

**ADDRESSING POVERTY AND LOCAL LIVELIHOODS IN THE CONTEXT
OF CONSERVATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE PROPOSED
NGELENGELE NATURE RESERVE**

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ABSTRACT

Many people in Africa, due to high levels of poverty, rely directly on natural resources and the environment for their livelihoods. Different mechanisms have been employed over the years to address poverty and local livelihoods in the context of conservation. Community Conservation Areas and the sustainable livelihood approach are examples of these mechanisms. Increasingly, these and other mechanisms have reinforced the view that unless the risks and opportunities presented by poverty to local livelihoods are addressed, many conservation efforts are bound to fail.

The research reported here was based on the premise that appropriate mechanisms that explicitly address poverty and local livelihoods are a necessary prerequisite to successfully engaging local people in conservation. Such mechanisms assure the sustainability of local livelihoods and present opportunities for conservation initiatives to succeed within the context of human societies that are dependent on associated ecosystems and resources. The Maloti-Drakensberg mountains region in South Africa was the study site and the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve, a Community Conservation Area, was used as a case study.

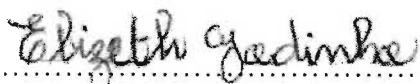
The amaHlubi community people constituted the study's respondents. The study was largely qualitative, drawing on both primary and secondary sources of data in the form of interviewer-administered questionnaire and documentary analysis respectively. Field observations and discussions with respondents complemented the interviews. By adopting the sustainable livelihoods framework to understand and analyse the livelihoods of the amaHlubi community, the study highlighted concerns

about livelihood assets with the conclusion that there is a high dependence on natural resources mainly for domestic purposes, and in general most of the assets are non-existent. The study also highlighted the level of awareness and community support towards Ngelengele Nature Reserve, as well as the reserve's implications on local livelihoods. Although some stated that the objectives of Ngelengele Nature Reserve remain unclear, the majority of respondents showed high expectations and support for the project.

DECLARATION

The research described in this mini-dissertation was carried out at the Centre for Environment, Agriculture and Development, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, under the supervision of Dr. N. Nyambe and Mr. D. Densham.

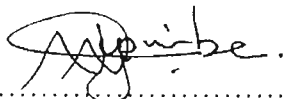
This mini-dissertation represents the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma at any university. Where use of others work is made, it is duly acknowledged in the text.



Elizeth Godinho



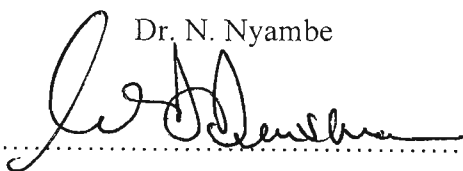
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DEDICATIONS

To my greatest Lord Jesus Christ for all graces and miracles made to make possible for me the studies leading to this dissertation.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resources Management
CCAs	Community Conservation Areas
DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
DFID	Department for International Development
EKZNW	Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
ICDPs	Integrated Conservation and Development Projects
MDTP	Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Project
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SA	South Africa
SL	Sustainable Livelihoods
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the research

This study investigated the notions of poverty and livelihoods within the context of conservation and more specifically community conservation. Adams and Hulme (2001:13) have defined community conservation as “those principles and practices that argue that conservation goals should be pursued by strategies that emphasise the role of local residents in decision-making about natural resources”. The study was motivated by the assumption that without appropriate mechanisms that explicitly address poverty in general and the local livelihoods in particular, conservation initiatives are unlikely to succeed (Cernea 1991; DFID 2002). Failure is likely because the much desired support and collaboration from the local people is unlikely to be forthcoming while the people continue living in abject poverty (DFID 2002; LIFE 2002).

Another assumption was that a realistic conservation initiative at the local level is one that explicitly acknowledges the importance of local livelihoods and demonstrates a commitment to facilitate those livelihoods. In other words, commitment to supporting livelihoods in a practical way with benefits from conservation being recorded at individual household and community levels is a foundation for conservation success (DFID 2002). In this way, conservation initiatives cannot be seen as far removed from the realities of the local people. As such, conservation initiatives cannot be seen as operating outside the context of human societies that are dependent on their associated ecosystems and resources (WCPA 2003).

1.1.1 Inadequate representation of biodiversity in existing protected areas

Conservation need not be limited to government owned and managed protected areas. State-owned protected areas, important as they are to biodiversity conservation, are by no means sufficient for effective conservation. While the size, number and complexity of protected areas have increased to impressive proportions over the years (Mogelgaard 2003; Chape *et al.* 2003), this does not discount the fact that formally protected areas account for a small proportion of the global land and sea scapes (WCPA 2003). Expansive areas with a lot of biodiversity deserving of conservation lie outside the formal conservation estate.

Consequently, most of the biodiversity in the world is found outside formally protected areas. According to Baillie, Hilton-Taylor & Stuart (2004), only about 13% of all species in the world and 19.9% of all threatened species are presently conserved within the world's protected areas, which constitute about 11.5% of the global land area. The rest are outside formal protected areas on private or communally owned lands. The seriousness of this situation cannot be over-emphasised, and its enormity becomes compounded if we consider that the biodiversity associated with the sea scapes is also far from being adequately conserved (WCPA 2003). Not only are marine protected areas presently inadequate, but also the biodiversity in the deep seas (areas on the sea without national jurisdiction) lacks effective conservation measures (WCPA 2003).

1.1.2 The need to complement state-run protected areas

Ways to complement conservation work done in state-run protected areas have to be explored taking into account that most of the biodiversity is found outside protected

areas. In terms of terrestrial biodiversity, it is found on communal lands where the need for conservation is highlighted by problems such as deforestation, over-fishing, uncontrolled burning, and invasive alien plants (Jones and Murphree 2004). Expanding the formal conservation estate through acquisition of communal and public lands has for long been seen as a realistic option (Chidumayo *et al.* 1993). It requires changing the land use to either solely conservation or other land uses not inimical to protected area management goals. While this shift in land use is comparatively easier on public lands, the same might not be the case on communal lands, which, the world over, are in "... territories under the ownership, control or management of indigenous peoples and local (including mobile) communities" (WCPA 2003: 68).

Besides, local people in most cases tend to develop strong ties with the land both culturally and in terms of sustaining their livelihoods. In a call for local and indigenous communities to be considered stakeholders in co-management, it was observed that "... indigenous and local communities who have traditionally owned, occupied, or used lands and resources within the protected area [or areas adjacent to a protected area] can claim customary or legal rights to lands and resources based on an ancient possession, continuity of relationship, historical ties, cultural ties and direct dependency on the resources" (Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari and Oviedo 2004: 33).

The mix of livelihoods and cultural or ancestral ties to communal lands makes managing such lands for conservation purposes a daunting task. The legacy of mistrust between local communities and conservation authorities is a likely barrier (Stoll-Kleeman 2001). Sources of feelings of mistrust among local communities include lack of direct benefits from conservation, erstwhile forced removals from

ancestral lands, their subjection to deprivation of means of livelihoods through a lack of access to natural resources and a general strong feeling of apathy arising from the paramilitary approach that has for long been a feature of protected area management (Rutten 2004; Mogelgaard 2003).

1.1.3 Community conservation

Community conservation offers opportunities for expanding the conservation estate. (Adams and Hulme 2001) One of the strategies that falls under this broad definition is the notion of community conservation areas (CCAs), defined as land willingly set aside by either the community or traditional leader with an intention of pursuing conservation land use in accordance with existing conservation legislation/s and policies (Reid , Sindiga, Evans and Ongaro 1999).

CCAs are gaining popularity around the world as a feasible direction for expanding conservation work beyond state-run protected areas. Arguably, CCAs are a long overdue response to the challenge of ‘green islands’ – a metaphor used to refer to the common scenario whereby protected areas are surrounded by degraded lands and there is a need to go beyond ‘boundaries’ in protected area management. Since meaningful biodiversity conservation initiatives have to be based on a representative system of protected areas (Salafsky and Wollenberg 2000; Mogelgaard 2003), complemented by a variety of land uses consistent with the conservation ethos, CCAs are an important and strategic innovation in the conservation sector. The conversion of communal lands to land uses compatible with conservation is a strategic gain for biodiversity conservation. There is also the complementary possibility of developing eco-tourism ventures which could boost the local economies and hence make

important contributions to local livelihoods (Murphree 1991; Steiner and Rihoy 1995; Bond 2001).

Another important player in the quest to expand the conservation estate is the private sector. In South Africa, private nature reserves have grown in number over the years and are playing an important role in conserving various species including those that are endangered (Cowan, Swift and Yawitch 2003). Hence, it can be argued that it is the combined areas and efforts of government, private and communally protected areas that will ensure that the objectives of the Convention for Biological Diversity will be achieved by member states.

1.2 Problem statement

The proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal is a good example of a CCA that simultaneously seeks to contribute to resource conservation and the amelioration of the livelihood challenges of the local people. The traditional leadership and the local amaHlubi people, resident on the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains, have been working with the provincial conservation agency (Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife) on the proposal.

There are a number of reasons behind this proposal. Firstly, the proposed site is close to some of the protected areas in the region, notably the Giants Castle Game Reserve of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park and it is envisaged to adjoin Hillside and Injisuthi Nature Reserves. Thus, the establishment of Ngelengele Nature Reserve creates opportunities for consolidating conservation efforts between the existing protected areas and neighbouring communal lands. The creation of the CCA creates prospects for compatible land uses with those in the nearby protected areas.

Secondly, the area has an abundance of wildlife and natural areas deserving of conservation, not to mention the many cultural sites scattered in the communal lands. There are also opportunities for establishing community-based natural resources based initiatives that could benefit Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNW) in terms of eco-tourism. These opportunities include the natural surroundings of the area, the mountains with the associated rich cultural heritage as well as the presence of protected areas run by EKZNW (EKZNW undated). The abject poverty that afflicts the resident communities requires the development of local economic development initiatives. The proposed reserve offers some opportunities in this regard.

Lastly but not the least, the nearby uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park which is a World Heritage Site, a status attained in recognition of both its biodiversity and cultural endowments, offers immense opportunities for the CCA to promote itself. The proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve is consistent with the stated objectives to conserve the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park while promoting community upliftment and ecotourism development in surrounding areas. However, the proposed area is in no way absolved from the challenges highlighted earlier regarding the potential difficulties in promoting conservation as a form of land use in communal areas.

1.3 Justification of the research

The significance of this research is that it explores two contemporary ideas relevant to protected area management, livelihoods and CCAs. Increasingly, there has been a realisation that protected area management goals cannot be achieved without the recognition of the livelihoods of people living in and around them (Salafsky and Wollenberg 2000; OPAAL 2005). Also, the notion of CCAs is gaining in recognition of the limitations of state-run protected areas in respect of institutionalising protected

area management and promoting the conservation ethic at local levels. (Jones 2004, LIFE 2002)

Further, while the proposal which motivated this study is still in its infancy, it is nonetheless important to develop an understanding of local perspectives and reactions to the proposal. The provincial conservation agency's community conservation staff in the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg region have been working with the local people and the traditional leadership regarding the proposal. This study is therefore not a pure academic endeavour and has some practical relevance that may inform the planning processes of Ngelengele Nature Reserve.

From a theoretical and research perspective, this study is significant because the issues it raises require the consideration of two main bodies of literature, the transformation of conservation, and sustainable livelihoods in the context of South Africa. There is much to gain from an intellectual dialogue between these previously separate areas of research and thought. The study is timely because it brings together two key contemporary issues in the conservation and development lexicon, livelihoods and community conservation areas. Despite the fact that the literature has revealed the inherent under-exploration of the issue of livelihoods in relation to conservation (Adams and Hulme 2001; Jones undated), this lesson has not been integrated into contemporary debates over the redefinition and practice of conservation (Jones undated). In particular, attempts at community-based conservation projects have not adequately dealt with the inherently vulnerable nature of local livelihoods and the opportunities and tensions in marrying conservation with livelihoods.

1.4 Aim and objectives

The study aim was to apply the sustainable livelihood framework in analysing the livelihood assets of the amaHlubi people and outlining their perspectives about the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve. Three specific objectives were developed for the study:

- Determine the respondents' perceptions of the livelihood assets of the amaHlubi community.
- Determine the respondents' awareness of, and support towards, the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve.
- Assess the respondent's views about the implications of the envisaged activities of Ngelengele Nature Reserve for the livelihood strategies of the amaHlubi community.

1.5 Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

- Conservation initiatives must apply strategies that explicitly address the livelihoods of the local communities.
- The livelihoods strategies of the amaHlubi community are mainly based on natural resources.
- By explicitly acknowledging the importance of the local livelihoods and committing to improve those livelihoods, the Ngelengele Nature Reserve could make a great contribution to the upliftment of the amaHlubi community.

1.6 Methodology

The respondents were all residents of the study area. Being a qualitative study, the focus was not on statistical significance, but rather on the nature of issues the

respondents raised. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was the primary source of data. The research instrument was tested during a reconnaissance visit to the area. Refinements to the instruments were made prior to the final data collection phase. Meetings were conducted in the homesteads of the respondents over a period of nine days. To give the study conceptual underpinning, the sustainable livelihoods framework (Chambers and Conway 1992; DFID 2002) was adopted. In addition to its robustness, the framework has relevance to all the three critical components of this study: livelihoods, poverty and resource sustainability. A detailed description of the methodology is provided in Chapter 3.

1.7 Limitations

Two major problems were faced during the study. Firstly there were time constraints that mainly arose from the bureaucracy of both the provincial conservation agency and the traditional leadership. While this delayed the start of data collection, it was advantageous because all concerned parties supported the project in the end. This problem occurred with the first few interviewees and making appointments for the subsequent interviewees a day in advance rectified it. Language was also a barrier, as most of the respondents could not speak the English language. An interpreter, competent in both English and *isiZulu*, was hired to help with the fieldwork.

1.8 Structure of dissertation

This dissertation comprises two stand-alone components. Together with the following two chapters, this chapter comprises Component A. This component introduces the study, provides a review of relevant literature as well as an overview of the research approaches and methods followed in the study. Component B is written according to

the criteria of a research paper presenting the findings of the study and their implications. Since Component B must be able to stand alone as a publishable journal article, abbreviated sections from Component A have been included.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter laid the foundations for the dissertation. It began with a background to the research where it firstly highlighted the study's underlying assumptions, followed by the research problem. Then the research aim and objectives were outlined before the justification of the study. Thereafter, the methodology was briefly described and the study limitations followed. Lastly, the structure of the thesis was outlined. On these foundations, the thesis can proceed with a detailed description of the research, starting with the literature review in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

IMPLICATIONS OF POVERTY AND LOCAL LIVELIHOODS ON CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

2.1 Introduction

Local conditions in most of southern Africa dictate that for conservation initiatives to succeed, a major component they must address is the livelihood strategies of the rural people (DFID 2002). The premise is that an understanding of livelihoods is essential because it provides a basis from which to understand the multiple and complex resource use patterns that characterise most rural livelihoods (Carney 1998). To this end three themes, namely, poverty, livelihoods and conservation are explored in this chapter. The reason for using this combination of literature is to test the key argument of this study, namely that the ability to facilitate sustainable livelihoods is essential to promoting effective conservation in areas outside formal conservation jurisdiction.

Three major sections make up this chapter. The first illustrates linkages between poverty, livelihoods and conservation and the impacts of poverty on conservation and of a cash economy on livelihoods and conservation. The second discusses attempts at transforming and redefining the conservation sector in a post-apartheid South Africa against background of past policies and practices. The focus on South Africa was motivated by the fact that the promotion of sustainable livelihoods is a critical element in the country's transformation agenda in general, and particularly in efforts aimed at uplifting poverty stricken rural communities (ANC 1994). The third section is an overview of the sustainable livelihoods framework, highlighting its elements and their connections and linkages to conservation. The sustainable livelihoods framework guided the collection of data and was crucial to data analysis.

2.2 Poverty, livelihoods and conservation

It has long been realised that the success of conservation work, including the effective management of protected areas cannot succeed without adequate consideration of the socio-economic realities of the regions in which protected areas are located (Grimble and Laidlan 2002; Mogelgaard 2003; Salafsky and Wollenbrg 2000). Poverty and livelihoods are two examples of the socio-economic realities conservation authorities ought to face (DFID 2002; LIFE 2002).

2.2.1 Poverty

“Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not being able to go to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water and finally, poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom” (World Bank 2001a: 1).

According to the World Bank (2001a), deprivation or the detrimental lack of essential goods and services like clean water, food, clothing and income is one way in which poverty is commonly experienced in many parts of the world. However, the effects of poverty manifest themselves differently, varying according to different contexts (Chambers and Conway 1992). In contexts of abject poverty, drivers of poverty are many, including general life-cycle changes and illness or death of a bread winner (World Bank 2001a). Poverty conditions can be exacerbated when external economic conditions get worse due to factors such as a civil war (*ibid*).

Involving so many aspects of human existence, poverty is a complex concept, yet poverty has for long been subjected to simplistic approaches which fail to appreciate its complexity (Chambers and Conway 1992). New approaches offering a more comprehensive understanding of poverty have been developed over the years, for

example. the sustainable livelihoods approach (Carney 1998; DFID 2002) and the rights-based approach (IDS 2003). The former is discussed in section 2.4.2 as it has informed the conceptual framework chosen for this study.

2.2.2 Livelihoods

In many sectors, including conservation, it has increasingly been suggested that a useful approach of dealing with poverty requires an understanding of how people earn their livelihoods, appreciating that livelihoods themselves are very complex (Carney 1998; Chambers and Conway 1992). Livelihood is a concept used to describe the process of meeting basic goods and services (Oxford University Dictionary 2004) hence its definition as “means of living or of supporting life and meeting individual and community needs” (UNDP cited in SEI 2003: 2). A livelihood comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living including food, income and assets (Carney 1998; Chambers and Conway 1992). A livelihood is environmentally sustainable when it maintains or enhances the local and global assets on which livelihoods depend and has net beneficial effects on other livelihoods. Livelihood is a useful concept in understanding poverty (Chambers and Conway 1992).

2.2.3 Poverty and livelihoods – the link to conservation

People in rural areas depend on the natural environment for their survival. For most southern African communities, their livelihoods rely directly on natural resources (Chidumayo *et al.* 1993). Direct consumption and or use of natural resources such as thatch grass, mushrooms, natural veld and medicinal plants is a common reality in southern Africa (Chidumayo *et al.* 1993). Dependence on natural resources has evolved to form complex and multiple resource use patterns, mainly on a subsistence scale amongst the rural people. Heavy direct dependence on natural resources makes

natural resources a critical component of rural sustenance and livelihoods (Jones undated).

Hence, increasingly, conservation initiatives are also engaged in linking conservation and sustainable livelihoods in order to improve the quality of life of poor people (Roe, Pimbert, Swidersha and Vermeulen 2005). The diversity of livelihoods for poor people relies mainly on the natural resources, especially in times of stress. (DFID 2002). Consequently, they become more vulnerable when access to resources is denied for any reason, leading to shortcomings in income and/or limited opportunities to diversify livelihoods (LIFE 2002; Shackleton and Shackleton 2004).

2.2.4 Implications of poverty on the conservation of natural resources

Poverty is a concept that is engaged from different sectors such as health, education, and agriculture. Conservation has not been left out especially as Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) has gradually become adopted as an approach in poverty reduction in southern African countries (Jones 2004). Within the context of conservation, CBNRM has been promoted by governments, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and communities as an approach to fight poverty mainly in the context of income realised from different natural resource based activities (Jones undated).

A common link between poverty and conservation is perhaps its association with resource degradation (Marcoux 1999; Iftikhar 2003; Ayeni *et al.* 2002). Central to this association has been the view that poverty forces people to over-exploit the resource base in their attempts to eke an existence, often on a hand-to-mouth basis (Lamy 2005; Iftikhar 2003; Ayeni *et al.* 2002; United Nations undated). This situation should

not be misunderstood to mean that poor people do not care about the environment and natural resources. The reality is that the majority of the rural people are too poor to be able to invest labour and other resources from productive activities into conservation measures unless there are immediate returns. The immediacy of their livelihood needs overrides the quest to conserve resources in most cases. The situation is compounded by the fact that often, the benefits from natural resource conservation are long term.

Left unaddressed, poverty can thwart conservation initiatives – formal or otherwise. It is important in the conceptualisation and implementation of conservation initiatives to ensure that poverty is addressed, not as an indirect objective but as a critical strategic objective (DFID 2002; WCPA 2003). Addressing poverty creates opportunities for lasting and realistic responses to the problems of resource degradation (Chidumayo *et al.* 1993).

For several decades now, strategies to promote conservation have broadened their objectives to include aspects of socio-economic development, e.g. livelihoods, education and health deemed appropriate in the fight against poverty (Hazlewood, Kulshrestha and McNeill undated). These strategies were informed by a shift in conservation policy which led to the emergence of Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) (Brown 2002). Examples of ICDP-based initiatives include the various CBNRM initiatives promoted during a good part of the 1980s in southern Africa and other regions in the developing countries (Adams and Hulme 2001).

Without appropriate strategies that explicitly address poverty in general and the local livelihoods more specifically, conservation initiatives are unlikely to succeed. A

realistic conservation initiative at the local level, therefore, is one which explicitly acknowledges the importance of local livelihoods and commits to supporting those livelihoods (Loader 1994; Brinkcate 1997). That way, conservation initiatives cannot be seen as far removed from the realities of the local people.

Negative consequences of a lack of support towards livelihoods can be detrimental to conservation initiatives in the short and long term. This can be attributed to the fact that some of the negative effects arising from a combination of lack of support and a poor or degraded resource base can take a very long time to address. It is therefore important when implementing conservation projects to continuously consider how conservation can make a practical contribution to the livelihoods of the local communities. Failure and or success of some conservation initiatives can be partially associated with their degree of support towards local livelihoods.

2.2.5 Implications of a cash economy on livelihoods and conservation

Poverty, understood in the context of the emergence of a cash economy, is transforming the livelihoods of people in rural areas. By cash economy is meant the reality in which money has become the dominant means of trade. Previously, this was not necessarily the case as people depended on the natural environment for most of their livelihood requirements, and bartering sufficed for their needs. In a cash economy, this is no longer possible and this transformation of rural livelihoods poses serious implications for natural resource management.

From total dependence on natural resources on a subsistence scale, rural communities now use natural resources in ways that provide opportunities for income to enable their survival in a cash economy (Jones and Murphree 2004). This trend, coupled with

other factors such as population growth, weak governance and inappropriate resource use patterns has heightened pressure on natural resources and ecosystems (Marcoux 2000; Crowley and Kirsten 1999; Birdlife International 2006; Ayeni *et al.* 2002). Deforestation, over fishing, over-grazing, uncontrolled burning of rangelands, encroachment of forests, and other manifestations of environmental degradation are consequently negatively affecting livelihoods. In the long term, these trends can confine poor rural communities to eking out livelihoods based on a depleted resource base (DFID 2002).

Reversing this trend, and better still, preventing it from happening requires an appreciation that rural people are exposed to the risks of a cash economy which requires them to generate income as part of their livelihood strategies (Carney 1998). Use of natural resources for the people in rural areas is not a livelihood option. Rather, it is a practical and sometimes the only way to raise money, and it is particularly compelling as alternative sources of income are practically non-existent for the majority of poor people (DEAT 1997). There is also a need to recognise the opportunities presented by a cash economy for such communities. Natural resources in rural communities with strong governance and proper support, can generate income for the rural areas, e.g. through organised resource extraction, and controlled access for purposes of ecotourism (Cowan *et al.* 2003).

2.3 Transforming conservation in post apartheid South Africa

The foregoing discussion on the linkages of poverty, livelihoods and conservation is relevant in many developing country contexts. However, South Africa provides another important dimension because of the institutionalisation of apartheid policies and how they affected the relationships between conservation and local people

(DEAT 2003). Also, South Africa provides comparatively recent and much more accentuated efforts to transform the conservation sector alongside the country's broader transformation agenda in the period leading to and the period after democratisation (Cowan *et al.* 2003).

2.3.1 A brief historical perspective on South African protected area management

South Africa boasts an extensive and well-managed protected area network. Yet, the country's conservation sector is deeply marked by the legacies of apartheid (Carruthers 1989). For several decades, the apartheid government showed no interest in poverty alleviation among indigenous peoples. The apartheid government's focus for a long time was on procuring agricultural land for settlers and cheap labour for mining and industry (Anderson and Grove 1987; Brooks 1992; Brinkcate 1997). The South African Natives Land Act (No 27 of 1913) was the cornerstone of this rural transformation, resulting in inequitable land distribution and the characteristic underdevelopment of black, rural South Africa (Carruthers 1989). The literature analysing and critiquing the South African Natives Land Act (No 27 of 1913) and its far-reaching implications in the context of resource management highlights many aspects (Box 2.1).

- Forced removals through appropriation of land previously occupied and sustainably utilised by indigenous people for the benefit of the white settler economy.
- Indigenous people lost their land and their resources without equitable compensation.
- Reduction and confinement of indigenous people who were reduced to wage labour through being denied access to their land and natural resources.
- The emergent white settler economy overexploited the natural resources at first and later instituted conservation practices.
- No participation whatsoever in the governance of conservation by the general public and the indigenous communities were further denied access to resources and benefits arising from conservation
- The status quo was maintained through conservation authorities becoming a public aversity and paramilitary force.

Box 2.1. A summary of issues associated with erstwhile conservation practices in South Africa

Alongside massive land appropriation were forced removals of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands around which they had weaved strong ties culturally, in terms of their sustenance and livelihoods (Carruthers 1995). Forced removals ensured that communities were sometimes moved to distant places where they had to start new ways of sustaining their livelihoods, e.g. growing crops or harvesting resources. Livelihoods were seriously disrupted as indigenous people no longer had access to their previous land and their associated natural resources such as medicinal herbs or game meat. Access to cultural assets, such as gravesites within conservation areas, was also denied, thereby creating a serious infringement on their cultural rights (Steenkamp and Hughes 1997).

The usage of paramilitary force (Koch 1993) both in law and practice to keep indigenous people away from conservation areas created negative perceptions of conservation, and everything associated with it, among indigenous people. Most, if not all, conservation areas shared one salient feature; they were surrounded by overcrowded and degraded rural areas inhabited by residents strongly biased against conservation (Jacobson 1991; Poonan and Massyn 1997). Coupled with the painful experiences of forced removals, it was not strange that these experiences made people come to a realistic conclusion that in South Africa animals were more important than people (Armstrong 1991). Against this background, indigenous people living around game reserves in South Africa have for the larger part been identified as victims rather than beneficiaries of conservation (Koch cited in Matlala 1991)

The plight of livelihoods has been disadvantaged further by the fact that the environmental movement in South Africa has traditionally been concerned with aesthetic, recreational, biodiversity and preservation issues in isolation from social

considerations (Fourie 1994; Poonan and Massyn 1997; Steenkamp and Hughes 1997). This lack of focus on social considerations, under whose ambit the notion of livelihood falls, was unsurprisingly one of the key aspects that came to the fore in efforts to transform conservation in the post apartheid era (Tapela and Omara-Ojungu undated).

2.3.2 Conservation with development: New approaches in South Africa

The philosophies that underpinned conservation during the apartheid era were inconsistent with the social and political climate of a new democratic South Africa. Democratisation introduced new pressures required for a change in conservation practice and policy (DEAT 2003). Overall, there was recognition that biodiversity conservation could only succeed if the social needs of neighbouring human communities were genuinely met (Armstrong 1991; Cock and Koch 1991; Poonan and Massyn 1997; Steenkamp and Hughes 1997; DEAT 1997). Meeting these needs, it was argued, needed not to be seen as an additional task, but a strategic and integrated task that conservation agencies had to take up as part of their operational and strategic activities (Loader 1994; Brinkcate 1997). The pressures for change in conservation policy and practice came from different fronts.

The first was the political democratisation process which empowered the previously unheard voices, particularly the black communities (DEAT 2003). Prior to democratisation black communities, including those living next to South Africa's protected areas, were not only marginalised but also under-resourced (Poonan and Massyn 1997). This meant that they came nowhere close to positive consideration in terms of policy and legislation during the apartheid era. For the larger part, they were

seen as sources of problems facing protected areas and were normally the targets of oppressive legislative provisions (DEAT 2003).

The second was that prior to and after democratisation a lot of advocacy occurred (Poonan and Massyn 1997). Various local interest groups including lawyers, journalists and non-governmental organisations created an unprecedented coalition calling for change in conservation policy and practice in South Africa (DEAT 1997). In many ways, the coalition has been influential in changing the perception of conservation and neighbouring communities through directly engaging communities on land rights and their potential roles in conservation governance (Poonan and Massyn 1997).

The third set of pressures arose from the growing international conservation interest in the design and implementation of integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs) (Adams and Hulme 2001). This approach advocates conservation proposals that espouse the principles of development alongside conservation (Armstrong 1991; Cock and Koch 1991; Wells and Brandon 1992; Fourie 1994).

The fourth set of pressures has been insights arising from several years' experience in the implementation of ICDPs in other countries in southern Africa (Armstrong 1991; Jacobson 1991; Mwenya 1993). Lastly but not the least have been lessons from some early innovative experiments by South African conservation agencies at promoting ICDP-based initiatives in different parts of South Africa (Poonan and Massyn 1997; Steenkamp and Hughes 1997).

Concerns about the long-standing problem of poor relations between protected areas and neighbouring communities arose in the period leading to democratisation in 1994.

These concerns were consistent with socio-economic policies of South Africa outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the Government of National Unity. Among others, the RDP highlighted the importance of using environmental resources sustainably to satisfy basic human needs, and to contribute to improving quality of life and to ultimately reduce pressure on the environment (ANC 1994).

The imperative of conservation contributing to meeting basic human needs is in line with calls for sustainable livelihoods. In general, the thinking has been that conservation should not be an end in itself. It has long been argued that in southern Africa, as well as other parts of the world, protected areas could and should involve local communities, thereby creating regional economies and encouraging rural development (Robinson 1995). Using its particular vantage points, conservation can help to alleviate poverty in neighbouring communities and thereby help to promote sustainable livelihoods.

Against this background it is important to note that poverty is a complex phenomenon which cannot be completely addressed by conservation initiatives, especially in that it is not even the primary objective of many conservation initiatives. However, many southern African governments and their development partners have indicated a strong need for conservation to make practical contributions in the fight against poverty (e.g. MET 1995; DEAT 1997; DFID 2002; LIFE 2002). Areas in which conservation can make practical contributions include job creation and income generation through initiatives such as CCAs/community conservancies, trophy hunting, eco-tourism, tour guiding and the craft industry which usually relies on a well developed tourism market and park infrastructure.

The above orientation has encouraged reviews of conservation initiatives such as CBNRM which have been technically and conceptually biased towards income generation to the exclusion of other important factors (Jones undated). What is needed is a broader understanding of poverty as opposed to focusing only on material and or economic gains (Turner 2003). Other factors which have implications for livelihoods of poor rural communities need to be considered as well. But the need to analyse CBNRM and other conservation initiatives in the context of "... a modern understanding of the symptoms and root causes of poverty and the factors that have been identified as a means to reduce and/or alleviate poverty" (Jones undated: 1) remains.

2.4 A conceptual framework: the sustainable livelihoods framework

2.4.1 Background to the framework

This section describes in detail the conceptual framework adopted for this study – the sustainable livelihoods (SL) framework (Carney 1998; Chambers and Conway 1992; DFID 2002). The SL framework is a product of an evolving understanding of poverty and strategies to combat poverty. Shifts in thinking about poverty have led to agreement on the fact that poverty is multi-dimensional, involving social, economic and political factors. The World Bank has over the years continued to play an instrumental role in creating an understanding of the nature of poverty as a complex subject. It has accordingly, especially in its 2000/2001 World Development Report (WDR) seen by many as reflecting the bank's new understanding of poverty, suggested strategies to combat poverty (World Bank 2001b).

Shifts in thinking about poverty have led to broadening the concept of poverty to include powerlessness, vulnerability, deprivation, isolation, lack of decision-making power, lack of assets and general insecurity (Chambers and Conway 1992; World Bank 2001b). New strategies based on social, economic and political processes informed the World Bank's 2000/2001 report in which it proposed issues that need to be addressed in the fight against poverty (World Bank 2001b). Four key elements have been identified as critical in the fight against poverty: targeted economic opportunities, building of assets, empowerment and security.

Targeted economic opportunities

With regard to targeted economic opportunities, the idea is to move away from past experiences where benefits of growth failed to reach the poor people. In this regard, it was noted that “the distribution of growth benefits matters, not the least because of distributional conflict can undermine the stability needed for overall growth” (World Bank 2001b: 38). Hence, the World Bank advocates pro-poor strategies, e.g. allowing poor people to use land as collateral in their efforts to access credit facilities.

Building assets

People remain trapped in the poverty cycle because they have no access to assets and as a result, lack the opportunity to build assets (World Bank 2001b). Summarizing the World Bank's views on building assets, Jones (undated) observes that there are five forms of assets necessary to elevate people from conditions of poverty:

- Human assets, e.g. skills, good health and capacity to work.
- Natural assets, e.g. forests, land, water and other natural resources.
- Physical assets, e.g. access to infrastructure such as roads and shelter.
- Financial assets, e.g. access to finance and credit facilities.

- Social assets, e.g. networks of relationships with others, reciprocal obligations that can be called on in times of need and political influence.

In addition to market forces, access to assets is also influenced by political and social processes as well as the actions of the state and social institutions. This means, for example, that access to a given communal resource may be determined by one's ethnicity or residence or indeed by government policy.

Empowerment

In the context of fighting poverty, the World Bank defines empowerment as follows: "Empowerment means enhancing the capacity of poor people to influence the state institutions that affect their lives, by strengthening their participation in political processes and local decision-making. And it means removing barriers – political, legal and social – that work against particular groups and building assets of poor people to enable them to engage effectively in markets" (World Bank 2001b: 39).

Empowerment is only possible if the poor people, working in their own organisations, can effectively engage state institutions and demand good governance, transparency and accountability in their work (World Bank 2001b). In its promotion of a poverty fighting strategy specific to Africa, called Community Driven Development, the World Bank underscores the view that local empowerment, in its own right, is a strategy of poverty reduction (World Bank 2000).

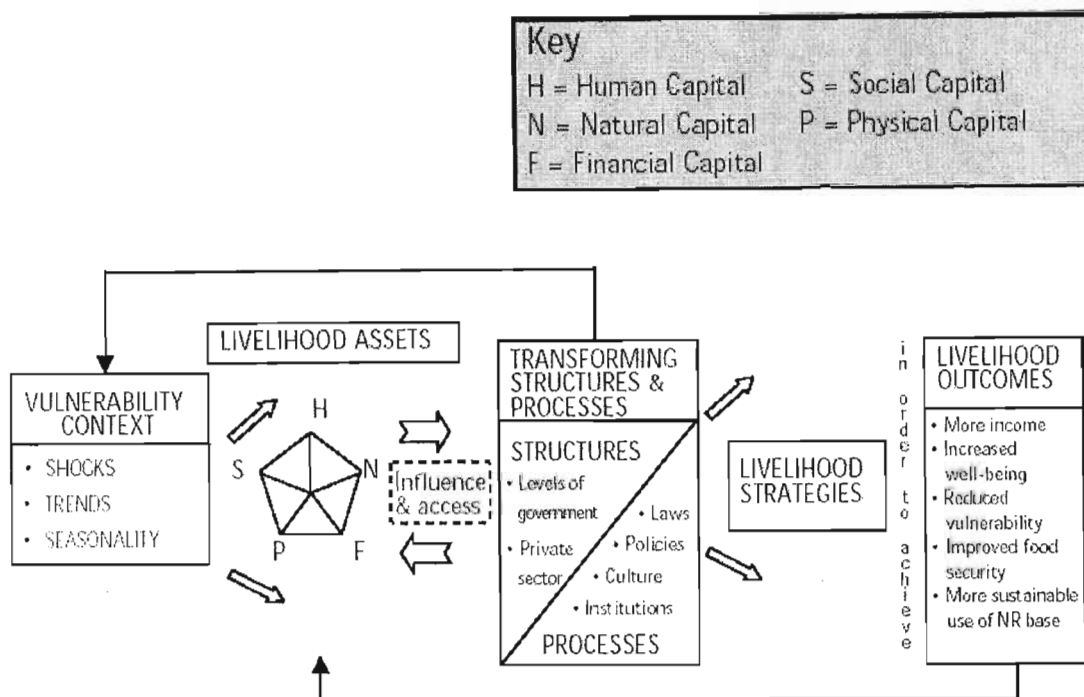
Security

According to the World Bank (2001b), security for poor people means creating a hedge against vulnerability risks such as ill health, economic shocks and natural calamities. It also means being able to help poor people in times of such difficulties. Since assets are central in fighting poverty (Carney 1998), it is critical to ensure that

the protection of poor people from vulnerability includes supporting the different assets that people have. Similarly, hedging poor people from vulnerability could include rendering support to institutions that help poor people manage risk as well as government and local-level social safety nets (Carney 1998). Ensuring that government institutions and policies are adequately prepared for appropriate responses is another form of dealing with vulnerability.

2.4.2 The sustainable livelihoods framework

The above-explained ideas have been summarized in a framework (Figure 2.1) to constitute what is known as the SL approach. “Sustainable livelihoods are those that can cope with, and can recover from stress and shocks in the long term by drawing on a mix of potentials of the local people and the capabilities of their natural environment with the help of appropriate institutional interventions” (Chambers and Conway 1992). Furthermore, SLs are not only resilient, but also have the capability to create opportunities for future generations. SLs are expected to maintain or enhance their capabilities and assets over time. Importantly, they contribute “net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long-term” (Chambers and Conway 1992: 36).



Source: DFID 2002

Figure 2.1. The sustainable livelihood framework

The SL approach targets poverty as an inhibitor of human development and proposes the harnessing of potentials in people¹, their environs and the significance of institutional interventions in that regard. Recognition is given in this framework to the importance of understanding the key conditions that affect poor people's ability to build assets. Five key components make up the framework; vulnerability context, livelihoods assets, transforming structures and processes, livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes. Each of these components is discussed below.

Vulnerability context

This aspect is concerned with the context in which factors that affect livelihoods, namely trends, seasonality and local cultural practices are found (Carney 1998). The framework underscores the fact that for poor people, vulnerability is a situation and

¹ The centrality of people to the sustainable livelihoods framework is perhaps illustrated in the suggestion that the desired livelihood outcomes are not what governments and other agencies might be able to provide to people but what people aspire to (Khanya 2000).

determinant of poverty, and it relates to the ability of people to prevent, withstand or recover from the destructive impacts of shocks to their lives and those beyond their direct control (DFID 2002). In the context of this study, the vulnerability context includes the immediate natural and institutional environments and their influence on the living conditions of local people.

Livelihood assets or capitals

As discussed earlier, proponents of the SL framework suggest that the ability to pursue diverse livelihood strategies is dependent on the basic assets or capitals people have at their disposal (e.g. Chambers and Conway 1992). Five forms of capital are identified; natural, human, physical, financial, and social, with the key argument that each of these capitals need to exist to facilitate sustainable livelihoods.

Natural capital refers to the natural resources that are available to communities for their livelihoods including intangible public goods. Human capital includes knowledge, good health, skills and ability to labour. Physical capital is related to infrastructures required to support livelihoods. Financial capital denotes resources available for households, either in the form of stocks or regular inflows of money from wages or social security, etc. The model proponents further observe that financial capital is the least available to poor people and normally converted into other assets that will supply direct livelihood outcomes. Lastly, social capital is the social resources leading the people to draw their livelihood objectives. Social capital could take various forms including locally established support networks such as family, friends, church and other local institutions or simply a more supportive social environment (DFID 2002). Importantly, each of these capitals can also provide a flow

of output, perhaps becoming diminished as a result, or may be accrued as a surplus to be invested in future productive purposes (Scoones 1998).

Transforming structures and processes

The key to a SL is an integrated interaction between governance, policy, science and technology, and investment and finance (Rogers 1999). This aspect of the SL approach is based on a recognised need for appropriate institutional mechanisms in areas of legislation, market regulations, government and community organisations (Scoones 1998; Khanya 2000 and DFID 1999). Only when there is such integration is it possible to enhance the assets that local people have already achieved (Rogers *ibid*). Hence, transforming structures are created and facilitated by a policy and institutional environment that supports multiple livelihood strategies and promotes equitable access to competitive markets for all (DFID 2002). Processes such as policies, laws and regulations need to be present to direct and define livelihood options.

Livelihood strategies

Livelihood strategies are essentially the choices that rural people make and commit to in pursuing and sustaining their livelihoods. In poor rural communities, livelihood strategies include three primary clusters: agricultural intensification, livelihood diversification and migration, which according to Scoones (1998) denote the range of choices open to rural people. Livelihood strategies include both those based on natural resources and those that are not (*ibid*). Whatever major form of livelihood strategies is chosen in poverty stricken rural contexts, the trend is often of multiple but integrated resource use patterns. This entails that for many rural people, livelihoods are premised on multiple resource uses complemented by periodic income generation, e.g. through wage labour, remittances and or gifts. Such integrated livelihood

strategies are central to granting livelihood opportunities to people who would otherwise be unable to access benefits from macro-economy (Carney 1998). While the reality is one of certain activities being dominant, it is unlikely for a household, and in particular rural poor households, to depend totally on one activity. Mostly, they merge these complex activities in their livelihoods (Soussan *et al.* 2001).

Livelihood outcomes

Livelihood outcomes are the accomplishments or outputs of livelihood strategies (Khanya 2000; DFID cited in George undated). The model identifies five livelihood outcomes: more income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security and more sustainable use of natural resources (DFID 2002; de Gruchy 2004).

The first three of these livelihood outcomes are concerned with issues of employment, income generation, poverty reduction as well as wider concerns of adequacy, food security, well-being and capability. Sustained growth in income is normally referred to as economic sustainability of livelihoods (general increase of money for households). Increased well-being is one of the most undervalued livelihood outcomes and perhaps one of the most important, if not the most important (de Gruchy 2004), and it includes physical, spiritual and cultural well-being, self-esteem, access to services and political enfranchisement. Reducing livelihood vulnerability is related to social and environmental factors. As livelihoods become more sustainable, people's capacity to overcome adverse conditions increases. This will lead to improved food security with less deaths related to hunger and the more sustainable use of natural resources (DFID 1999). The last two include the resource or environmental sustainability dimension. More specifically, they focus on the

resilience of livelihoods and the natural resource foundation on which, to some extent, they depend (Scoones 1998 and Soussan *et al.* 2001).

Natural resource extraction for consumption or sale facilitates numerous requirements of life for rural households, including the meeting of food requirements. Increasingly, in addition to subsistence requirements, rural households develop natural resources for commercial sale, providing income generation benefits and opportunities. Overall, a sense of the outcomes of the framework is decipherable from its associated objectives (Box 2.2).

- improved access to high-quality education, information, technologies and training and better nutrition and health;
- a more supportive and cohesive social environment;
- more secure access to, and better management of, natural resources;
- better access to basic and facilitating infrastructure;
- more secure access to financial resources; and
- a policy and institutional environment that supports multiple livelihoods strategies and promotes equitable access to competitive markets for all.

Source: DFID (1999: 7)

Box 2.2 Objectives of the sustainable livelihoods approach

2.5 Relevance of the framework to this study

The relevance of the SL framework lies in its robustness in dealing with poverty and the association it has with resource conservation. Regarding poverty, it draws attention to the dynamic nature of poverty and its far reaching consequences. For example, the framework is sensitive to how poverty influences various factors and how it in turn is influenced by those same forces (Carney 1998). For these reasons,

the framework has been acknowledged and offered as an empirically testable and robust way of dealing with poverty (Khanya 2000; de Gruchy 2005; Chambers and Conway 1992; Conroy and Litvinoff 1988). The framework offers a means of analyzing people's livelihoods by working with them to identify ways to improve their livelihoods, hence they are active rather than passive participants (DFID 2002).

The framework goes further than just meeting basic needs or subsistence living. Meeting basic needs would be just one of the earliest steps (Rogers 1999). It brings into focus the need to address issues of empowerment such as skills and knowledge acquisition. Further, the framework supports the sustainability of natural resources as an important pillar in sustaining livelihoods of rural people; "the livelihood approach views the sustainability of resources as an integral component of the sustainability of livelihoods and rather than only minimise the negative, it seeks to maximise the positive contribution made by the natural environment to people's livelihood outcomes" (DFID 1999:12). The framework also calls for both sustainable and productive use of the resource base taking into consideration the future generations (Rogers 1999). However, it is important to emphasise that livelihood activities can enhance or degrade the local natural resources base. As such sustainability will be determined by the way assets are utilised, maintained and enhanced (Chambers and Conway 1992).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature relevant to this study. The review of literature has been organised around the themes of poverty and livelihoods in the context of their implications on conservation. The South African context has been used to

illustrate how the shifting paradigm of conservation is increasingly embracing socio-economic imperatives. Poverty and livelihoods were used as exemplars of the socio-economic realities that conservation ought to embrace. The study's adopted framework has been presented and its elements have been outlined. The chapter ended with an exposition of the relevance of the framework.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research setting and methodology. It comprises three major sections. The first describes the setting of the study, namely the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains region. Contained in this section is information highlighting the ecological, cultural and economic significance of the Maloti-Drakensberg Area. Threats facing the mountains are also outlined. The second section is an overview of the amaHlubi people who are involved with the initiative used as a case study. The third section focuses on the methodology. It explains and rationalises the methods and approach followed in the study with regard to data collection and analysis. Limitations of the study are also explained.

3.2 Research setting

The setting of the study is the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains region. The Maloti-Drakensberg mountains are a major landmark of the region, straddling the border between the Kingdom of Lesotho and South Africa for nearly 300km and rising to various altitudes² (Zunckel *et al.* undated). The mountains form part of the regional history spanning many centuries (Box 3.1). They are significant for ecological and cultural reasons. Their significance to the regional economy is also invaluable. However, the mountains' resources and associated goods and services face increasing pressures which could undermine their significance in the long term.

² The altitudes vary from more than 3 353m in the eastern part to about 2 440m farther west with Thabana Ntlenyana at 3 482 m the highest point on the African continent south of Kilimanjaro (DEAT undated; Encyclopaedia Britannica 2006).

- Inhabited by the ancestors of the nineteenth century San 8 000 years ago.
- Home to the San people - small hunter and gatherer communities who left their legacy in the form of rock art.
- In the 1200s or perhaps earlier, the Iron Age farmers settled in the foothills of the mountains.
- In the 1600s, African cattle-herding groups established permanent settlements around the mountains.
- An area of conflict and shelter in the 1800s as those fleeing from regional tribal fights battled with those they found, for occupation.
- Surrounding areas were battle grounds for the indigenous groups against settlers and during the Anglo-Boer war.

Sources: DEAT undated; Derwent, Porter and Sandwith. 2003

Box 3.1 Some historical aspects about the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains

3.2.1 Ecological and cultural significance

The mountains are internationally recognised for their unique mix of biodiversity with high levels of endemism and cultural significance. The endemism of the mountains is partially associated with its two major high altitude vegetation types: the Afro-Mountain grassland biome, found at altitudes between 1700m-2500m above sea level, and the Alti-Mountain biome, found at above 2500m (Derwent *et al.* 2001; 2003). Also, the wetlands located in the higher reaches of the mountains are home to a great diversity of endemic animals and plants (Derwent *et al.* 2001; 2003). This unique combination of natural and cultural characteristics led to the declaration in 2000 of one of the largest parks in the bioregion - the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park (2428 km²) – as a World Heritage Site (Cowan *et al.* 2003). The high level of endemism in the park is well-documented: 2153 different species of plants with an endemism of 51.5%; 299 bird species with 32 species endemic to South Africa and 43 species endemic to southern Africa; 48 mammal species; eight species of fish, 48 species of

reptiles and 48 species of amphibians (Derwent *et al.* 2001; 2003). Although the invertebrate fauna of the park is not well-known, it is thought to include many species endemic to the region (*ibid.*).

The cultural significance of the mountains derives from the presence of an unmatched gallery of rock art in the world painted by the San people (Zunckel *et al.* 2005; DEAT undated; Derwent, Porter, Sandwith 2001). The rock art symbolises “a very long tradition with the oldest dated painting on a rock shelter being about 2 400 years old, and the more recently painted images having been created up to the late nineteenth century” (*ibid* 2001: 13). The rock art depicts linkages of the San people with nature, spiritual importance, as well as historical events and conflicts. The uniqueness of the paintings is highlighted by several factors: “the quality of sites and paintings, the diversity of sites and painting locations, the undisturbed harmony between the art and the environment, the preservation of the art’s cultural context and that the images come from a single artistic tradition and the remarkable state of preservation of the art” (*ibid* 2001: 13).

3.2.2 Significance to the regional economy

The importance of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains continues to date: “the mountains link the livelihoods of people in both countries [Lesotho and South Africa], who depend on the water resources and the use of the mountains for agriculture and tourism” (Cowan *et al.* 2003: 106). In addition to the benefits at the local livelihoods scale, the mountains have an invaluable role in the regional economy. For example, they are an important catchment providing fresh water to industries and households in the region. The landscape, natural and cultural resources of the mountains have

various tourism potentials that need to be identified and developed (Cowan *et al.* 2003; DEAT undated). The mountains and associated resources have great potential to contribute to the development of the economy of the region and the livelihoods of the local people who depend on its resources (Derwent *et al.* 2001; 2003; DEAT undated).

3.2.3 Threats to cultural and environmental sustainability

However, the natural and cultural integrity and sustainability of the mountains are increasingly under threat from a number of factors. These factors include overgrazing of communal lands, out of season burning regimes and uncontrolled wild fires, increased cultivation on steep mountain slopes, invasion of alien plant species, settlement encroachment and uncontrolled tourism development, land-use transformation and afforestation, illegal activities such as stock-theft, border infringements, poaching, dagga (marijuana) cultivation and smuggling, and land claims (Derwent *et al.* 2003; DEAT undated; Zunckel *et al.* undated; Zunckel *et al.* 2005; Cowan *et al.* 2003). These factors could lead to the loss of the mountains' significant biodiversity and natural resources, and subsequently undermine the potential for sustainable development and economic growth in the region.

The urgency to sustainably manage this important regional resource cannot be over-emphasised. Neither is this realisation new as there are already a number of protected areas which were established in pursuit of conservation. The Giant's Castle Game Reserve was the first legislated protected area of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains, which was declared in 1903 (DEAT undated; Derwent *et al.* 2003). Later, other protected areas were also established and in 1993 these areas were consolidated to

constitute the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park, which in 2000 was proclaimed a World Heritage Site on account of its outstanding natural and cultural resources (Zunckel *et al.* 2005; Cowan *et al.* 2003; DEAT undated).

However, conservation cannot and should not be limited to the protected areas alone. Innovative and dynamic ways are needed to effectively conserve the biological diversity and cultural resources. Such initiatives are needed at different scales. For example, at the regional scale, the Maloti-Drakenberg Transfrontier Project (MDTP) was established to collaboratively³ address conservation threats and stimulate regional and community development through the promotion of sustainable livelihoods (DEAT undated, Zunckel *et al.* undated; Derwent *et al.* 2003). Similarly, initiatives are needed at the local scale, and the involvement of local people is particularly essential in planning and implementing local scale initiatives that will assure the integrity and sustainability of the mountain region. One such community is the amaHlubi who are working with the conservation agency on the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve.

3.3 The amaHlubi people

The amaHlubi, who draw their name from one of their early chiefs⁴ are settled in the foothills of the Drakensberg mountains in eastern KwaZulu-Natal. They have historically been an agricultural community (Afra News undated 1). More than 100 years ago, they were driven out of their homeland after chief Langalibalele clashed with the then colonial British government in 1873 (Clark 2004; Elyot 2003).

³ Between South Africa and Lesotho with financial assistance from the World Bank.

⁴ It is thought that the name came from chief Bungane Hlubi (<http://www.sedibafountain.org.za>, accessed on 10 October, 2005).

The amaHlubi are one of the many indigenous South African groups to win back their land following a successful land claim (Afra News undated 2). More than 8000 hectares of land, previously used for commercial agriculture were transferred (Clark 2004; News24.com 2004). The present leadership sees the land transferred as a great opportunity for job creation considering the agricultural and ecotourism potential of the land (Keeton 2000). In addition, the rate of unemployment is very high and most community members are migrant labourers (EKZNW undated). The leadership has also expressed concern at environmental degradation in the area (Hadebe⁵ *pers. comm.*). To this end, in 2003, the community was involved in a wetlands conservation project in order “to reverse exploitative agricultural techniques by previous farmers whose drainage systems led to near desertification of the wetland system and mass species migration from the area” (Elyot 2003: 1).

Currently, the amaHlubi community are working on a proposed nature conservation initiative called Ngelengele Nature Reserve, envisaged to be a community-based conservation and development initiative. The initiative is expected to be a partnership involving the local amaHlubi community led by their traditional leadership and various government, non-governmental and private organisations. The initiative intends to develop workable solutions to constrain problems affecting the amaHlubi community such as the high unemployment rate (EKZNW undated). It is this initiative that forms the basis of this study.

⁵ This is the current Chief Langalibalele who I had the opportunity to meet on two occasions during the course of the study.

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 Initial consultations and preparations

Initially, there was a lot of uncertainty about the focus of the study except the interest in exploring the linkage between livelihoods and poverty on one hand and conservation on the other. Consultations with officers from EKZNW and the MDTP confirmed that there was a possibility to explore this linkage. It was during these consultations that the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve was discussed. This proposal was seen as an appropriate opportunity to test, from a local community perspective, poverty, livelihoods and conservation linkages. Based on the initial consultations, a draft proposal was prepared as well as a questionnaire.

A reconnaissance visit was arranged to the amaHlubi community. There was a lot of enthusiasm in the proposed establishment of Ngelengele Nature Reserve. The questionnaire was tested during the reconnaissance visit to the area. It was during the reconnaissance visit that greater focus was established. Refinements to the questionnaire and proposal were made after the reconnaissance visit. Afterwards, a final research proposal was prepared and presented to EKZNW for consideration. The project was approved and a contact person was appointed within the agency to serve as a link with the amaHlubi community. Contact with the representative of the agency and other gatekeepers was on an on-going basis through the use of emails, telephones and where possible and necessary, in person. Data collection only started after approval had been granted by both the traditional leadership and EKZNW. Following the above exhaustive process ensured that the problem of gatekeepers, and access to the community, both of which are common in case studies (Burton 2000) were avoided.

3.4.2 Research approach

The study was concerned with investigating people's views, perceptions and expectations of the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve. It was founded on the assumption that without support from the local people, the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve was likely to fail in the long term. Therefore, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because it is more suitable especially if accompanied by appropriate methods (Bless and Higson-Smith 2000). To give the study sufficient focus, a case study method was adopted, complemented by the interviewer administered questionnaires in the respondent's home environment and observations during fieldwork.

3.4.3 Case study

This research is a case study since it is a "detailed, varied and in-depth" (Neuman 2000: 32) exploration of one initiative in the broader Maloti-Drakensberg mountains region in the context of international efforts of and debate around expanding conservation to communal lands. The case study method is suitable "...when the investigator has little control over events and when focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context (Yin 1994: 1). Poverty, livelihoods and the notion of community conservation areas are all contemporary phenomena, and the amaHlubi people and the Maloti-Drakensberg region provided the necessary context.

Other reasons for using the case study approach were as follows:

- Appropriate to use in a qualitative study.
- Flexibility which permits the use of different data collection methods.
- Possibility for a detailed and revealing investigation.

- The desire to describe the circumstances of the amaHlubi people while leaving room to draw broader philosophical and policy conclusions.

As with any approach to research, case studies have limitations too. A major limitation is the risk they pose when drawing implications of the findings and the accompanying temptation to make generalisations (Neuman 2000). This difficulty arises from the fact that no two or more case studies are exactly the same, and it is this uniqueness that must be accounted for in making generalisations of findings from case studies (Platt 1988; Yin 1994). Nevertheless, it is this very characteristic of case studies that facilitates better understanding of context as opposed to samples of similar cases which holds the significance of case studies (Burton 2000). The value of a case study method therefore is its ability to retain context while informing broader theories and our understanding of a given phenomenon at different scales (Neuman 2000).

3.4.4 Respondents and data collection

All 40 respondents were members of the amaHlubi community. After the introductions and an explanation of the aim of the study at the start of each data collection session, the respondents were requested to confirm their willingness to participate in the study. At all times, confidentiality and other ethical considerations were assured. Three tools were used to collect data: a questionnaire, documentary analysis and observations, and they are all consistent with qualitative research (Neuman 2000).

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed as a basis for primary data collection (Appendix 1). It was tested and revised. To avoid problems related to illiteracy, the questionnaire was interviewer administered. This meant face-to-face sessions which made it possible to provide clarification as and when necessary. The questionnaire comprised open-ended and closed-ended questions, and in this way, was structured (Bless and Higson-Smith 2000). A semi-structured questionnaire was consistent with the qualitative design. It enabled the respondents to express themselves in responding to open-ended questions. Respondents also had leeway to provide elaborations as they saw fit on some questions. Deliberate efforts were made to ensure that there was interaction, more or less along the lines of an interview so as not to sound highly structured. While not entirely the same as an interview, the questionnaire achieved its objective of providing flexibility and structure at the same time. All questionnaires were checked for completeness at the end of each session.

Documentary analysis

Public documents at EKZNW and MDTP were reviewed for details pertaining to collaboration with local communities, establishment of conservancies, poverty alleviation and support towards local livelihoods. This process helped to collect secondary data which was helpful in providing insights about the two organisations. The secondary data also informed the data analysis process. Documents consulted included reports, brochures and the information obtained from websites.

3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis was undertaken so as to generate a structure and add meaning to the raw data (Marshall and Rossman 1989). An early process of data analysis was to ensure that each questionnaire was checked for completion. A higher sense of each respondent's perspective was developed. Thereafter, data was coded. The coding process involved revisiting each questionnaire for internal consistency checks and thoroughness. Open-ended questions were coded based on emerging themes and categories. After coding, data were entered into a spreadsheet using MS Excel 2003. The approach followed in data analysis involved reduction and display, which according to Miles and Huberman (1984), are critical to the decision-making process of any research. Data reduction and displays facilitate decision-making about various elements of the data, e.g. what elements of the data to highlight in the report (*ibid*).

Data from observation and documentary analysis was analysed in slightly different ways. Data from observations was taken from fieldwork notes and used to integrate the emerging ideas into the analysis and write-up. Data acquired from documentary analysis was analysed similarly to open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Material from various documents was first synthesized, taking into account the research issues and focus. Ultimately, the material was categorised into emerging themes and was used in the write-up where necessary, e.g. to reinforce or clarify an idea that emerged from the primary data.

3.6 Limitations

Most of the respondents could only speak *isiZulu*. Therefore, a potential limitation of this study was the usage of an interpreter in data collection. Although the interpreter

was good at English, the possibility that problems may have occurred in the process of interpreting cannot be ruled out in all cases. However, the interpreter fulfilled a very important role which was not originally envisaged; she was a known community member and her presence gave me credibility. She had also worked on similar exercises so this exercise was not entirely new to her.

Questions might be asked about the sample size. While the sample size may be perceived as too small to be representative of the entire amaHlubi community, the interest of the study was in the depth and range of issues that the respondents raised. Therefore, a small sample size of local residents was sufficient as they were intimately aware of the developments in their community. Moreover, a semi-structured questionnaire supplemented by secondary data was robust enough to engage the respondents and collect in-depth and varied data.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined the research setting and methodology. Among other things, it has explained and provided a rationale of the methods used, as well as a description of data collection methods and analysis. It is the last segment of Component A.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

STATEMENT READ OUT TO ALL RESPONDENTS AT THE START OF EACH SESSION

Hello, my name is Elizeth Godinho. I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Centre for Environment, Agriculture and Development. I am here as part of my studies and I am looking at community perceptions on the proposed Ngenlengele Nature Reserve. The study has been registered and approved by Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife and Chief Langalibabalele and his council.

This session is totally voluntary and neither myself, EKZNW, the amahlubi traditional leadership nor the University can compensate you for your time. However, if you agree to participate in this session, you can choose to end this session at any time and you can refuse to answer any question. I don't need your names, but will require some information on your personal circumstances to help contextualise the findings. However, whatever information you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality, so your anonymity is held in high regard.

It should also be pointed out that this study will not necessarily bring you or your community any direct benefit but any feedback from these studies can be used in the future for the betterment of your community. Please feel free to ask questions if you are unsure at any time during this session. By participating in this study, you will not in any way be exposed to danger of any form and your participation is entirely dependent on your consent. Lastly, do I have your consent to proceed with the session? **(SESSION TO PROCEED ONLY IF CONSENT IS GIVEN)**

Questionnaire #

1. RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION (COMMUNITY MEMBERS)

To help me relate your views to the core issues of this study, I will start by asking questions about your personal circumstances. The following questions are meant to help in this regard.

- 1.1 Age: 18-25 26-35 36 - 45 46 - 55 Above 56 years Don't know
- 1.2 Sex: Male Female
- 1.3 Marital status: Single Married Other:.....
- 1.4 Education? (The highest level attained)
None Primary Secondary Tertiary Other (specify):.....
- 1.5 Household size (number of people living in the house and 'eat from the same pot')
Adults (≤ 18)..... Children (≥ 18).....
- 1.6 How do you characterise your role in the household?
Household head Adult member of household Other.....

- 1.7 Describe your type of housing
 Mud, pole and thatch Mud, pole and asbestos/ iron sheets
 Bricks/ cement blocks & asbestos/ iron sheets Other: (specify).....
- 1.8 How would you rate your household's consumption of meals?
 Very adequate Adequate Just enough Inadequate Completely inadequate
- 1.9 Are you presently employed? Yes No (*If No, skip to 1.13*)
- 1.10 Please describe your present employment.
- 1.11 How would you describe your income from your current job?
 Very satisfactory Satisfactory Not satisfactory
- 1.12 Please, give an estimate of your monthly income.
 ≥ R500 R501-R1000 R1001-1500 R1501-2000 Above R 2001
- 1.13 Since you are unemployed, how do you earn income?

2. THE LIVELIHOOD ASSETS / CAPITALS OF THE AMAHLUBI COMMUNITY

NATURAL CAPITAL

- 2.1 Please rate the present status of natural resources in your community/ area?
 Very satisfactory Satisfactory Unsatisfactory Barely enough
- 2.2 In all cases, please explain your response above.

- 2.3 Do you personally generate income from use of natural resources?
 Yes No (*If No, skip to 2.6*)
- 2.4 How would you rate your household's dependence on natural resources?
 Very high High Average Low None
- 2.5 Identify the natural resources based activities that mainly help you generate income.

- 2.6 How common are the following **natural resource uses** in this community? (*Probe*)

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Very common</i>	<i>Common</i>	<i>Not common</i>	<i>None</i>
Hunting and gathering				
Farming (dry land cropping/ rain fed)				
Grazing of livestock				
Gardening/ irrigation				

2.7 Kindly rate the level of contribution of natural resources to the following activities of your household? (*Probe on each aspect*).

<i>Activities/ considerations</i>	<i>Very high</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Nourishment/ food					
Health					
Savings/ investment					
Family dignity/ worth					
Housing – building materials, fencing, etc.					
Fuel/ energy, e.g. charcoal and firewood					

2.8 What is your opinion about each of the following statements?

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Access to natural resources is fair for all local people					
Conflict exists over natural resources					
Local knowledge to help in conservation exists					
Natural resources in this area are protected from encroachment by outsiders					

2.9 Are you personally aware of evidence of unsustainable (inappropriate) use of natural resources in this area?

Yes No Don't know (*If no, skip to 2.12*)

2.10 How would you rate the problem of unsustainable (inappropriate) use of natural resources in this area?

Urgent, needs attention Not urgent, can stay as is Not sure (*skip to 2.12 if not sure*).

2.10.1 Please elaborate on the above:

2.11 In your opinion, list three major threats faced by natural resources in this area in order of priority.

.....

2.12 How would you describe your present type of access to the following resources?

	<i>Communal</i>	<i>Private</i>
Land		
Water		
Fish		
Wildlife (game)		
Forest products, e.g. pasture and wood		

2.13 Describe your perception of the role of each of the following in influencing access to natural resources.

	<i>Very strongly</i>	<i>Strongly</i>	<i>Weakly</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Local people					
Local traders/ business people					
Traditional leaders					
Other (specify).....					

3. SOCIAL, PHYSICAL, FINANCIAL AND HUMAN CAPITAL

3.1 How would you assess the following statements in respect of your household in dealing with crises? (**Social capital**).

	<i>True</i>	<i>Fairly true</i>	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
We call on extended family, social networks, etc. for support				
We sell our labour in advance				
We sell household assets				
Please mention any other strategies employed by your household in dealing with crises such as disease, lack of skills, low level of education, drought and floods (Probe):				

	<i>True</i>	<i>Fairly true</i>	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Members of this community share resources like livestock, farming implements, etc.				
Sharing of resources between households in extended family & other social networks is normal				
Most people in this community have affiliations with social and political institutions				
Group activities are an important feature of this community				
Please briefly elaborate on your perceptions of inter-dependence in this community				

3.3 In your opinion, assess the correctness of the following statements in relation to your community (**Physical capital**)

	<i>True</i>	<i>Fairly true</i>	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
We have affordable transport (including road infrastructure)				
We have secure shelter and buildings				
We have adequate water				
We have adequate sanitation				
We have clean, affordable energy				
We have adequate access to information				

3.4 Assess the correctness of the following statements in light of the circumstances of your household (**Financial capital**)

	<i>True</i>	<i>Fairly true</i>	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Don't know/ NA</i>
My household has adequate savings				
My household has a reliable source of income				
My household depends on remittances by a family member(s)				
Pension payments/ social welfare is our main source of income				
My household has access to credit facilities offered by formal financial service organizations				
My household's income is exclusively used for domestic needs				
A portion of the household income is invested				

3.5 In what form do you keep your savings?

Livestock Cash Bank deposits Other (specify):.....

3.6 What is your opinion about each of the following statements about your community?

(Human capital)

	<i>True</i>	<i>Fairly true</i>	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
We have adequate education/ training infrastructure				
We have adequate health infrastructure				
Skills development opportunities are available and affordable				
Education opportunities are available for all people				
Access to health facilities and services are available for all people				
Training opportunities are available for all people				

3.7 How important is tourism to people of this community? (Tick)

Very important Important Not important Not sure

3.8 In your opinion, what benefits, if any, are drawn from tourism in the area?

.....

4. AWARENESS OF, AND SUPPORT TOWARDS THE PROPOSED NGELENGELE NATURE RESERVE

4.1 Please describe your level of awareness about the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve .

Very high High Average Low None

4.2 How would you rate your personal support the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve?

Very high High Average Low None

4.3 Kindly elaborate on your response above.

.....

4.4 How would you describe the following processes in respect of the processes of the establishment of the proposed nature reserve so far?

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>None / not sure</i>
Consultation and involvement of stakeholders				
Agreement on goals and management objectives				
Transparency of the process				
Feedback at various stages				
Conflict management				
Engagement of the local community by the KZN Wildlife staff				

4.5 How would you rate each of the following among the **local stakeholders** of the Ngelengele Nature Reserve?

<i>Community attributes</i>	<i>Very high</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>None/ not sure</i>
Local community support				
Knowledge of objective of the Ngelengele Nature Reserve				
Local community expectations				

4.6 How would you rate each of the following on the processes leading to the establishment of the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve?

	<i>Very strongly</i>	<i>Strongly</i>	<i>Weakly</i>	<i>None</i>
Consultation and involvement of stakeholders				
Agreement on goals and management objectives				
Transparency of the process				
Feedback at various stages				
Conflict management				

4.7 How would you rate the impact of the proposed initiative on each of the following issues?

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Very Strong</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>None</i>
Income generation				
Well being				
Exposure to risk, e.g. drought, disease, etc.				
Food security				
Environmental sustainability/ resource conservation				

NGELENGELE NATURE RESERVE'S ACTIVITIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF THE AMAHLUBI COMMUNITY

5.1 Do you envisage the activities of the Ngelengele nature reserve impacting the local livelihoods positively?
 Yes No

5.4.1 In either case, elaborate:

.....

5.2 How do you see the importance of tourism this area? (Tick)
 Very important Important Not important Not sure

5.3 In your opinion, what benefits, if any, are drawn from tourism in the area?

5.4 Do you anticipate the Ngelengele nature reserve's activities helping in fighting and/or promoting the following? (Tick)

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Uncontrolled access to natural resources		
Inappropriate natural resource uses		
Uncontrolled physical development		
Job creation		
Poverty eradication		
Please elaborate:.....		

5.5 How do you see the following being impacted by the Ngelengele nature reserve activities?

	<i>Positively</i>	<i>Negatively</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>None</i>
Local people's access to natural resources				
Selling of natural resources based products				
Conservation of natural resources				
Promotion of tourism				
Traditional authority over access to, and use of natural resources				

5.6 Has there been any form of community representation of concerns about perceived constraints resulting from the activities of Ngelengele nature reserve?

Yes No

5.6.1 Please briefly elaborate:

.....

5.7 Is there any matters you would like to share with me relevant to this interview?

.....

Thank you very much for taking your time to participate in this study. I wish to reiterate that the material from this study is for academic purposes only and will not be linked to you in any way.

Good day.

COMPONENT B

(Article written in a generic journal format. It will be written to suit the requirements of an identified journal when presented for publication)

**ADDRESSING POVERTY AND LOCAL LIVELIHOODS IN THE CONTEXT
OF CONSERVATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE PROPOSED
NGELENGELE NATURE RESERVE**

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of an empirical study undertaken to investigate the links between poverty, local livelihoods and conservation with respect to a proposed nature reserve in a communal area. Using the sustainable livelihoods framework, a case study of the amaHlubi people was conducted. The framework underscores the need to understand various factors that affect people's ability to build capital assets. Without acquiring such assets, people remain trapped in poverty which hinders conservation efforts in the area.

The study has demonstrated concerns about livelihood assets with the conclusion that there is a high dependence on natural resources, mainly for domestic purposes. Questions of access and availability of different assets were differently viewed, but in general, there is a need to develop the different assets in the amaHlubi community. High unemployment and the poor state of housing are two of the major challenges being faced. Limited formal education backgrounds means that the respondents are not competitive enough for the job market. The absence of skills needed in the job market does not help the situation either. That Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife is working with the local people on the proposed initiative is therefore not amiss. The study makes a number of recommendations regarding the clarification of the Ngelengele Nature Reserve objectives, the need to clearly communicate these to the amaHlubi community and pays particular attention to building necessary skills among the local people, if the activities of the planned community conservation area are to succeed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Concerns about the effects and implications of conservation initiatives on local livelihoods have been growing over time (Hulme and Murphree 2001; DFID 2002). In part this is because most protected areas, at least in the southern African context, are often surrounded by people living in abject poverty (Dzingirai 2004). Hence sometimes, the very existence of protected areas negatively affects local livelihoods (Hulme and Murphree 2001). Livelihoods get negatively impacted because not only are the affected communities denied access to natural resources within protected areas, but the existence of protected areas, especially in areas with weak traditional authority, tends to worsen levels of resource exploitation on neighbouring communal lands (*ibid*). The resultant *de facto* open access is one of the key challenges to the conservation of communal lands and associated ecosystems and resources (WCPA 2003).

This study was conducted as a contribution to an identified gap, namely the inadequate exploration of the relationships between community conservation, poverty reduction/alleviation and rural livelihoods in the local context (Jones undated). With the position of community based natural resources management (CBNRM) as a means of addressing poverty in southern Africa by governments, Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and donors (Jones 2004), questions are being asked about the contribution of conservation initiatives to poverty reduction (DFID 2002; LIFE 2002). The general concern is that poverty and local livelihoods need to be factored into mainstream conservation initiatives.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study is to apply the sustainable livelihood framework (Carney 1998; DFID 1999; Chambers and Conway 1992) in analysing the livelihood assets of the amaHlubi people and outlining their perspectives on matters concerning the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve. Three specific objectives were developed for the study as follows:

- Determine the respondents' perceptions of the livelihood assets in the amaHlubi community.
- Determine the respondents' awareness of, and support towards, the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve.
- Assess the respondents' views about the implications of the envisaged activities of Ngelengele Nature Reserve for the livelihood strategies of the amaHlubi community.

Importantly, since the project is still in the planning phase, some of the insights arising from this study, could be considered in the subsequent future planning activities. In this way, this academic research will present empirically tested baseline information that will be useful to the amaHlubi community, planners and researchers.

3. LIMITATIONS

Two key limitations were encountered in undertaking this study. The first limitation was the language barrier. Given the context of the study participants, it was important to speak in *isiZulu*. However, not being a native Zulu speaker, the researcher relied on the assistance of an interpreter who was recommended, based on previous engagements in similar tasks by the staff of Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife

(EKZNW) – the provincial conservation agency. While extra care was taken to explain the purpose and nature of the study, there is a possibility that some meaning may have been lost in the process of translation. Spending time with the interpreter to go through the research instrument also helped to clarify a number of aspects about the study.

A second limitation was the time available for fieldwork. While enough time was originally aside for fieldwork in the work plan, the process of registering the project and engaging gatekeepers took longer than initially anticipated. In this study, the gatekeepers were traditional authorities of the amaHlubi people, especially the Chief and an advisor of his who is based in Cape Town. A lot of time was spent liaising with the Chief's advisor who acted as the mediator between the researcher and the traditional authorities. This resulted in the loss of valuable time which the researcher had intended to spend in the community to become acquainted with community members and activities. In the end, there was only enough time for data collection. The researcher spent the entire data collection phase residing in the community.

4. THE STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in a communal area located in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands next to the town of Draycott. The focus of the study was the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve, a community conservation area (CCA), in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The land was acquired by the local amaHlubi people after a successful land claim. The traditional leadership and the local amaHlubi people, resident in the foothills of the UKhahlamba-Drakensberg Mountains, are working with EKZNW on the project.

The major objective of the nature reserve is to contribute to resource conservation and the amelioration of poverty and related livelihood challenges of the local people (EKZNW undated). The reasons for the proposed establishment include the following:

- Conservation is a compatible land use option since the area is in close proximity to a protected area.
- There is an abundance of natural and cultural resources deserving of conservation as well as presenting opportunities for ecotourism, offering job creation and local economic development.
- Willingness by the provincial conservation authority and other relevant stakeholders to support the initiative.
- The initiative presents opportunities for ameliorating the socio-economic challenges faced by the local people, especially poverty and unemployment.

The nature reserve will be managed by the amaHlubi community. However, the proposed area is in no way absolved from the challenges and potential difficulties in promoting conservation as a form of land use in communal areas, hence this study.

5. METHODOLOGY

A case study approach was adopted. This approach was preferred to other options because the study was investigating an issue around which the respondents were closely linked, namely, the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve. It is an issue not everyone would understand or be willing to answer questions about (as in the case of a survey), hence the use of a case study approach (Bless and Higson-Smith 2000). A case study approach was also preferred because the study, as Yin (1994) advises, was

addressing a contemporary phenomenon, in this case being the linkages among poverty, livelihoods and conservation.

The respondents were all residents of the study area. Being a qualitative study, the focus was not on statistical significance, but on the nature of the issues the respondents raised. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was the primary source of data. Meetings were conducted in the homesteads of the respondents over a period of nine days.

6. SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK

The sustainable livelihoods framework (Carney 1998; Chambers and Conway 1992; DFID 2002) was adopted as the basis of the study. The framework is a product of an evolving understanding of poverty and strategies necessary to combat it. This evolution in thinking about poverty and its redress were comprehensively articulated in the 2000/2001 *World Development Report* (World Bank 2001). The new approach includes the provision of economic opportunities for the poor, strengthening or building up the assets of the poor people, empowerment of poor people as well as ameliorating their vulnerability to different shocks and risks.

The framework has direct relevance to all the three critical components of this study: livelihoods, poverty and resource sustainability. It recognises that people's livelihoods are complex and require multiple strategies to secure and develop them (Carney 1998). The framework further advocates for the optimum contribution of the different types of capital in the promotion of sustainable livelihoods namely: natural, financial, social, human and physical (Carney 1998; DFID 1999). Poverty is recognised in the

framework as having potentially negative effects on livelihoods and as a complex issue. One of these negative implications is the erosion of commitment of the local people to developing the different types of capital including natural capital (which is directly linked to resource conservation) (Chambers and Conway 1992). As such, the framework advocates that conservation, based on its key potential aspects such as resource harvesting and eco-tourism ventures should meaningfully contribute towards poverty eradication (Jones undated)

7. FINDINGS

An important prior consideration of the study was the need to develop some understanding of the respondents' socio-economic profile. This aspect of the study takes precedence in the presentation of findings. This arrangement helps to contextualise the rest of the study results and provides opportunities for making better informed interpretations of their implications for the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve.

7.1 Respondents' profile

In terms of respondents' profile, the following issues were investigated: age and gender, marital status, level of education (attained), income generation, household size, nutrition and type of housing.

Age and gender

The study comprised a total of 40 respondents, of which 68% were female. The sample displayed a relatively mature group of respondents – mostly above the age of 36 (Figure 1). The largest concentration of the respondents were in the 36-45 age group (34%), followed by those in the 46-55 age group (20%) and the 26-35 age group (20%).

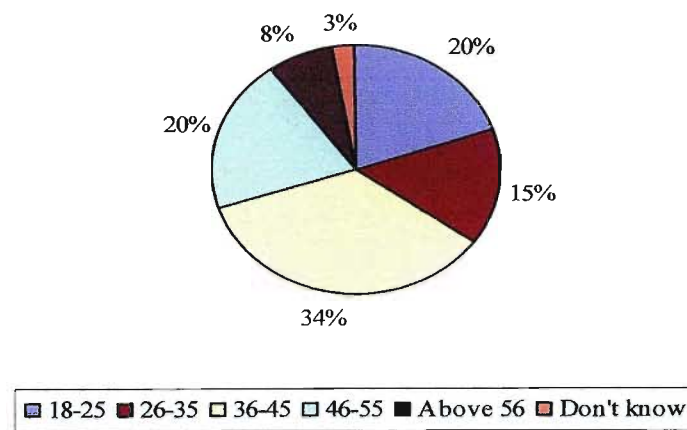


Figure 1. Respondents' age profile

Marital status

In terms of marital status, the sample defied the common characteristic of traditional rural areas where early marriages tend to be a common feature. As a result of early marriages, most rural areas tend to be characterised by high marriage levels. However, despite most of the respondents falling in the mature age group, only slightly above half (53%) were married. With the exception of one widow, the rest were single (44%).

Level of education and income generation

Respondents reported an attainment of primary (33%) and secondary (53%) education levels. A further 10% reported attaining tertiary education while the remaining 4% had not attended formal school at all.

Given the level of education attained by the participants, there are implications for the type of jobs available to them as well as their income-generating ability. The respondents were typically in the low income bracket, reporting high levels of

unemployment (93%) and employment in low income jobs and menial labour. In this study, unemployment was seen to be anyone without a steady job and income. This high unemployment level means unstable, unreliable and limited sources of income. The remaining respondents (7%) were employed as electricians (temporal), operators at a water project and security guards. The sources of income for the unemployed include wage labour (e.g. collecting fire wood and harvesting crops for well off households). A third of the unemployed respondents rely on support from close relatives and government transfers such as child, pension and disability grants. The sale of natural resource products is another major source of income, with 50% of respondents selling crafts.

Household size

The challenges presented by inadequate and unreliable incomes presented above are compounded by relatively large household sizes in the study area. The smallest household size was three while the largest household had 14 people. The average household size was 6.8 people. Forty eight percent (48%) of the respondents came from households larger than the average stated above (6.8 people). Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents categorised themselves as household heads, and it is highly likely that within the households, there were other income earners.

Nutrition

An important factor in livelihood and poverty issues is the number and quality of meals per day in each household. This study could not consider the temporal dimension (including the time when meals are normally taken), nature or composition of meals and related factors, as they were beyond the scope of the study. The results

below (Table 1) indicated that between two and four meals were consumed by the respondents per day. It emerged from the respondents that starvation, in this context understood as going for days without a meal, was not prevalent in the households represented in the study.

Table 1. Number of meals taken in households represented in the study

Number of Meals	Frequency	Percent
2	20	50
3	14	35
4	6	15
Total	40	100

Type of housing

It has been stated in other contexts that housing is one of the more visible dimensions of poverty (Marais *et al.* 2003). Accordingly, questions were raised to get an idea of the type of dwelling that the respondents lived in. Table 2 summarises the findings in this regard.

Table 2. Types of houses that the respondents live in

Type of house	Frequency	Percent
Mud and pole, stones and thatch	28	70
Mud and pole and iron sheets/asbestos	6	15
Bricks/ blocks/ cement and iron sheets/asbestos	4	10
Other mix of material – iron/ thatch, etc.	2	5
TOTAL	40	100

In rural KwaZulu-Natal, traditional houses are mainly round in shape and usually consist of one room. In the study area, the houses were similar in design. Most of the homesteads had thatched roofing while a smaller proportion had iron sheet roofs. Some, however, were built using materials such as bricks and cement while others were built from locally found stones, grass and mud. Households which owned livestock had livestock kraals in close proximity to them.

7.2 Perceptions of the livelihood assets in the amaHlubi community

The framework adopted for this study identifies five types of capital; natural, social, physical, financial and human (DFID 2002). This section reports on the findings regarding each of these types of capital, covering relevant aspects per type of capital. Greater attention is paid to natural capital compared to other forms of capital because of the specific circumstances of the study and its inclination to resource conservation.

7.2.1 *Natural assets*

Natural capital denotes the whole range of natural resources present in an area which may be extracted and used for the betterment of people. Questions regarding natural capital addressed a number of interrelated aspects including the following; status, dependence/uses, access, tenure and the influence of various stakeholders on natural resource management in the area.

Status of natural resources

The status of natural resources was positively perceived by 68% of the respondents in their responses as 'very satisfactory' (28%) and 'satisfactory' (40%). Various reasons were given for these positive views including the diversity and range of resources in the area, especially the rangelands and forests. The remaining respondents (32%) voiced their concerns about the status of natural resources in the area due to deforestation and the people encroaching on the remaining forests. Concerns were also voiced about deteriorating rangelands with associated problems of overgrazing resulting from overstocking of livestock and poor veld burning practices. While hunting was reportedly uncommon, its presence and negative effect was noted by very few respondents (8%). The effects of poaching were presented mainly in the context of dwindling numbers of wildlife.

Dependence on natural resources as a source of livelihood and income is a reality in most rural areas of southern Africa (Chidumayo *et al.* 1993). Household dependence on natural resources as a source of livelihood and income, especially for domestic purposes was acknowledged by all respondents. Dependence on natural resources was rated as 'very high' (20%); 'high' (55%) and 'average' (18%). In other words, more than 90% of the respondents claimed some degree of direct dependence on natural resources at household level. The rest (7%) saw their dependence on natural resources as 'low'.

Income from natural assets and resource use

Income derived from natural resources was reported by 60% of the respondents but they indicated that this is not a historical activity. They now sell thatch, building poles and crafts as a major source of income. A few respondents (15%) also indicated that they sell medicinal plants. The sale of crafts was reported by 50% of the respondents. A point reiterated by most of the respondents was that they frequently utilized natural resources for many purposes, such as building houses, fuel wood and food. However, for more than 60% of the respondents, a natural resource based income helps to provide some measure of family dignity.

Activities based on natural assets

Rural livelihoods in most cases are based on a mixture of natural resource based activities (Chambers and Conway 1992). Livelihoods in the study area were perceived to revolve around a mix of hunting, crop farming (dryland), keeping livestock and gardening (irrigated). Gardening emerged as the most common activity (100%) followed by grazing of livestock (80%) (Table 3). It appears there is very little

hunting and gathering taking place in the area by the participation of the majority (85%).

Table 3. Perceptions of natural resource uses in the amaHlubi community

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Very common</i>	<i>Common</i>	<i>Not common</i>	<i>None</i>
Hunting and gathering	5%	5%	5%	85%
Farming (dry land cropping)	75%	25%	-	-
Grazing of livestock	80%	5%	10%	-
Gardening/irrigation	100%	-	-	-

Natural assets' contribution to livelihoods

The use of natural resources makes direct contributions to different household spheres, e.g. health, nutrition, family dignity, etc. (Table 4). The greatest contribution was towards fuel/energy (95%) while the least contribution was towards saving/investments – a view expressed by 95% of the respondents (Table 4). In other words, the possibility of making savings¹ based on earnings from the use of natural resources was non-existent. Furthermore, while some of the respondents acknowledged the contribution of natural resources, specifically medicinal plants to their health, the majority (65%) felt otherwise.

Table 4. Perceptions of the contribution of natural resources to various household spheres

<i>Activities/ considerations</i>	<i>Very high</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Nourishment/ food	75%	20%	5%	-	-
Health/ medicinal plants	15%	5%	15%	65%	-
Savings/ investment	-	-	5%	95%	-
Family dignity/ worth	45%	20%	15%	15%	5%
Housing – building materials, fencing, etc.	85%	10%	5%	-	-
Fuel/ energy, e.g. charcoal and firewood	95%	5%	-	-	-

¹ It was easy to notice during the interviews just how sensitive the question about making savings was to the respondents. Most of the responses were full of emotion perceiving the question as a mockery of their personal circumstances. But at all times, the importance of the question was explained to the respondents.

Access to natural assets

Contestation around access and use of natural resources is a common aspect in communal lands, especially those deemed to be operating as an open access regime. Contestation would normally occur among locals, leading to localized conflict or conflict with foreigners or people not deemed to be locals. (Adam and Hulme 2001)

Table 5. Respondents' opinions concerning access and conflict around natural resources

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Access to natural resources is fair for all local people	90%	5%	5%	-	-
Conflict exists over natural resources	20%	10%	25%	45%	-
Natural resources in this area are protected from use by outsiders	-	10%	30%	40%	20%

Access was perceived to be fair for all local people by the majority of respondents (90%). While the majority of respondents were of the view that conflict does not exist over resources (70%)², there were those who felt otherwise. Protection of natural resources from outsiders received mixed reactions. A small proportion (10%) agreed, but the majority (70%) did not think so.

Unsustainable use of natural assets

Natural capital tends to be susceptible to unsustainable use in communal lands as controlling access is generally difficult to enforce (Dzingirai and Breen 2005). The majority (88%) expressed a lack of personal awareness of unsustainable practices in the use of resources in the area. The few who stated otherwise (12%), felt that the problem of unsustainable use of resources was urgent and demanded immediate attention and identified the following as key concerns;

² The percentage combines 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' responses.

- uncontrolled fires,
- overgrazing,
- deforestation (the felling of trees in nearby forests),
- encroachment on the forests by the local people and
- poaching.

Elaborations revolved around the view that uncontrolled fires were causing damage to grazing land. This concern was justified given that livestock keeping is an important livelihood activity among the people in the study area. As a result of uncontrolled burning, grazing tends to be concentrated in areas not burned, hence overgrazing. Large numbers of livestock were also blamed for over grazing. Encroachment on remaining forest land by the local people and deforestation were presented as largely interrelated, showing similar effects, namely; the uncontrolled felling of trees as people established new homesteads.

Overall, there was a sense that the current practices of resource use were undermining traditional institutions, especially the role of traditional leaders exercising control over resource use. High levels of poverty and the lack of economic opportunities were also highlighted as factors likely to lead to even more unsustainable practices by the locals in the future.

In most communities, it is common to find different groups exerting influence on access and use of natural resources. Such strength normally derives from factors such as wealth, gender, tradition and political influence within the community. The findings in this respect are summarized in Table 6. Local people's ability to influence

decisions about access and use is regarded as weak (85%) while traditional leaders' influence is seen to be very strong (70%). Sixty percent (60%) also felt that other groups, such as the conservation agency operating in the area and private landowners besides the local people and local traders, were very influential. They are influential in a positive way because of their mandate, in the case of the conservation agency, while private land owners also are busy encouraging sustainable resource utilization of resources and own huge tracts of land. Compared to the other groups, there was more diffusion in the perception of the influence of local traders/business people.

Table 6. Perceptions of the relative strength of stakeholder groups in influencing access to natural resources

<i>Stakeholder group</i>	<i>Very strongly</i>	<i>Strongly</i>	<i>Weakly</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Local people	-	10%	85%	-	5%
Local traders/ business people	25%	30%	15%	5%	15%
Traditional leaders	75%	15%	10%	-	-
Other (specify).....	60%	35%	5%	-	-

7.2.2 Social assets

Social assets or capital relates to the nature and quality of relationships that exist in a community. Good social capital presents opportunities for social support mechanisms and a sense of mutuality by bonding the affected communities and providing support mechanisms through existing institutions, norms, values and structure (DFID 2002). Two sets of elements were investigated regarding social capital; coping strategies in times of great vulnerability and mutuality and group existence.

Coping strategies in times of great vulnerability

Regarding coping strategies in times of great vulnerability (Table 7), dependence on family support/social networks was endorsed by nearly all the respondents (95%).

However, the common strategy in poverty stricken communities of selling labour in advance (a practice whereby community members get goods or some form of assistance to be paid for by undertaking activities such as helping the provider with harvesting, weeding or any other task at an agreed future date) was discounted by the majority (90%) who felt that the system did not apply in the context of their community.

Suffice it to note that the contention was with regard to the use of the word ‘advance’ because, as established earlier in this study, the sale of labour is a very common livelihood strategy in the area. Although there was mention of the sale of livestock, the perception that it only happens as a coping strategy in times of great need was seen as lacking credibility but not to the proportions recorded in respect of the sale of labour in advance.

Table 7. Perspectives on how households in the amaHlubi community deal with crises

	<i>True</i>	<i>Fairly true</i>	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
We call on extended family, social networks, etc. for support	95%	5%	-	-
We sell labour in advance	-	10%	90%	-
We sell household assets	35%	5%	60%	-

While 60% found the selling of household assets as a coping strategy to be untrue, 35% felt otherwise. Probing revealed that the selling of livestock was often the last resort because of the traditional significance of livestock ownership in the community. Also, respondents exhibited heavy expectation or desire for government support and donor agencies in times of great need. Church association was further highlighted as a key resource and opportunity for support.

Mutuality and group existence

The second aspect involved testing respondents' reactions to statements about mutuality and group existence in traditional communal settings when dealing with crises (Table 8). Both mutuality and group existence serve to reinforce social capital as they promote reciprocity among community members thereby strengthening local relationships. The responses generally accorded with the majority of the literature on social capital. For example, there was acknowledgement by most of the respondents (90%) as to the significance of the group activities in the community. Similarly, the sharing of resources between households in the extended family and other social networks was deemed 'true' by 90% of the respondents.

Table 8. Perceptions of the extent of interdependence and affiliations in the amaHlubi community

	<i>True</i>	<i>Fairly true</i>	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Members of this community share resources like livestock, farming implements, etc.	50%	35%	5%	-
Sharing of resources between households in extended family & other social networks is normal	90%	10%	-	-
Most people in this community have affiliations with social and political institutions	-	30%	50%	20%
Group activities are an important feature of this community	90%	5%	-	5%

However, half of the respondents stated that the majority of the people in the community had more affiliations with social than political³ institutions. Further probing with respect to inter-dependence in the community failed to yield much response except for isolated observations that the high levels of poverty were undermining the strong communal ties. It was explained that in the past, interdependence was seen in activities such as farming/cultivating fields and building

³ In the context of this study, social institutions refers to bodies such as churches (e.g. a section committee for a church) or a cooperative (e.g. for accessing agricultural inputs) whereas political institutions refers to bodies serving particular political interests, e.g. a ward committee.

homesteads whereas now these communal ties are only evident in life-threatening circumstances or at funerals.

7.2.3 Physical assets

Physical capital provides good sanitation, clean water supplies, reliable and clean energy, good transportation and reliable access to information (DFID 2002). For example, a community with a good road network is in a better position to enjoy accessibility by both locals and outsiders. Delivery of essential seed and agricultural products can be comparatively cheaper than in areas without good roads. Respondents were questioned on several aspects of physical capital in their community (Table 9).

Table 9. Perspectives on the state of physical capital in the amaHlubi community

	<i>True</i>	<i>Fairly true</i>	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
We have affordable transport (including road infrastructure)	-	5%	95%	-
We have secure ⁴ shelter and buildings	-	5%	85%	10%
We have adequate water	80%	15%	5%	-
We have adequate sanitation	65%	10%	25%	-
We have clean, affordable energy	60%	20%	20%	-
We have adequate access to information	40%	15%	45%	-

The majority of respondents (85%) felt the buildings in the area were not secure. Hence they classified the statement about the security of building and shelter as untrue. Similarly, the majority of the respondents (95%) found the statement suggesting they had affordable transport (including road infrastructure) to be untrue. Further, slightly more than half (55%⁵) stated having adequate access to information. Availability of water was regarded by the majority (80%) in the positive light both due to easy access to natural water nearby and presence of communal stand pipes.

⁴ Secure in terms of both burglary and weather conditions.

⁵ Arrived at after adding responses for 'true' and 'fairly true' responses.

To a lesser extent, statements about the state of sanitation and energy were well received – both above 60%. While energy and sanitation were endorsed, it was easy to see the complication they presented. For example, it is evident in the community that there is heavy reliance on traditional pit latrines and yet a considerable proportion of respondents (65%) felt they had adequate sanitation. Similarly, there is heavy reliance on fuelwood as a source of energy and yet this aspect was endorsed. This sort of situation poses a serious need for the developed community to understand the points of view of locals. In this case, it would raise the following questions which are however outside the scope of this study: what do we mean by adequate sanitation or clean and affordable energy. Should the interpretation of these aspects in the urban setting be used in rural contexts?

7.2.4 *Financial assets*

The respondents were asked about their perceptions with respect to accessibility to financial services, ability to save, reliability of income, sources of income and prospects for making investments. All these issues were raised taking into account the importance of finances in a cash economy – a reality which people in rural Africa and other developing world contexts are increasingly faced with (Chambers and Conway 1992). In the livelihoods framework, it is stressed that it is not just a question of having access to finances, but also being able to grow the financial base, e.g. through investment (DFID 2002).

Table 10. Perspectives on financial capital in the amaHlubi community

	<i>True</i>	<i>Fairly true</i>	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
My household has adequate savings	-	5%	90%	-
My household has a reliable source of income	-	-	100%	-
My household depends on remittances by a family member(s)	90%	5%	5%	-
Pension payments/social welfare is our main source of income	10%	15%	70%	-
My household has access to credit facilities offered by formal financial service organizations	-	-	100%	-
My household's income is exclusively used for domestic needs	85%	10%	5%	-
A portion of the household income is invested	-	5%	95%	-

Five of the seven statements about financial capital were considered untrue by the majority of the respondents (Table 10). The two exceptions, dependence on remittances (90%) and exclusive use of household income on domestic needs (85%), corroborated the earlier reported findings suggesting a hand to mouth lifestyle in the study area with very little opportunity for the investment of savings. This scenario, typical for many rural communities in many parts of the world, placed the community under study in a position of serious financial vulnerability worsened by inadequate and unreliable income and lack of access to credit facilities (DFID 2002).

Furthermore, the majority (88%) of the respondents reported cash keeping (i.e. the practice of keeping money at home rather than in a bank account) as their major form of savings. Saving accounts with an established financial institution (e.g. a bank) was reported by 10% of the respondents. In all cases, however, the savings accounts are mainly used for receiving remittances from relatives rather than for personal investment.

7.2.5 Human assets

Human assets entail developing and harnessing the capabilities, skills and expertise of the people in a community (Carney 1998). It is human assets or human capital that transforms the other forms of capital into productive modes (DFID 2002). Respondents were asked to comment on some statements focusing on health and education/skills acquisition relative to their specific community (Table 11).

Table 11. Respondents' reactions to statements about health, education and skills acquisition in the amaHlubi community

	<i>True</i>	<i>Fairly true</i>	<i>Not true</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
We have adequate education/training infrastructure	55%	30%	10%	5%
We have adequate health infrastructure	55%	35%	5%	5%
Access to education/training opportunities are available	40%	50%	10%	
Access to health facilities and services are available	75%	20%	10%	5%
Skills development opportunities are available and affordable	-	-	90%	10%

The findings are positive about the education/training and health infrastructure in the study area. There is a noticeable difference in terms of accessibility to health and education services. Availability of access to education/training with 'fairly true' from half of the respondents in comparison to a majority of the respondents (75%) commenting on access to health facilities and services. The affordability and availability of skills development, an important aspect of human capital, by 60% of the respondents was considered to be too expensive. It was indicated that opportunities for skills development were mainly available outside of the community, i.e. in nearby urban centres and towns and it is this aspect which compounded cost and affected availability.

7.3 Awareness of, and support for, the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve

In this section, the findings regarding the awareness of, and support for the Ngelengele Nature Reserve are reported on. The importance of community awareness and support for any proposed community initiative can not be over-emphasised (Hulme and Murphree 2001). At the very least, the presence of community support can lead to legitimacy (i.e. wider knowledge and acceptance of an initiative based on acknowledgement that it was done correctly, conforms to tradition or law) – a very important factor for success of community-based conservation initiatives (*ibid*). Therefore, the success of the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve partly hinges on the support from the local community. Support and awareness were considered at the personal level.

A little over half of the respondents (55%) indicated their personal level of awareness about Ngelengele Nature Reserve to be ‘very high’, a further (30%) and (15%) designated their awareness levels as ‘high’ and average respectively. Awareness of the initiative at the personal level was generally high as none of the respondents indicated ‘low/none’ as a response.

Perceptions of process related considerations

Often, community initiatives are affected by a host of factors which threaten their takeoff let alone success in the long term. Usually, these threats are related to processes such as the nature of consultation and involvement with stakeholders, agreement on goals and management objectives, perceptions about the transparency of the process, feedback at various stages and conflict management (Hulme and

Murphree 2001). These elements were investigated and results are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12. Respondents' perceptions of the processes leading to the establishment of Ngelengele Nature Reserve

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>None / not sure</i>
Consultation and involvement of stakeholders	75%	25%	-	-
Agreement on goals and management objectives	45%	40%	15%	-
Transparency of the process	90%	10%	-	-
Feedback at various stages	70%	20%	10%	-
Conflict management	52%	48%	-	-
Engagement of the local community by the KZN Wildlife staff	95%	5%	-	-

The majority of the respondents (90%) considered the transparency of the process as 'very good'. They endorsed the processes as either very good or good. It is particularly important to note that the favourable attitude and perceptions that proposed nature reserve seems to enjoy were generally the case on each of the process-related issues raised. It was therefore not strange that the majority of the respondents (95%) saw the engagement by EKZMW personnel as very good⁶. The support for the conservation agency might be attributed to a strong presence of the agency's staff from its directorate of community conservation in the area. These agency employees are the ones who have for some time been working with the community in the study area.

⁶ While this support may be seen as a case of sample bias, there is no way of being confident about this assertion as the respondents were all drawn randomly – without any prior knowledge of their connection, if any, with the agency, whether they had worked with it before or had benefited from natural resources from one of the nearby protected areas.

Individual interpretations of community feelings about the project

Individuals live in communities and it is important to get a sense of their interpretation of the community feelings about a given initiative. Perceptions at the individual level are important in assessing prospects of community initiatives, but they are not a sufficient gauge. Three attributes were identified by the respondents and they are;

- local community support,
- knowledge of the objectives of the initiatives, and
- community expectations of the Ngelengele Nature Reserve.

Results are summarised in Table 13.

Table 13. Respondents' characterisation of local community support, objectives and local community expectations of Ngelengele Nature Reserve

<i>Community attributes</i>	<i>Very high</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>None</i>
Local community support	35%	45%	5%	15%
Knowledge of objective of the Ngelengele Nature Reserve	25%	40%	25%	10%
Local community expectations	65%	25%	-	-

Local community expectations of the Ngelengele Nature Reserve were perceived to be 'very high' (65%) and 'high' (25%). Together, the total is 90% and this finding is consistent with one of the hurdles anticipated in the project document by the conservation agency (EKZMW undated). On the contrary, local community support and knowledge of the objectives recorded some pessimistic responses. In particular, 25% felt the knowledge levels of the project were weak. Further investigation on this aspect revealed that although the objectives had been communicated, they remained unclear and some respondents were not keen followers of the processes concerning the proposed initiative. No reasons were given for the alleged lack of close observation of the processes behind the project.

A conclusion from this trend was that although some individuals had a general understanding of the proposed nature reserve, not all could provide detailed information regarding the project. For some of the respondents, all they could say about the project was that it was meant to promote ecotourism or conservation in the area and nothing more. Given that the project is yet to be implemented, it can only be speculated that the project scope and intentions will receive further clarification in due course at the broad community level since there appears to be high interaction between the EKZ⁷ staff and the community members.

Respondent's awareness of the project objectives

The research focuses on the community's awareness of the objectives of Ngelengele Nature Reserve (NNR) in an indirect manner. A more direct consideration of objectives was considered important as they constitute a fundamental aspect of the NNR proposal. The respondents were questioned on their understanding of the objectives of the proposed nature reserve. The three objectives⁷ that were selected were the promotion of tourism (40%), job creation (40%) and biodiversity conservation (32%). While the amaHlubi area is renowned for its rich historical and cultural heritage, this aspect did not arise as an objective of the initiative from the respondents. However, the objectives selected were consistent with the official objectives (Box 1).

⁷ These were given as choices for the respondents to choose from and multiple responses were permitted.

1. *Contribute to the creation of a buffer zone around uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site*
2. *Conserve indigenous arts and culture*
3. *Expose and stimulate the historical background of amaHlubi and San communities*
4. *Conserve indigenous biodiversity*
5. *Establish a Community Based Section 21 Company (not for profit) to plan, implement and monitor coherent strategies for self-improvement*
6. *Attracting people [tourists] to the area*
7. *Fostering linkages between business ventures in Draycott*

Source: EKZNW undated

Box 1. Objectives of the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve

Interpreted in the context of the formal position of the project, the objective concerning job creation is acknowledged in a description of the beneficiaries: “This project is aimed at the unemployed community especially the out-of-school youth of Draycott⁸ under the leadership of iNkosi M.J. Hadebe under the auspices of the Hlubi Traditional Authority and other stakeholders involved in the ecotourism initiatives including businesses in this part of KwaZulu-Natal” (EKZNW undated: 5). The importance of job creation is also implicit in the declaration of the project’s key aim: “The project aims to plan and facilitate processes which will help move communities towards vibrant economic activities to derive spin-offs for effective Local Economic Development for self-renewal biodiversity programmes.” Clearly, there is a shared feeling that provision of employment and attendant imperatives such as income generation should form part of the objectives of the project.

⁸ This is the closest town to the study area.

Project impact on selected imperatives⁹

The projects objectives will have to be met through the execution of certain activities which will among other things promote income generation, well being, reduce exposure to risk, promote food security and ensure environmental sustainability (e.g. through promoting sustainable resource use practices). Whether or not such execution was perceived by local communities to produce desirable impacts is a question that was raised. The responses are summarised in Table 14.

Table 14. Respondents' perceptions of Ngelengele Nature Reserve's potential contribution towards income generation, wellbeing, exposure to risk, food security and environmental sustainability

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Very Strong</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>None</i>
Income generation	80%	20%	-	-
Well being	35%	50%	20%	-
Exposure to risk, e.g. drought, disease, etc.	-	15%	20%	65%
Food security	20%	25%	25%	30%
Environmental sustainability/ resource conservation	50%	50%	-	-

An important and positive impact will be income generation (80%) followed by a sustainable environment and resource conservation (50%). Income generation of the Ngelengele Nature Reserve project was seen as very important, with 35% of the respondents saying that the project would 'very strongly' result in well-being and 50% stating that it would 'strongly' contribute to their well being. Responses to the exposure to risks such as disease and drought were on the pessimistic side of the scale. Similarly, but to a lesser degree, the responses on food security weighed negatively as less than half¹⁰ (45%) envisaged a positive impact on food security. In

⁹ These imperatives (Table 14) were selected based on some of the goals of the sustainable livelihood approach (DFID 2002) which is the conceptual framework for this study.

¹⁰ Percent arrived at by adding the scores for very good and good.

both of these cases, the interest of the study was to establish perceptions based on anticipation, so no elaborations were sought.

There appears to be shared anticipation of the project's impact on income generation between the project proponents and the local community. However, it is important to note that the project proponents have a wider understanding as their focus is on local economic development rather than just income generation which appears to be an overriding expectation for the respondents (EKZNW undated).

Reasons for supporting or not supporting the initiative (at personal level)

The high sense of community optimism¹¹ (Table 13) regarding the project was mirrored at the personal level. Respondents rated their personal support to the initiative as 'very high' (65%) and 'high' (35%). Elaborations on the responses were revealing as 50% cited prospects of getting jobs once the project was operational. The other half indicated that the project would expose the area as a tourism destination and would therefore help bring money into the local community, e.g. through creating a market for handcrafts and locally grown garden produce. None of the respondents, however, explicitly mentioned the conservation of natural resources as a reason for supporting the initiative despite this being raised as a matter of concern in the area¹².

7.4 Ngelengele Nature Reserve's activities and implications for the livelihood strategies of the amaHlubi community

One of the key areas anticipated to be positively impacted by the project is the livelihood of the local people (EKZNW undated). Most (85%) respondents shared this

¹¹ Adding the 'very high' and 'high' responses in Table 13, the total is 80%.

¹² This issue could be treated as an unprompted question because the respondents expressed concerns when the issues of resource sustainability was explicitly raised with them – see below.

anticipation, attributing this view mainly to income generating opportunities such as employment in some initiatives associated with the project, e.g. tour guiding and nature interpretation. The few who felt otherwise (15%) mentioned limited vacancies as a major concern, reasoning that unemployment levels in the area were too high to be minimised by this single initiative.

A major aspect earmarked for promotion in the project area is that of tourism as a springboard for supporting both the local economy and livelihoods. It is envisaged that this will be realised through attracting people to the area by promoting tourism opportunities in the area (EKZMW undated). In addition to being located within the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve will benefit from its proximity to central Ukhahlamba Drakensberg Park, a World Heritage Site. Also, it will adjoin long established nature reserves¹³. Hence the reserve is strategically positioned in an area that will serve as a “springboard for marketing goods and services to the tourist industry using EKZMW branding as a marketing strategy” (EKZMW undated: 3).

Given the importance attached to tourism, respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of the importance of tourism in the area. None of the respondents saw the tourism potential as unimportant. Thirty percent (30%) of the respondents were not sure about the potential, and the situation was the same even after being probed. The rest saw the potential as ‘very high’ (50%) and ‘high’ (20%).

¹³ The proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve will adjoin Hillside and Injisuthi Nature Reserves and sections of the famous Giants Castle Game Reserve

Respondents were also asked to outline the benefits that tourism would bring to the area. Three main opportunities were identified: income generation and job creation (90%), exposure of area to outsiders and tourists (55%) and acquisition of skills (38%)¹⁴. There is a degree of consistency as the respondents perceived opportunities to be in line with the project’s strategic link:

“The Ngelengele CBNRM Program supports the achievement of a transformed economic system based on equity of success and quality, and places particular emphasis on skills development for the underdeveloped community especially youth. The programme directly supports the accelerated achievement of opportunities for underdeveloped indigenous Africans in sustainable livelihoods” (EKZNW undated: 8)

The Ngelengele Nature Reserve is envisaged to meet multiple interrelated goals relating to fostering local economic development, sustainable utilisation of natural resources, sustainable livelihoods and others. Respondents were asked to indicate their opinions of identified imperatives (Table 15).

Table 15. Respondents’ anticipation of the Ngelengele Nature Reserve project curbing uncontrolled access to and inappropriate use of natural resources, uncontrolled physical development, high unemployment and poverty

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Moderately agree</i>	<i>Completely disagree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
Uncontrolled access to natural resources	100%	-	-	-
Inappropriate natural resource uses	85%	15%	-	-
Uncontrolled physical development	65%	15%	5%	15%
Job creation	100%	-	-	-
Poverty eradication	90%	10%	-	-

Responses were generally in the affirmative. For example, all respondents strongly agreed that the project would help the fight the scourge of uncontrolled access to natural resources. Job creation was also perceived in the same light by a corresponding percentage of respondents (100%). While 65% strongly agreed that the

¹⁴ Percentages not equal to hundred as multiple responses were permitted.

project would be helpful in countering uncontrolled physical developments, 5% completely disagreed and a further 15% were unsure. In general, respondents expressed a lot of optimism regarding the impact of the project on specific aspects raised with them.

It is a common complaint that the establishment of nature reserves has historically destabilised local livelihoods by disrupting access to resources for domestic purposes (Hulme and Murphree 2001). Also, the role of traditional leadership in the management of resources has been severely constrained in some cases (Wells and Brandon 1992). Although the Ngelengele Nature Reserve initiative is envisaged and designed to operate as a CCA (EKZMW undated), it was nevertheless important to develop insights into what the respondents felt about this long standing source of tensions between communities and conservation agencies. This issue was tackled in the study by seeking the respondents' opinion on the perceived impact of the initiative on access, opportunities to sell resources and the role of traditional leadership (Table 16).

Table 16. Respondents' perception of Ngelengele Nature Reserve's ability of access to natural resources, selling of natural resources products and traditional authority

	<i>Positively</i>	<i>Negatively</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
Local people's access to natural resources	60%	30%	-	30%
Selling of natural resources based products	70%	10%	-	20%
Traditional authority over access to, and use of natural resources	75%	10%	10%	5%

The sale of natural resource based products (and services) and traditional authority over access to and use of natural resources were seen in the positive light by 70% and 75% of the respondents respectively. Feelings of pessimism were expressed in regard to access to natural resources (30%) and a further 30% were unsure.

It is not strange for community members to air grievances about community initiatives. Although in this case, no reports were made about formal grievances, it can be realistically speculated that the project is still in its infancy and matters warranting formal complaints have probably not yet arisen. Nevertheless, the EKZNW Community Conservation branch in the Drakensberg area¹⁵ have anticipated politically motivated resistance as one of the potential challenges the project might encounter (EKZNW undated).

8. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to apply a sustainable livelihoods framework to address the objectives of the study. The framework provided a useful research tool for engaging the respondents to determine their opinions on the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve and to cover a wide range of issues without losing focus.

Perceptions about livelihood assets

In line with the framework adopted for the study, attention was on the issues raised under each form of capital. Noteworthy in this regard are the following aspects: for natural capital, the status of natural resources was regarded as important, but there were concerns about the deteriorating state of rangelands, rangeland fires, felling of trees, and encroachment on forests. While in the minority, these concerns might need consideration in the project's planning processes. Dependence on natural resources was shown to be high, not surprising given the study area is in a rural setting. There

¹⁵ It is under the auspices of this branch of Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife that the Ngelengele Nature Reserve is being championed.

was also evidence of reliance on natural resources as a source of income from sales of handcrafts, medicinal plants and thatch.

Regarding social capital, the study revealed a significant reliance on social networks and family support as coping strategies particularly in times of difficulty. Another mechanism was the sale of household assets, although to a smaller extent among the respondents. The nature of social capital in the area was also confirmed in the respondents' responses to statements about mutuality. They confirmed the importance of social capital, in terms of group activities and sharing of resources between households.

Concerning physical assets, two aspects appeared to be of key concern to the respondents. These are transport infrastructure, particularly roads and good homesteads. However, access to water, energy and information and state of infrastructure were positively viewed.

Financial assets were the least placed of the capitals. The respondents lack stable and reliable sources of income due to unemployment. The situation is further compounded by a lack of credit opportunities. The study showed an extremely low level of savings as well as a heavy dependence on remittances by relatives and other external sources that were sporadic and unreliable in nature.

Human assets are not just about the mere presence of people. It goes deeper, requiring the presence of requisite knowledge and skills, and education is critical in this respect (DFID 2002). The educational backgrounds of the respondents were found to be basic

– mostly primary and secondary school. The majority of the respondents expressed pessimism about the affordability and availability of skills development opportunities.

Awareness and support for Ngelengele Nature Reserve

The initiative was generally well known as none of the respondents expressed ignorance even though it was still in its infancy at the time of the study. There was also a generally high level of support and understanding of the nature of objectives of the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve. Furthermore, there was positive anticipation that the reserve will increase the opportunity of income generation and environmental sustainability.

The proposed project was endorsed by the majority of the respondents on a personal level. Two key reasons dominated the endorsement, the creation of job opportunities and exposure of the area as a tourism destination.

Ngelengele Nature Reserve's role and implications for livelihood strategies

The third objective addressed the proposed nature reserve's role and implications for livelihood strategies in the study area. While there was generally a positive anticipation of an improvement of the livelihood strategies, sceptics identified limited job vacancies as a challenge.

Tourism emerged as a key opportunity that would improve local livelihoods in the community. The proposed initiative was regarded as potentially countering uncontrolled physical developments in the area, uncontrolled access to natural

resources, inappropriate use of natural resources and poverty. All these aspects are closely linked to the local livelihoods.

The Ngelengele Nature Reserve, once implemented, could serve as an innovative model for partnership between EKZNW, a statutory government agency and the local community. A critical factor is that the land involved was acquired through a successful land claim. It is very different from the Makuleke case (Tapela and Omara-Ojungu undated; Steenkamp and Makuleke 1998). In this case, however, the land is outside formal conservation, and the authorities and local people have collaborated and developed a shared vision; that local economic development is needed in the area. Although other land use options might exist, the most prudent is conservation for it is consistent with activities already underway in the nearby protected areas. The imposing presence of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Mountains, with their associated cultural and natural attributes, has played an important role in the decision by the community to develop a nature reserve.

9. RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The majority of respondents are concerned that the nature reserve may negatively impact on food security and increase exposure to risk. The project leaders will need to address these concerns since there can be no realistic discussions on social upliftment and livelihoods without paying attention to these two issues. Food security and the need to reduce exposure to risk are both integral aspects of daily life experiences and it will be important that clarification on these matters is provided. This could take the form of public awareness measures about the project prior to the start of the project to

ensure that unrealistic expectations about the nature reserve by the community are dispelled from the outset.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations rise out of the research;

1. the objectives of the Ngelengele Nature Reserve need to be clearly communicated to the amaHlubi community to avoid unrealistic expectations;
2. the opportunity of job creation and the types and levels of skills required should be clearly communicated to the community;
3. planning and holding regular meetings, with workshops where required, to ensure continued involvement of the community;
4. employ the human resources that are present that in the community, and;
5. develop skills required to effectively manage the reserve amongst the community members.

11. CONCLUSION

This study has outlined the respondents' perceptions concerning the livelihood assets in the study area. It has also considered the respondents' awareness of, and support towards the proposed Ngelengele Nature Reserve. Lastly, it has assessed the respondents' views about the implications for the livelihood strategies of the amaHlubi community of the envisaged activities of the proposed nature reserve.

Against this background, the study has highlighted the significance of recognising the centrality of local livelihoods in the decisions about conservation. Where conservation is perceived as a potential threat to local livelihoods, its support from local people is likely to be weak. An important contribution of this study is that it has gathered and synthesised important local perspectives that might be used as part of the baseline data for the project.

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