one has the power to do so. In so doing, leaders who administer must support and value those around them. Leadership also assumes integrity, ethics and compassion as prerequisites. So against this view of leadership, there are behaviours that can be learnt and so any echelon has the potential to produce a leader. The challenge to us is to find and nurture them so as to counter those that suggest that the biggest threat to conservation is a leadership crisis?

### **HIV and AIDS**

The HIV and AIDS pandemic is crippling many institutions in Africa and conservation is no exception. The purpose for including this theme was two-fold. One aspect was to illuminate a few current means of addressing HIV and AIDS issues by conservation organizations. The second aspect was to encourage participants to look inward at their organizations to identify difficulties in addressing impacts along with means for ameliorating these impacts.

The seminar process took the form of two presentations; the first by Dr Sheila Mokoboto-Zwane of SANParks who explained the process through which an HIV and AIDS policy was established by SANParks, and the second by Andrew Muir of the Wilderness Foundation who highlighted the challenge of AIDS orphans and described a programme through which these orphans were



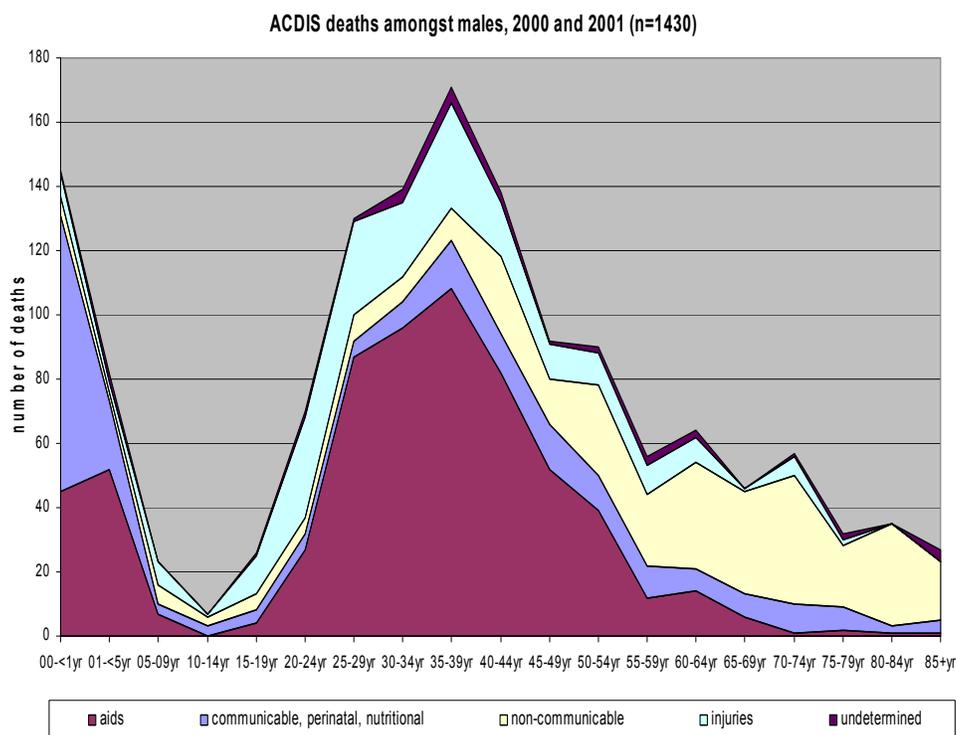
*Sheila Mokoboto-Zwane presents on HIV and AIDS*

being integrated in conservation and ecotourism activities. The presentations were followed by a working session which examined the following questions:

1. What are the difficulties in addressing the HIV and AIDS challenge?
2. What are the impacts imposed by HIV and AIDS?
3. What are the key steps to be taken by conservation organisations to address the HIV and AIDS challenge?

This theme also included a visit to the Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies at Hlabisa near Matubatuba and a presentation by Tinofa Mutevedzi, a demographer at the Centre. The Centre monitors approximately 90 000 people in this specific geographical location and is at the forefront of HIV and AIDS research, monitoring and intervention.

An important factor to emerge from the presentation and discussion at the Centre is the nature of the *burden of disease* in the Hlabisa study area. What emerges is the growing awareness that at-risk ‘communities’ suffer from the diseases of poverty – infectious and parasitic diseases such as TB, an ominous contribution from HIV and AIDS and under-nutrition – as well as a growing penchant for the so-called ‘diseases of lifestyle’/‘affluence’ or non-communicable diseases, to intrude – circulatory problems, heart disease and cancers. The figure below articulates this picture only too well. It is not improbable that similar patterns may be found in many southern African rural communities.



*Source: Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies*

The key issue from the presentations and discussions was that HIV and AIDS is currently not a priority in conservation. With the exception of SANParks few conservation agencies have HIV and AIDS policies and all are battling to truly grasp how to deal with HIV and AIDS in the workplace. It was recognised that HIV and AIDS impacts also extend beyond the workplace. There are serious implications from HIV and AIDS orphans that are and will be influencing our societies and organisations. Additionally, HIV and AIDS requires already constrained resources in organizations to be reallocated for necessary programs.

Ultimately, HIV and AIDS needs to become part of organizations' "daily business." It needs to be mainstreamed in order to provide the appropriate support and resources for those that are affected.

### 1. What are the difficulties in addressing the HIV/AIDS challenge?

- Prioritisation of issues within organisations by management – the failure by management to mainstream HIV and AIDS into organisational structures and programmes
- Lack of capacity within organisations to address HIV and AIDS issues, especially at management level
- Lack of resources to implement HIV and AIDS policies and strategies
- Time lag in implementing policies and strategies once developed – overcoming organisational bureaucracy
- Stigma and discrimination due to a lack of confidentiality once people disclose their status
- Behavioural patterns influenced by legislative, economic, social and cultural factors
- Literacy levels among certain employees and communities – influenced by access to information and adequacy of the format in which information is disseminated
- Geographical isolation of protected areas from the necessary health infrastructure
- Clarifying whether the HIV and AIDS issue is a social, political, physiological or other challenge
- Putting an actual cost on the impact of HIV and AIDS on organisations



*The Africa Centre – cutting edge research on HIV and AIDS*

## 2. What are the impacts imposed by HIV and AIDS?

- Financial impacts include, amongst others, the human resource costs imposed by people suffering from HIV/AIDS; increases competition for limited resources – financial and human; the costs of recruiting and training replacement staff; and increased insurance, administrative, medical and funeral costs.
- Social impacts include declining morale; the stigma of HIV and AIDS within conservation organisations; social and cultural fragmentation; changes in family structure; changes in cultural succession, and declines in value systems and social networks
- Organizational and business process impacts include absenteeism; changes in succession planning; reduced productivity; reduced focus and concentration by employees (and employers); declining physical ability of employees; loss of skills, and loss of intergenerational knowledge on conservation.
- Community impacts include increased poverty; increased pressure on natural resources; increased exploitation of natural resources by the corporate world; death of societal members - leading to increased numbers of orphans; increased government social responsibilities, and increased pressure on personal budgets.

## 3. What are the key steps to be taken by conservation organisations to address the HIV and AIDS challenge?

- It is critically important to get buy-in from all stakeholders within organisations, especially management, for the development and implementation of policies
- Engage in partnerships with stakeholders that can provide resources (skills and cash) to implement HIV and AIDS programmes
- Structure HIV and AIDS policies and programmes in a participatory manner
- Allocate resources to support HIV related programmes
- Create a conducive environment for voluntary counselling and testing
- Campaigns should be mitigation driven i.e. combine medical/preventative solutions with health and welfare programmes
- Education programmes should make use of people living with HIV and AIDS – especially policy makers
- Improve communication strategies
- Establish employee wellness programmes
- Establish an ethic of love and caring as opposed to stigma
- Create clear accountability within all systems
- Confidentiality should be legally enshrined.

## Commercialisation

Alongside national budget cuts for the conservation sector, there is a growing expectation by African governments that conservation agencies should embrace commercialization as a means of supplementing scarce resources. This shift toward financial reliance on commercial activities demands a very different approach to conservation, and indeed very different kinds of conservation professionals, than in the past. The seminar sought to address the opportunities and challenges involved in the promotion of commercialisation by conservation agencies.

This theme included three presentations followed by a working session. Dr Morris Mtsambiwa of the Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Management Authority presented the Authority's state led

commercialisation efforts. Maxi Pia Louis of the Namibian Community-Based Natural Resource Programme presented an NGO view on commercialisation highlighting the successes in Namibia. Colin Bell, the retired founder of Wilderness Safaris, presented a private sector view of commercialisation highlighting the successes achieved in Botswana and Namibia and the challenges faced by South Africa. Two critical issues emerged from these presentations: 1) Where should governments locate themselves in discussions between communities and private sector? 2) How



*Maxi Louis and Colin Bell presented on commercialisation successes in Namibia*

can conservation areas be zoned for non-consumptive or consumptive uses? In addition to the formal session Sikhumbuzo Dlamini of the Swaziland National Trust provided a presentation on the commercialisation of game reserves in Swaziland.

The following questions formed the points of discussion for the working session:

1. How do organisations adapt and change to embrace commercialisation?
2. How is sustainability negotiated in the context of commercialization?
3. How does a government negotiate its role as competitor and regulator?

### 1. How do organisations adapt and change to embrace commercialisation?

It was agreed that conservation organisations should transform into multi-skilled agencies able to co-ordinate and support both conservation and tourism interests within conservation areas. The organisation should promote public ownership of the process of rights allocations so as to build trust amongst all parties. It should have a business orientated approach and be able to accommodate the specific interests of community groups, NGOs, the private sector and the State. The organisation required sufficient funding, should be able to operate autonomously and needed to be flexible in its operations. In this context the State needs to remain cognizant of its responsibility to conservation and should develop policy supportive of the transformation of conservation



*Ponta Mamoli – A successful private sector ecotourism operation*

organisations. There is risk associated with the State dominating the process. To reduce this conservation organisations should establish a “Board of Directors made up of multiple skilled people representing stakeholder interests such as tourism, conservation and business (rather than government entities only) to ensure that the required checks and balances are in the system.

### 2. How is sustainability negotiated in the context of commercialization?

It is necessary to divide sustainability into three key areas: the resource base (environmental), the stakeholders/resource players (social), and commercial activities (financial). Following this stakeholders need to engage in determining what the appropriate commercialisation models might be and then incorporate thinking around the three key areas into these models

1. Financial – skills development, participation and buy-in by government, marketing, promotion of broad-based business
2. Environmental – ecological sustainability, monitoring, land-use zonation linked to activities
3. Social – Community benefits, full and equitable partnerships, capacity to run business

### 3. How does the State negotiate its role as competitor and regulator?

The State should transform ways of running businesses. It needs to establish rules applicable to all stakeholders (including itself) and defined by all to ensure fairness. These rules should be based on the core governance values of transparency, accountability, teamwork (government, private sector, community), innovation (niche identification, not all groups can do every aspect thus need to have various groups identify specific work areas) and facilitation.

The working session concluded with a discussion on what do “we” as leaders need to do? Critical to the success of commercialisation is the need to facilitate the formation of conservation “business” partnerships between community groups, the private sector and the state; to encourage the integration of conservation and business interests; to ensure long-term buy-in to the commercialisation process, and to develop a climate of interaction and action that endorses change.

#### Co-Management

Co-management is increasingly recognized as central to successful conservation in areas where communities are substantial stakeholders. Co-management is also being used because the top-down approach to conservation is not always successful. Sometimes the exclusion of users from all management aspects has resulted in barriers between administrators and user communities. The seminar set out to examine current models of co-management with a view to identifying the key components of these models. The process involved three presentations and a working session. Dr Mafa Hara of the University of the Western Cape presented the significant challenges facing co-management primarily in the coastal fisheries sector. Felismina Langa of the Directorate of Tourism in Mozambique presented a co-management case-study from the Niassa Game Reserve in northern Mozambique. The working session involved the identification and prioritization of the key ingredients for successful co-management. Following the working session Vuyiswa Radebe-Mkhize of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife presented a co-management case-study involving her organisation and the mussel harvesters of KwaZulu-Natal.



*Gill-netter at Lake Piti – A co-management challenge*

The key ingredients identified as critical to co-management success were identified as the following:

1. Participants in the process should jointly define and share the same vision and management objectives
2. There needed to be equal commitment by all parties to the process and the products of this process.
3. Building of relationships and trust are critical
4. A balance between protecting biodiversity and meeting the needs of business /subsistence partners needs to be achieved.
5. All agreements on rights allocations and other issues need to be articulated in clearly defined contracts
6. All participants in co-management need to clarify and understand their specific roles.
7. Co-management requires resources (financial, human, knowledge) in order to operate.
8. A dedicated and passionate (but impartial) champion is required to lead and support the process
9. Involvement by participants needs to be legally enshrined (i.e. there needs to be clear policy and legislative framework that supports equitable participation)
10. Co-management is management – relevant management skills need to be developed by all parties
11. Appropriate level of benefits need to accrue to support active participation (there need to be tangible incentives to participate in the process, especially to marginalised communities)
12. An honest broker is required to facilitate the co-management process (the need for co-management usually arises out of conflicts around resource use – active facilitation is required to resolve these conflicts)
13. For co-management to work property rights need to be clearly and explicitly defined and be legally enshrined.
14. The process needs to include clearly defined decision-making guidelines
15. The process itself needs to be clearly defined
16. Mechanisms need to be developed to apply learning during the process to management actions
17. Equity of relationships between co-managers needs to be developed
18. Capacity to equally contribute to contracts (implementation) needs to be developed.

While attempts were made to prioritize these ingredients of successful co-management it was recognised that the ingredients operate in combination as a package.

## Transfrontier Conservation

In Southern Africa valuable ecosystems have been fragmented by political boundaries. Fences have separated both people and wildlife. Recently it has been contended that we break the physical, political, and institutional fences. The theme explored the early stages of this process:

What are the key lessons we have learned? What are the key challenges that lie ahead? How should we be engaging these challenges? The process involved a presentation and a working session. Piet Theron of SANParks provided an overview of Transfrontier Conservation efforts where South Africa is engaged. The working session focused on the key issues involved with transfrontier conservation areas and what are some recommendations for these issues



*Three Heads-of-State endorsing transfrontier conservation efforts*

There are numerous transfrontier programs occurring around Southern Africa. These programs are attempting to meet several objectives. Some of these objectives include:

- promoting alliances in the management of biological natural resources by encouraging social, economic and other partnerships among the parties- including the private sector, local communities, and nongovernmental organizations.
- enhancing ecosystems integrity and natural ecological processes by harmonising environmental management procedures
- fostering regional socio-economic
- exchanging technical, scientific, and legal information

Additionally, these transfrontier programs can play a crucial role in developing relationships between these countries. But they are not easy. A few key questions are:

1. How will revenue be shared between countries involved with transfrontier parks?
2. How do you run these parks as single units with a high number of departments and countries involved?
3. How will local communities benefit from these transfrontier conservation areas?

The key issues identified in the working session were:

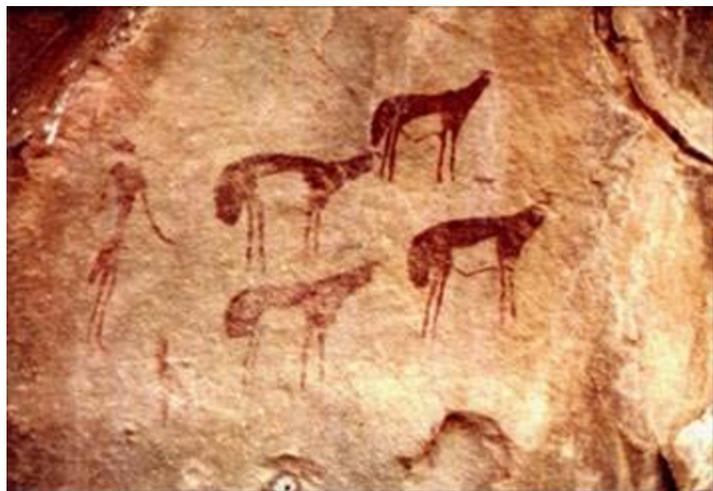
1. Legal structures and policies, particularly the harmonization of these structures and policies between participating countries
2. Unequal management capacity and rate of planning amongst participating countries
3. Community participation and benefit sharing

Key recommendations to resolve these issues included:

1. Encourage policy dialogue between countries focusing on solution-driven discussions; the establishment of inventories of existing policies that do or do not facilitate the direction toward a successful TFCA; improving understanding of all aspects of migration, customs and law enforcement; and developing a common understanding of what structures and policies enable TFCAs to function successfully?
2. Building capacity, including the recognition of NGOs as critical catalysts because of their programmatic focus (for example, the Peace Parks Foundation); developing mechanisms for information sharing across institutions (there are significant opportunities for these exchanges); and improving the collective understanding of the costs and benefits that accrue to the individual parks involved in TFCAs.
3. State and TFCA policies need to support community and stakeholder engagement but these policies need to address how communities are engaged, and they need to consider not simply community involvement but also community rights.
4. A TFCA Secretariat should be established for each TFCA. This secretariat should include dedicated full-time, professionals, managers and administrators so as to take the pressure off individuals whose primary responsibility is the conservation area in his or her respective country.

### Cultural Heritage

Conservation is no longer just about wildlife. It also embraces sites of cultural and historical significance within and adjacent to protected areas, which need to be managed in conjunction with traditional conservation efforts. This theme focused on the importance of integrated and holistic conservation and preservation strategies in managing this interface. It comprised two presentations and working session. Edgar Neluvhalani presented SANParks approach to cultural heritage in protected areas and Conrad de Rosna presented on the rock art of the Kruger National Park. The working session revolved around



*Rock Art – there are 140 sites in the Kruger National Park alone*

looking beyond the artifacts at the stories of the people creating those artifacts. It was important to recognize that these stories and artifacts may have sensitive histories, that some stories had been distorted and that some of these artifacts were created to demonstrate a particular culture's influence over other cultures.

Cultural heritage as a sector is an aspect of conservation that is developing rapidly to protect, understand, and support traditional cultures. To establish cultural heritage as an important component in conservation planning and protection there needs to be planning and processes sensitive to cultural artifacts and current lifestyles. One approach is park zonation where areas can be managed for the preservation of cultural resources. This will help to guide conservation agencies in dealing with cultural issues such as human remains and artifacts. Another approach involves changing the training of guides to provide both a cultural and wildlife experience. An integrated management plan that addresses maintaining and sharing these artifacts needs to include all stakeholders and traditional knowledge aspects.

Cultural heritage encourages a separate set of questions for conservation such as:

1. How does park management views cultural heritage?
2. How do we document cultural heritage?
3. How can we incorporate areas of cultural significance into the wildlife experience?

A process is necessary in the identification of all stakeholders and that process should involve indigenous knowledge and traditions. This allows for the understanding of needs and recognition of communities' culture concerns about visiting cultural sites. This process should include discussions between stakeholders on:

1. Access to ancestral cultural sites and developments in and around gravesites
2. Ways of enabling good stakeholder relations
3. Exploring potential areas of conflict between the management of biodiversity and cultural heritage
4. Balancing community cultural resource use needs against the parks desired state
5. Coordinating research needs and priorities
6. Tapping into and utilizing different knowledge systems.

## Relationships and Networks

Conservation professionals from Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, the USA and South Africa were able to interact with each other and with academics, specialists and private sector representatives, forge new relationships, re-establish old ones, and discuss and debate areas of mutual interest. These interactions form the basis for informal and formal networks that will be consolidated with time, ongoing interactions, and with informal and formal follow-up sessions.



*Women – a growing force in the conversation movement*

It is intended that the African Leadership seminar will establish a formal network enabling it to influence people and conservation processes at local, national, regional and international levels. In order to grow this network it is intended, funding willing, to host seminars on an annual basis in Southern Africa. Participants now will become the hosts of the future.

## Learning and “re-wakening”

Possibly the most difficult to quantify but probably the most profound outcome of the Seminar is the new knowledge that participants now have and are able to take back into their respective organisations. Deliberately invited as leaders in their organisations these individuals have the unique opportunity to impart new ideas, information and concepts to their colleagues and to integrate this knowledge into their respective organisations.



*Men – a declining force in conservation?*

But it is not just about “new knowledge”. A significant portion of what was learned was already known but had become dormant in our minds as we engage the day-to-day humdrum of our professional lives. The seminar provided the opportunity to “re-awaken” these ideas, re-examine them and test them in new contexts.

### Conservation in action

The seminar was not just a series of themes and workshops on those themes. Participants were brought face-to-face with sites of considerable conservation significance. At St Lucia, a World Heritage Site, we encountered a landscape that five years previously had been commercial pine plantation. In the advance stages of rehabilitation, the Eastern Shores is now teaming with White Rhino, buffalo, zebra, warthog and numerous species of antelope. Signs warn us to the presence of Elephant and the game register indicates numerous sightings of leopard by tourists. The challenges of managing this new wonderland were explained to us. The worst drought in living memory combined with freshwater abstraction and river system manipulation has reduced South Africa’s largest estuary to a puddle. As greed and poverty operate hand-in-hand poaching is on the increase. Commercial plantations have left behind a legacy of invasive alien plants which are being removed creating jobs for impoverished surrounding communities.



*Rangers and poachers – the tools of their respective trades*

At the Maputo Special Reserve in Southern Mozambique we encountered a conservation estate emerging from years of war. A magnificent landscape of sandy shores, dunes and coastal wetlands, grasslands and forests waiting for the re-introduction of wildlife. Transfrontier conservation in action with the corridor being established between this reserve and Tembe in South Africa. Elephants previously separated will soon re-unite. Here stark poverty, and the conservation challenges that go with it, were apparent to all.

In the Kruger National Park we encountered one of Africa’s largest and longest established protected areas. Sophisticated roads and infrastructure, and mass tourism form a strange backdrop to the plethora of wildlife – elephant, rhino, buffalo leopard and plenty of general game in just a few hours. Where were the lions?

Not just the conservation areas provide food for thought. Leaving South Africa for Mozambique we plunge from tar roads into 4X4 tracks and from rampant commercialisation into poverty and subsistence – the stark reality of the different challenges faced by neighbouring countries in our region reflect also the different challenges faced by conservation.

Our accommodation – private sector operated in St Lucia and Mozambique and State operated in Kruger – allow us to reflect on commercialisation options. What did we experience? Where would we prefer to stay? Where did we get best value for money?

For many of us – senior professionals in conservation – what we saw on our journey was not entirely new. For most of us, what we encountered at the Africa Centre was new and profoundly disturbing. Over fifty percent HIV and Aids infection rates in women between the age of twenty-five and thirty! How can this be possible? What do we do, faced by this onslaught? HIV and Aids, previously regarded as peripheral to conservation, suddenly and profoundly took centre stage.

## A Synthesis

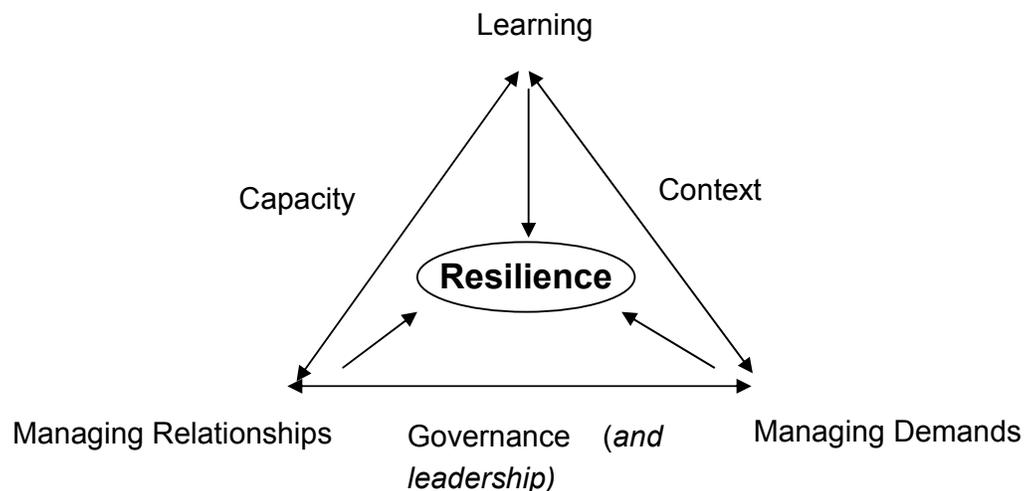
At the outset of this report we expressed excitement at having had the opportunity to host such an extremely articulate group of leaders working at the interface between people and the natural resource base. We hope that the excitement comes through in the report. We have set out the vision and purpose that we had for the seminar in section 1. We have also given an account of the proceedings of the trip and what we saw as key outcomes in section 2. With scant time, as yet, to reflect on the experiences we had and the frameworks for action that we came across, we offer the following preliminary concluding remarks.

The seminar provided an opportunity to come away with a profoundly heightened sense of the urgency to enhance the livelihoods of those who depend explicitly on their immediate and surrounding resource base. Understanding the historical context of such people is an issue to which we need to devote a great deal of attention. Not so much as to bemoan the situation in which people find themselves, when access to resources seem compromised or limited, but as a basis for looking boldly forward. The legacy of ‘preservation’ and ‘conservation’ efforts of the past has created dichotomies that mirror the chasm between the poor and the affluent, the powerless and the powerful. We cannot afford to live in a world of such dichotomies. More promising is to move to a view of a complex reality in which all stakeholders are interdependent as the search continues to secure more promising futures for all people in the areas we traversed. That was a message our leadership group portrayed.

In one sense the ability to ‘manage’ the environment is a fallacious notion. What we can do is to value our abilities to manage relationships between stakeholders and thereby the resource over which they have stewardship. That point of view places emphasis on managing demands and through the process of management, create the capacity to become learners and institutions of learning that will help secure that brighter future mentioned above. As a result of our deliberations on the Seminar, we have little doubt that conservation agencies have crucial roles to play in addressing issues of peoples’ health and wellbeing, besides their mandate of biodiversity conservation. These are exciting observations, because it places these agencies at the heart of poverty alleviation and development agendas that so many other institutions have hung onto with great tenacity. Conservationists must be more visible on these issues and the real and envisaged impact of HIV and AIDS and the disease burdens that the poor bear, cannot continue without wider societal implications and implosions.

In the seminar sessions and in the conversations in between a number of words and phrases were repeated time and again: policy, governance, leadership, relationships and trust; partnerships; learning, capacity building, empowerment, delivery, resilience, co-management, context, scale, and management process. What do they all mean?

In whatever we do and whatever the theme or issue we need to be guided by principles of **governance**. These include being accountable for our actions, ensuring effective and meaningful participation by relevant stakeholders, being consistent in our decisions and actions, and ensuring transparency at all times. But these are broad – we need to be more specific; we need a coherent **policy** framework that informs our actions and in turn our actions should inform the framework. Without policy we blunder around in the dark and if the on-the-ground reality does not influence policy and bring about change we cannot adapt. In implementing policy in people and conservation we need to be vitally aware of the possibilities of a **co-management** approach – the state and civil society committed to and managing together. Managing together requires an explicit **management process** understood by and agreed to by all. But if we are to manage together this requires that we establish **relationships**, build **trust** and forge **partnerships** for effective management. Management without understanding what and how something needs to be managed is meaningless. We need to **learn** how to manage and about what we are managing and we need to **build the capacity** of ourselves and others so that we are all **empowered** to engage. We need to understand the **context** in which we are managing - each ecosystem, each individual and each group of people is unique and so the interactions between ecosystems and people will be unique, testing our ability to adapt. This entire process requires **leadership** – the ability of individuals to serve, control and guide with integrity, ethics and compassion. The entire process must lead to **delivery**, particularly to those who are, for whatever reason, disempowered. In this way we build **resilience** in the people and conservation system. So, our end goal is resilience and the rest are ingredients in a complex combination that allow us to achieve this resilience.



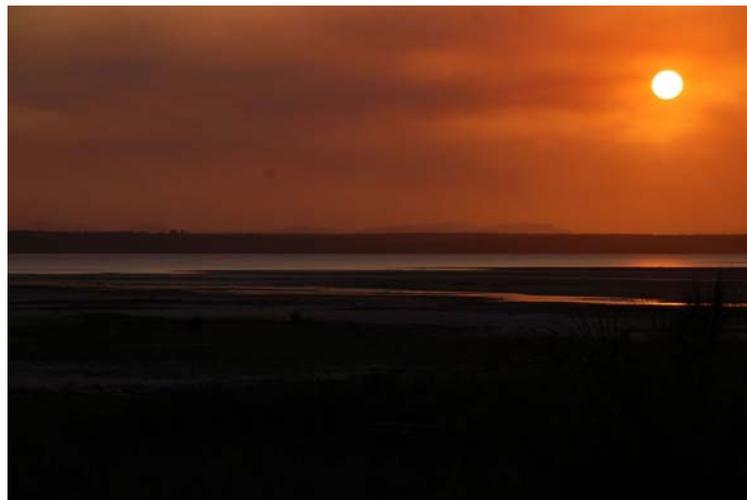
When we set out on the seminar the original documentation postulated a way of thinking about the themes and issues. The “Treehouse Model” above (conceptualised at the joint UKZN/The University of Montana PhD Programme, Kruger National Park in 2003-6) explores the relationships that exist between managing demand, managing relationships, capacity building,

governance and context. The overall aim is to improve our response to all these factors and create resilience in the people and conservation system.

Has the conceptual model survived the interrogation of the seminar process? To a large extent it has. How can we strengthen it? Two key elements not explicitly captured by this model were those of policy and leadership. Policy is quite simple to insert – it is an expression of governance at a more detailed level. We require specific policies so that we can manage relationships which, in turn, assist in managing the demands imposed by people and conservation issues.

Leadership is complex as it touches on all elements of the model. To build resilience into a people and conservation system requires leaders that create learning organizations. They do so by facilitating building capacity in those organisations and ensuring that sound governance systems are set in place.

As a final postscript it is important to reiterate that the Seminar is already established as a critical component of a broader strategy to provide opportunities for debating People and Conservation Issues. No doubt, as participants also alluded to, we need link our conceptual frameworks to actions on the ground. This we are doing through follow-up studies, projects and training programmes. What is crucial is that this initiative sets the stage for an annual African Leadership Seminar on People and Conservation.



*Sunset – The Greater St Lucia Wetland Park*

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