

## **Local participation in transfrontier tourism: Case of Sengwe community in Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area, Zimbabwe**

Transfrontier cross-border nature conservation has become a fashionable target in many parts of the world, including southern Africa. Transfrontier conservation initiatives are considered to have great capacity for biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism development by providing employment and revenue opportunities for poor people and communities. However, many previous studies have indicated that in spite of expectations and rhetoric there is often rather minimal community awareness and participation in conservation management, tourism economy and related opportunities. This study aims to discuss local people's perceptions of community participation, opportunities and constraints in sustainable transfrontier tourism in southeastern lowveld Zimbabwe. The results based on community interviews show that the people are aware of the potential role of tourism in improving livelihoods. The major challenge, however, is to address how this can be turned into concrete benefits for households and communities.

**Keywords:** transfrontier tourism; community participation; livelihood displacement; constraints; stakeholders; Sengwe community; Zimbabwe

### **1. Introduction**

Southern Africa has experienced the growth of transfrontier conservation initiatives over the past fifteen years (Andersson *et al.*, 2013; Bhatasara *et al.*, 2013; Gandiwa *et al.*, 2013). These conservation initiatives are considered to have great capacity for biodiversity conservation and opportunities for sustainable tourism development while providing employment opportunities for poor people in the developing countries (Peace Parks Foundation, 2006). In this respect one of the flagship has been the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA). When formally established in 2002 it was premised to foster biodiversity conservation and local communities' development through sustainable tourism (Dutton & Archer, 2004; Dhliwayo *et al.*, 2009).

Although community participation in sustainable tourism development is considered pivotal for the sustainability of the GLTFCA, there are no clear guidelines about how the affected

communities in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique could be involved and integrated in tourism developments. Previous studies in the GLTFCA have revealed, however, that there is rather minimal community driven tourism taking place in the area (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2013, Ferreira, 2004, Manwa, 2012). Furthermore, it is observed that since the introduction of transfrontier conservation areas, the people living on the boundary of this rich tourism resource base are often forgotten and potentially marginalized (Andersson *et al.*, 2013; Chirozva *et al.*, 2013). As noted by Murphree (2009: 2560) in the context of GLTFCA: few communities “even know of the project, conceded in the boardrooms of Pretoria Harare and Maputo.” This potential lack of knowledge, awareness and participation could threaten the future sustainability of tourism and conservation in the GLTFCA.

While the transboundary conservation discourse continues to evolve in southern Africa, there is an increase in the poverty status of rural communities and escalation of human-wildlife conflicts in the GLTFCA (Gandiwa *et al.*, 2013; Manjengwa *et al.*, 2012). This is in sharp contrast to the anticipation of a tourism boom in the transfrontier conservation area, which initiative was widely welcomed and had received support from local communities, governments, conservation and tourism organisations and NGOs as a model for biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development through tourism (Andersson *et al.*, 2013; Goodwin , 2002; Hanks, 2003; Mbaiwa, 2005). Indeed, as noted by Büscher (2013: 57) tourism is often framed as the ‘Holy Grail’ that has a magical power to integrate “all the different goals of contemporary (transfrontier) conservation” (see also Duffy, 2002). In addition, tourism development is also seen as a catalyst for international collaboration that is crucial in the transfrontier conservation and peace park movement.

This paper endeavours to determine the main opportunities and challenges for community participation in transfrontier destination tourism in the Sengwe community in south east low-veld Zimbabwe as informed by the perceptions of the local people themselves. There is need to establish what the local people perceive to be important to them in as far as tourism opportunities and constraints are concerned (Moswete *et al.*, 2012). The underlying assumption in this study is that despite the promotion of tourism in the GLFCA, there is a weak policy framework to guide community participation in tourism enterprises (Murphree, 2009, see Hall, 2014; Saarinen, 2010). In rural communities this has resulted in difficulties to realise the value of wildlife conservation and potentiality of nature-based tourism.

Furthermore this has contributed to the escalation of human-wildlife conflicts and a lack of viable community-based tourism enterprises (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2013). The study is based on a qualitative approach with in-depth household based interviews from the local people in Sengwe, next to Gonarezhou National Park (GNP) which is part of the GLTFCA.

## **2. The opportunities of community participation in sustainable transfrontier tourism**

Transfrontier tourism destination proponents have argued that transfrontier parks will provide tourism employment and revenue as well as other livelihood opportunities for people living adjacent to these parks (Munthali, 2007). The same view is further supported by the UNWTO (2014) which opines that tourism can be a tool which allows communities to pursue development without losing their identity while generating income and opportunities promoting local development in rural areas and therefore reversing migration to urban areas. Most of the revenue has been anticipated to come from ecotourism activities through public-private partnerships, for example (Ramutsindela, 2004; Büscher, 2013). There is now a notable shift in international tourist preferences showing a considerable interest among international tourists to national parks and local cultures of the destination countries (Manwa *et al.*, 2016) thereby presenting an often neglected set of opportunities for the development of locally owned complementary tourism products (Goodwin, 2002). Furthermore, it has been noted that conservation and wildlife management in the areas like GLTFCA could bring significant improvements in the lives of the rural poor as compared to the traditional lifestyles of hunting, livestock rearing and crop farming in drought prone areas (see Chiutsi *et al.*, 2011; Gandiwa, 2012; Munthali, 2007).

Local residents in communities adjacent to the GLTFCA, particularly from south east Lowveld in Zimbabwe (also housing the Sengwe community and the GNP), practice a combination of subsistence farming of cash crops and livestock rearing. This is despite the area being unsuitable for crop farming due to erratic rainfall patterns (Gandiwa, 2012; Murungweni, 2011). However, as the GLTFCA is established it is framed as a historic development that could provide significant opportunities for the south east Lowveld communities in Zimbabwe through sustainable biodiversity conservation and tourism growth. The great deal of optimism around tourism growth is envisaged on the understanding that transfrontier tourism arrangements can work well in converting such unsuitable agricultural and communal lands to effective biodiversity conservation and tourism development

(Munthali, 2007). Indeed, it has been further noted that the idea behind the GLTFCA was to foster an entrepreneurial spirit among communities, individuals and households to exploit the economic values of conservation resources leading to sustainable development (see Spierenburg *et al.*, 2008). Within the GLTFCA confines, nature-based tourism, including photographic and hunting safaris as well as game ranching were seen to have great potential to provide jobs and income at both national and local levels compared to cropping and cattle rearing on these marginal lands (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2013). However, it is quite difficult for communities to tap into the revenues generated by TFCA tourism developments and develop beneficial partnerships with the private sector (Ramutsindela, 2007).

### **3. Community participation in transfrontier tourism: constraints**

Previous research into the transfrontier initiatives in southern Africa have noted serious governance complexities leading to the needs of the poor being sacrificed (Ramutsindela, 2007; Bhatasara *et al.*, 2013). As these highly political projects take shape, conservation and development policy progressively shifts from the national to global arenas and the local communities most affected by TFCA formation tend to disappear from view (Andersson *et al.*, 2013; Cumming, 2011). It is argued that from the onset the weakness inherent in most TFCA initiatives is that they have narrow focus on policy, planning and implementation often resulting in the local communities being left out or silenced from conservation and development benefits associated with biodiversity in transfrontier areas (Gandiwa, 2013; Harold, 2002; Mutanga *et al.*, 2015; Tazim and Jamal, 2009).

Arguably, the creation of the GLTFCA has helped to integrate the wilderness areas for tourism development. However indications on the ground and multi-disciplinary examinations of how the GLTFCA has fared on the communities tourism development front leaves a lot of question marks about the effectiveness of transfrontier arrangements in promoting tourism development and regional economic integration of all involved (Mabunda, 2004; Muboko, 2011; Spenceley, 2006; Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2010). On the contrary most of studies on the GLTFCA have unearthed increasing human-wildlife conflict (Muboko, 2011), and side-lining of local communities in most of the GLTFCA developmental programmes (Gandiwa, 2013). Admittedly how the GLTFCA has been projected through many studies begs for more explanation and answers about the real players

behind the initiative (Ramutsindela, 2004). For many commentators the GLTFCA was initiated and it is proceeding by government fiat (Murphree, 2009).

Thus, Chapin (2004) has controversially argued that the move towards the GLTFCA is more about marginalising the very same local communities who are supposed to benefit from the transfrontier resources. Chapin maintains that the transboundary initiatives is a response to the difficulties environmental organisations experienced with community-based conservation and a way to marginalise the local communities who historically are not considered such good ecological stewards. Previous studies (see Dzingirai, 2004; Gandiwa, 2012; Metcalfe, 2003) in transboundary conservation and development have indicated that whereas there may be positive environmental gains from these transboundary developments, there are many unresolved issues of sovereignty and national security, immigration and customs controls, veterinary concerns, land tenure, and whether participation by local people will really be equitable and beneficial in the long term (Manjengwa *et al.*, 2012; Balint & Mashinya, 2006). The problem is further compounded by the fact that since inception there has been a lack of an integrated policy that relates to tourism development, land tenure and resettlement in transfrontier conservation areas (Mabunda, 2004).

Similarly Ramutsindela (2004) argues that in as much as the TFCA advocates do not want to be seen to be perpetuating colonial conservation mentality of restricting and sanctioning local communities in resource utilisation, he sees the communities much more vulnerable, silenced and side-lined on conservation matters and the associated benefits. This situation is often seen as representing a so-called fortress model of global conservation, separating wilderness from culture and nature from people (Nelson, 2010; Spinage, 1998). However, as Ramutsindela (2004) observe the TFCAs proponents do not want to be seen as representing a continuation of the fortress model of conservation thinking which earlier thrived on the impoverishment and marginalisation of the local communities (Murphree, 2009). Thus, they have included notions of community participation, empowerment and local economic development in the packaging of the transfrontier conservation area idea (see Jones, 2005; Büscher, 2013). Such concerns cannot therefore be dismissed without proper research of how livelihoods have been affected by the initiative and taking the study to the affected communities. One of the key challenges of community participation in the transfrontier tourism relates to a lack of policy on implementation. There is no clear cut framework to maximise community participation, to avoid the simmering conflict discourse within the GLTFCA stakeholders.

#### **4. Methods and research materials**

The study is mainly based on qualitative approach but aims to utilise also the benefits of quantitative analysis. Research material was collected between March and October in 2013 by using interviews as many rural community members are not often able to respond independently to a self-administered questionnaire. Although this limited the potential number of responses due to limited fieldwork period, it also provided richer material to use both qualitatively and quantitatively. The interviews focused on the community members perceptions about the utility of the GLTFCA to their livelihoods and community engagement. The interviews were targeting the selected households in the Wards of 13, 14 and 15 of the Sengwe communal area in Chiredzi District of Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Location of study area wards (Wards 13, 14 and 15 are located adjacent to the GNP)**

**Adopted from Chirozva et al., 2013**

The wards were purposively sampled due to their proximity to Gonarezhou National Park (GNP), which is a part of the GLTFCA, and therefore the assumption was that local people from these Wards were directly or indirectly involved in tourism and related conservation matters in the transfrontier tourist destination. Those interviewed (n=180) were head of households (or the most senior members of the household during the interview period) and this category was considered to have witnessed the shift in transboundary natural resources management in the GLTFCA. Table 1 summarises the biographic details of interviewees.

**Table 1: Biographic details of interviewees (n=177)**

#### **5. Local community perceptions of opportunities and constraints in transfrontier tourism enterprise**

##### *5.1 Community participation in sustainable tourism*

The key research findings that emerged from the interviewees to do with community participation constraints were related to concerns about poor governance of the GLTFCA programmes, lack of direct economic benefits to household and community level, threats of livelihood displacement, restricted access to natural resources, inequitable distribution of tourism benefits, corruption by community representatives, ineffective problem animal control, technical knowhow, lack of capital and lack of clear guidelines for community participation in transfrontier tourism enterprises (see Table 2). Interviewees also noted opportunities in handicraft industry, cultural tourism, tour guiding, festivals and market gardening as more tourists visit the transfrontier tourist destination.

**Table 2: Community hindrances to participate in tourism business enterprise (n=280)**

In relation to awareness, interviewees were asked to articulate their awareness and knowledge about the GLTFCA as a transfrontier tourist destination. It is important for the local communities to identify and to know the tourism opportunities within the GLTFCA if there is to be any meaningful involvement of communities in tourism. The majority of the interviewees representing approximately 96 percent (n=124) indicated that the main opportunity for residents was through the craft tourism industry. The locals were of the view that they could easily earn a living through the craft industry opportunity. Further to this, approximately four percent (n=5) were of the view that the main opportunity from the tourism industry to the local residents was through employment creation and cash transfers from the transfrontier tourism proceeds.

Interviewees were also asked to indicate how they have participated in sustainable tourism in the GLTFCA. Approximately 41 percent (n=53) of interviewees indicated that they were conserving natural resources as part of their contribution to GLTFCA management. Only six percent (n=7) indicated that they were involved through local level policing, whilst a high proportion of approximately 53 percent (n=68) indicated that they do not know their contribution and participation in GLTFCA management towards improving sustainable tourism (see Table 3). The results seem to suggest most of the interviewees who indicated that they do not know how they have participated in tourism in the GLTFCA in the past, were those with low GLTFCA awareness and were not very knowledgeable about sustainable tourism and conservation practices in the GLTFCA.

The local people who participated in GLTFCA management through local level policing cited that they enforced community wildlife anti-poaching laws and neighbourhood watch committees, cooperation with the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority. The majority of those who participated in local level policing were those who attended GLTFCA seminars on conservation and Rural District Councils (RDCs) natural resource conservation and awareness meetings. These were mainly represented by the village headmen who are the lowest level of representative authority in Zimbabwe. Further, the main sources of information about GLTFCA to the interviewed community members were the village headmen. This is a good sign of information dissemination in the wards but not effective for enforcing community engagement in the TLFCA programmes and activities as most headman may not be conversant with the intricacies of transboundary governance due to low literacy levels. Few people (approximately 19%) cited that their source of information was the RDC and the national parks. Reduced information dissemination and poor governance makes it impossible for local people to penetrate the tourism sector.

**Table 3: Community involvement in GLTFCA programmes (n=128)**

Furthermore approximately 41 percent (n=53) of the valid responses from the local residents appreciated that tourism has great potential to uplift livelihoods and therefore the interviewees claimed to be conserving natural resources as part of their contribution to GLTFCA management and sustainable tourism development. However it was noted that most of these respondents (approximately 62%) were from the Ward 15, which had previously benefitted from the tourism income through the Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). Indeed, in the Ward 15 of the Sengwe communal area, there are five CAMPFIRE villages which benefitted from the hunting that was done outside the Gonarezhou National Park (GNP). The campfire villages got at least 50 percent of the trophy fees which was deposited directly into each campfire village's bank account. This was a highly successful and model programme which facilitated devolution of power to local communities to directly manage and benefit from natural resources (Harrison *et al.*, 2015; Gandiwa *et al.*, 2013; Bhatasara *et al.*, 2013). The notable community participation in conservation and sustainable tourism is in line with previous studies which reported that the success of CAMPFIRE would be associated with community support for conservation programmes, as the campfire model provided direct incentives for conservation of

biodiversity to the local community through harvesting of animal or plant resources (Gandiwa *et al.*, 2013; Bhatasara *et al.*, 2013; Mearns, 2012).

## **5.2 GLTFCA governance issues and impact on transfrontier sustainability**

Despite the claim that GLTFCA governance structures would embrace all stakeholders including the local people in transfrontier area, the large proportion of the interviewees (approximately 42%) seem to have a perception of exclusion from key transfrontier area decision making processes. The majority of the interviewees (approximately 55%) were of the view that structures put in place to facilitate this community engagement and coordinate the development programmes in the transboundary area were not transparent enough. To incorporate and involve communities in the TFCA process the interviewees indicated that the various structures put in place to facilitate community participation were not functional.

With regards to community cooperation in GLTFCA programmes, improved transparency and information dissemination was considered very important by most interviewees in sustaining the transfrontier conservation areas programmes by the local people in Sengwe. This involves incorporating local people in GLTFCA governance structures. Most interviewees (44%) were of the view that this could help to allay community fears of livelihoods displacement. It is noted that transfrontier parks may have a huge negative impact on people's livelihoods in situations where communities have to be displaced from their livelihoods through being evicted to create space for the expansion of wildlife areas (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2013; Duffy, 2005). Constant pay-outs as community projects take off were among the reasons that caused interviewees to be very satisfied with the way the community is being involved. Community participation in tourism business is generally viewed as critical for communities to support conservation initiatives in the GLTFCA. Therefore any meaningful interventions to improve community perceptions should be focused on addressing those concerns and mainly devise ways to improve community engagement to come up with win –win models of resource utilisation.

In terms of corruption allegations against the local community leadership, one male interviewee (in the age group 41 to 50 years) from the Ward 15 had this to say:

“In one ward which had a grinding mill and a guest house built from campfire proceeds the local committee had embezzled the money generated from the grinding mill and guest house and there were no records of the income received on a daily basis. Campfire project committee had converted the project funds for personal use. To compensate for the embezzlement, all the members responsible for the fraud were forced to sell some of their livestock to pay back the money. Some complied. Some did not comply”

What is notable is that corruption, lack of transparency with respect to tourism projects income and inequitable distribution of benefits was a major source of disgruntlement from the community. This has the negative effect of making people lose interest in the tourism projects purportedly run on behalf of the local people in Sengwe. Furthermore interviewees cited problems with wildlife particularly elephants and lions which destroyed crops and ravaged livestock respectively thereby threatening the only viable livelihood strategy to the local communities within the GLTFCA.

A male household representative (in the age group 31 to 40 years) from the Ward 13 complained that:

“Elephants destroy crops every season and we report the problem to the local hunters. When hunters come and find that the elephants are not bulls they will not shoot. They say they are hunting for bull elephants and not female elephants”

This indicates the issue of problem animals remains a major challenge to the local community and creates feelings of resentment against the GLTFCA initiative. The issue of problem animal control was therefore cited in nearly all the households and it therefore needs an integrated approach to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts. Human wildlife conflicts have manifested in the Sengwe community through wildlife attacking livestock and people and raiding of crops. This threatens livelihoods sustainability as it is evident from the research findings that the main source of income for the GLTFCA rural communities in Sengwe is crop farming and cattle rearing. It can be noted that the crops and cattle both at the risk of wildlife have a considerable economic value for the local communities in the GLTFCA and this could be a priority area for intervention by key stakeholders. The local people also felt that they are treated as criminals once they try to deal with problem animals on their own and that hunting for subsistence is criminalised. This therefore suggests the need to respect

the local people as partners in the GLTFCA processes with their quest for subsistence being respected and not criminalised.

### **5.3 Key constraints to community participation in the GLTFCA tourism activities**

Despite the fact that tourism was expected to sustain livelihoods, the results seem to suggest that the dominant livelihood sustainability strategies for households have remained predominantly crop farming and livestock rearing. The large proportion of the interviewees (approximately 46%) indicated that they have not received benefits from transboundary tourism and therefore are likely to continue to engage in household level activities which bring them direct benefits like crop farming and livestock. Communities also pointed out livelihood displacement as a major threat to them, as wildlife has continued to be a menace to crops, livestock and people. Lack of compensation against wildlife induced losses has also contributed to the negative perception of the GLTFCA by the local communities, thereby diminishing the utility the GLTFCA to the residents.

A high proportion of the interviewees (about 68 percent) pointed out that community access to wildlife resources was very limited (see Table 4). Community access to wildlife resources in a way opens up the tourism industry and allows local communities in Sengwe to participate in the industry. That the majority of the selected households have no access to wildlife resources is an indication of the continuation of the fortress conservation approach which tends to look at communities and wildlife or wildlife resources as separate entities. The communities lack recognised access to land rights and this stifles the potential for tourism entrepreneurship for those with capacity to start tourism business projects. Where communities lack recognised land rights, they are excluded from effective joint-venture partnerships with the private sector. The challenge therefore is to regulate community access to wildlife resources so that both communities and biodiversity conservation benefits in the long term.

#### **Table 4: Community access to wildlife resources (n=170)**

The majority of the interviewees also felt short-changed by the GLTFCA officials with respect to problem animal control. Interviewees who disapproved of the GLTFCA value were mainly concerned about the escalation of livestock diseases; lack of community incentives, increased livestock attacks by the wildlife, crop raiding by wildlife as well as punitive law enforcement by officials as the major drawbacks by the introduction of the GLTFCA hence they say do not find it important to them. During the empirical phases of the study about 10 households had reported having lost their livestock to lions. The lions were attacking the cattle at a dam where they come watering and grazing.

One female household head from Ward 13 in the age group (31-40 years) had this to say:

“When lions attack our livestock, no action is taken even when we report to the appropriate authorities. They only come to hunt when they have clients who want to hunt lions through the professional hunters. When the professional hunters finally get their trophy we are not compensated for the livestock losses”

Despite a high number of participants having access to land near the area, the majority does not have access to wildlife resource for household utilisation and as a tourism resource. The accessibility to land is shown through households who have indicated that most of their livelihoods are sustained through livestock rearing and crop production. This land is normally communal and cannot be used for valuable tourism development such as game ranches, communal conservancies and community based ecotourism projects.

## **6. Discussion**

Based on local community perceptions, poor resource governance can be identified as the main hindrance for community participation in sustainable tourism activities in the GLTFCA. The concern about poor governance revolved around the disconnection in information and communication between the local people and the other key stakeholders involved in tourism and natural resources management in the transfrontier conservation area. Some of the hindrances linked to poor governance were revolving around lack of clarity about the local people’s wildlife or natural resources rights for them to be able to establish community game ranches or community based tourism enterprises. This, there is a need to initiate interventions that are aligned to address transfrontier governance problems. Transparency about the

GLTFCA programmes could be the starting point to enhance community engagement in tourism. Communities are of the view that tourism is a preserve for big safari companies and other private sector entities. Developing people-centric governance models in the GLTFCA could empower and motivate the local households to participate in tourism, thereby contributing to sustainable development in the area. In this respect the focus on empowerment is crucial as it is a key condition providing the “advantages of on-site local governance for local commonages” (Murphree, 2009: 2559). Currently the local people are of the view that the main beneficiaries of tourism in the GLTFCA are campfire committees, government officials and people from outside the transfrontier destination. This situation is discouraging the locals to pursue tourism as a livelihood alternative.

The need for proper administrative governance between the GLTFCA management structures and local communities emerged as a key concern for the local communities. To incorporate and involve communities in the TFCA process the interviewees indicated a need for accountability on the part of those representing the local people in tourism partnerships with private sector and development agencies. Most of the interviewed highlighted that the main challenge with tourism income is that it never reaches the household due to bureaucracy and corruption within those elected to represent the local people. Quite evidently from the local people in Sengwe, there was a great concern about corruption and embezzlement of funds raised through some of the community based tourism projects. A large proportion of the interviewed households were of the view that the local leadership were infiltrated by corrupt people hence community benefits had diminished as these representatives were only lining up their pockets. Thus, there is need for improved transparency among all key transboundary stakeholders including the local structures of community representation. Programmes involving communities and with potential to tamper with livelihoods sustainability should be premised on consensus building, hence the recommendation to improve governance and create platforms through which robust debates are done.

Community-oriented governance with better communication would also help to address the problem of unrealistic expectations of tourism income at a household level. In this regard the GLTFCA governance should take a leading role in fostering local community relations that will build trust and positive engagement relationships. The Parks and Wildlife Authority (PAWA) should take the initiatives in their hands to go to the communal areas within the conservation area to try to market their products as well as to educate those living within the

GLTFCA on what they stand for with respect to tourism opportunities for the local people. Indeed, the transboundary nature of the GLTFCA initiative cannot be left to the traditional leaders alone to explain its intricacies and how the other countries are forging ahead with the governance issues. For example, the people in Sengwe were concerned about issues with land rights and fear of livelihoods displacement. Thus, there is need for explanation at a higher level to assure the communities and allay their fears as well. Since the formation of the GLTFCA early 2000, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were quite effective in information dissemination within the confines of transfrontier areas. These NGOs were an important source of information and played an important role in assisting local authorities and governments to meet set targets, drive livelihood development programmes and aid in conservation related programmes which the local authorities and the national governments in the GLTFCA could not fund on their own.

However, as implied in the study findings, the NGOs' role in information dissemination and transfrontier governance appears to have diminished. This is not surprising as since 2005 the government of Zimbabwe's general elections have accused many NGOs as being agents of regime change and influencing communities to rise up against the government. The local people in Sengwe bemoaned the pull out of the NGOs like World Vision, CARE, CESVI, AWF and the International Centre for Research, Development and Agronomy (CIRAD) as this had negatively affected community development programmes in the GLTFCA. CESVI and AWF were quite instrumental as key strategic partners in the creation of the GLTFCA and have been funding biodiversity conservation and community based development initiatives (Chirozva *et al.*, 2013). Further to the NGO fatigue in funding biodiversity conservation and CBTs, the political and macro-economic instability experienced in Zimbabwe over the years has impacted negatively on the competitiveness of Zimbabwe as a tourist destination. What is quite evident is that the decline in governance structures and funding for conservation programmes in the GLTFCA could be linked to the withdrawal of NGOs in funding the transfrontier activities in Zimbabwe and is therefore largely influencing community perceptions about conservation and tourism development in the GLTFCA.

The indication is that the government of Zimbabwe, the RDCs and the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (PAWA) alone cannot afford to fund the transfrontier governance and capacity building programmes without assistance from external donor organisations. There is serious donor funding fatigue in Zimbabwe to the extent of even affecting basic surveillance and wildlife monitoring programmes in Zimbabwe's national parks. A classic example of the

breakdown in wildlife monitoring is the poisoning of over a hundred elephants at Hwange National Park (Muboko *et al.*, 2014). The government therefore cannot continue with the offensive to drive-out all conservation NGOs but should re-engage all conservation NGOs to fund the transboundary activities in Zimbabwe as well. While Zimbabwe is grappling with its confrontational politics with the Western funded conservation NGOs, South Africa and Mozambique have continued to receive donor support to improve conservation and governance processes in the GLTFCA. Apart from just courting donor organisations, there is need for the government to improve the macro-economic and political environment so that there is a stable environment that can help to promote tourist inflows to Zimbabwe. Without tourists visiting Zimbabwe there will not be any tourism income to talk about thereby derailing all the efforts to promote sustainable tourism and community well-being in the GLTFCA.

The results show that lack of technical knowhow and destination awareness was cited by the interviewees as a major hindrance for the local people to participate in sustainable tourism enterprises in the GLTFCA. Arguments put forward were that since the inception of the GLTFCA there are no successful individually or community owned tourism project by the people from Sengwe area as most people associated with successful projects were individuals coming from outside Sengwe. In addition, due to lack of technical knowhow the tourism opportunities available to the locals are limited. This also included the craft industry opportunities, which was considered as an alternative livelihood strategy for the locals in Sengwe. Thus, there is therefore need to find ways to regulate the craft industry in Sengwe as this has the potential to degrade the same environment through over-exploitation of vegetation and stone work used for crafts.

## **7. Conclusion**

The study based on the perceptions of the local people in Sengwe concludes that there is an imbalance of community development and transfrontier tourism destination conservation mandate. The results largely project a disillusioned transfrontier community, as the interviewees see an imbalance of the delicate relationship of livelihoods development, biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism development in the transfrontier tourist destination. There is a need to manage this perception of disillusionment by involving the

poor communities and ensuring that they benefit from tourism. Community engagement in tourism is therefore a key to ensure sustainability of tourism resources. The communities are of the view that there is money in tourism but only a few are benefiting. We conclude by suggesting the need to create clear guidelines and blue prints to guide community based tourism enterprises in the transfrontier destination. In this guideline the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders towards conservation, tourism development and community participation should be clearly defined. The lack of a defined framework could therefore explain some of the negative perceptions and misconceptions which the local people in Sengwe communal area have towards the GLTFCA and the associated conservation and tourism activities.

There is also a need for more research into this area to determine how the tourism benefits from the transfrontier tourism destination can be shared among the three participating countries cascading downwards to the communities involved. There is strong suspicion by the locals in Sengwe that only South African locals are benefitting from the GLTFCA initiative. The factors which hinder local benefits in Sengwe and meaningful community engagement from participating in sustainable tourism include: lack of information about the industry; lack of knowledge about the tourism opportunities; and how the communities can leverage from the available opportunities. A key economic driver behind the GLTFCA tourism potential is through nature-based tourism but also cultural tourism could be developed. However, as local people lack the awareness and technical know-how the communities have continued to focus on crop farming, livestock rearing and migrant labour to South Africa as key livelihood strategies compared to tourism.

Moreover the tourism value chain in the GLTFCA should be studied and geared towards empowering the locals to sustain their lives and making sure that there are direct income flows to household level. This entails curbing the flight of tourism income from the GLTFCA, particularly from the Zimbabwe side to neighbouring countries, South Africa and Mozambique. Even the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (2010) statistics seem to point to the uneven distribution of tourism incomes among the member countries, owing to persistent macro-economic and political challenges in Zimbabwe. In line with the transfrontier conservation mandate to contribute to global biodiversity conservation and regional economic development through sustainable tourism, the GLTFCA management structures and financiers should take into account the pressing key challenges of rural households in Sengwe

when advancing the GLTFCA agenda in order to mitigate community vulnerability to poverty and other household survival concerns like food security, health, transport and education. This therefore places food security as a key driver by the local communities in Sengwe to support conservation and sustainable tourism development. In order to make the tourism industry sustainable and deliver the development promises and prospects based on the GLTFCA, this indicates the need to come up with win-win strategies and interventions by all key stakeholders to mitigate wildlife induced losses on food and livestock.

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