

Local Communities, CBOs/Trusts, and People–Park Relationships: A Case Study of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Botswana

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Introduction

The concept of community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) was introduced in Botswana in the early 1990s, and was premised on the idea that rural people must have the power to make decisions regarding utilization of natural resources (Mulale et al. 2013). CBNRM was built on the need for local participation and involvement in the management and utilization of protected areas, as well as community empowerment within and adjacent to them (Thakadu 2006; Mutandwa and Gadzirayi 2007). Based on these fundamental tenets, the CBNRM initiative was designed to alleviate poverty, advance conservation, strengthen rural economies, and empower communities to manage and derive equitable benefits from resources, as well as determine their long-term use (Arntzen et al. 2003; GoB 2007). Since its adoption, the implementation arm for CBNRM initiatives has been largely orchestrated through the formation and operation of a local community-based organization (CBO) and/or community trust (Moswete et al. 2009; Mbaiwa 2013). This local organizational entity (hereafter referred to as a CBO/Trust) has evolved as an instrumental tool for rural communities as it provides a forum for them to negotiate their interests, problems, goals, and aspirations in a democratic and participatory process (Rozemeijer 2001; Arntzen et al. 2003; Mbaiwa 2013). This paper examines how local residents assess CBOs/Trusts, and people–park relationships, within the context of the Botswana portion of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP).

CBNRM in Botswana

In Botswana, park-based tourism and/or community ecotourism is strongly linked to the notion of CBNRM (GoB 2007). According to the National CBNRM Policy of 2007, the

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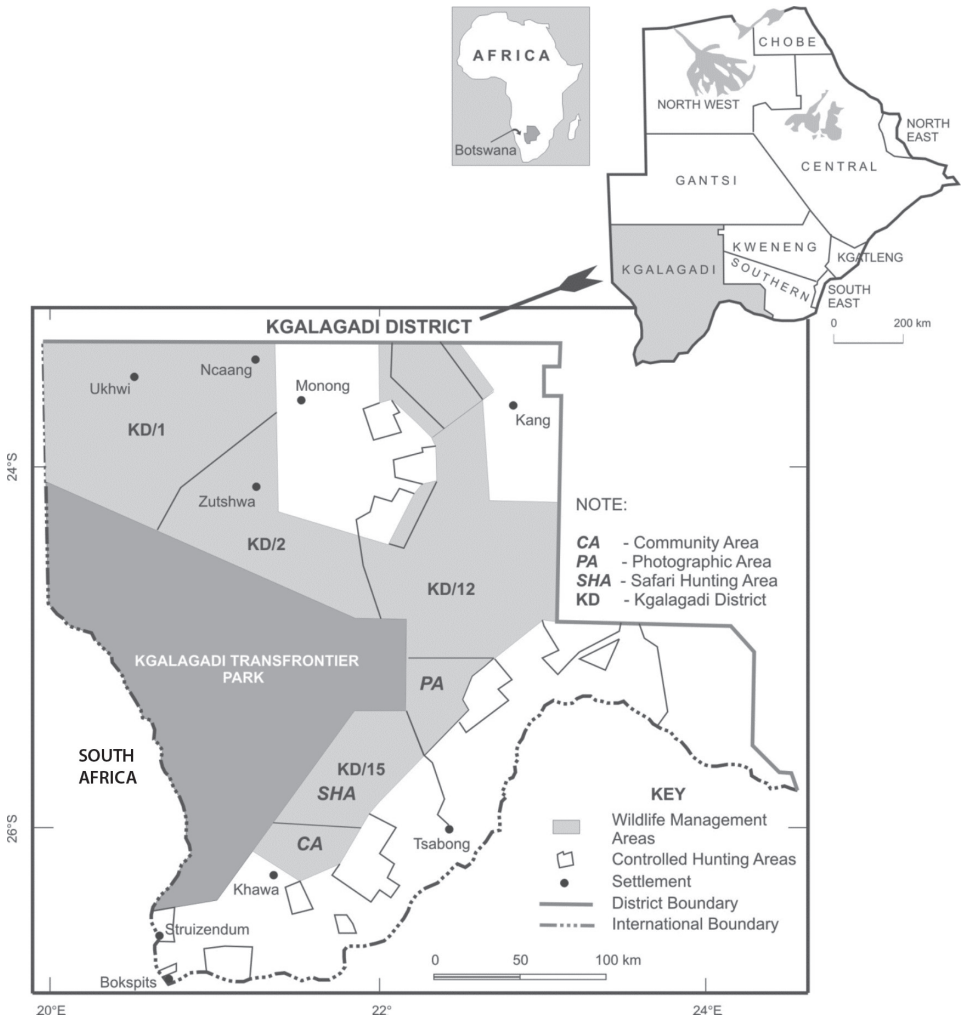
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Ecotourism Strategy of 2003, and the Wildlife Regulations of 2000, the host communities are encouraged to establish CBOs and/or community trusts (GoB 2007). It is through these CBOs/Trusts that communities organize themselves as per their village constituencies and collectively form communally owned tourism businesses or carry out tourism-related projects (Mbaiwa 2013; Mulale et al. 2013). At first, tourism activities run by CBOs/Trusts were not permitted to occur inside protected areas (such as transboundary conservation parks or wildlife reserves) but only within their buffer zones. The buffer zones are designated as wildlife management areas (WMAs; see Figure 1), as they function to resolve land-use conflicts

Figure 1. Study areas and wildlife management areas in and around Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP). Shown here is the portion of KTP inside Botswana; the transfrontier park extends across the border into South Africa. Map by G. Koorutwe.



as well as act as wildlife migratory corridors (GoB 2001; Dougill et al. 2016). The WMAs are further subdivided into smaller units referred to as controlled hunting areas (CHAs). The WMAs and CHAs are multiple-use areas in which sustainable utilization of natural and cultural resources is emphasized (GoB 2001). *Sustainable use* refers to appropriate consumption of resources to ensure that they are not depleted (GoB 2007). As such, controlled tourism activities are permitted in the WMAs, but agricultural practices with large pastoral and arable farming are not allowed (GoB 2001). The various land uses and wildlife activities permitted include photographic safaris (GoB 2007), film production, game ranching and viewing, and controlled trophy hunting (GoB 2001). Overall, WMAs play a significant role in ensuring the preservation and protection of wildlife and cultural heritage resources (GoB 2007; Mulale et al. 2013).

While CBNRM has the potential to strengthen community rights as well as manage and accrue benefits from a wide range of natural and cultural resources (Arntzen et al. 2003; Stone and Rogerson 2011; Mulale et al. 2013), there are also other positive and negative effects of activities engaged in by various villagers and communities (Mbaiwa 2003, 2013; Stone 2015). While some CBOs/Trusts have been successful in the operational aspects (Arntzen et al. 2003), others have lacked meaningful involvement of locals in tourism (Mbaiwa 2003; Moswete et al. 2009; Moswete and Thapa 2015; Stone 2015). Some of this can be attributed to a deficiency of community capacity to manage tourism-related projects (Stone 2015). It should also be noted that while the majority of CBNRM tourism projects are focused on wildlife and wilderness (Arntzen et al. 2003; GoB 2007), there are a few emerging projects related to cultural tourism and agro-tourism (Rozemeijer 2001; Moswete and Lacey 2014; Lenao and Saarinen 2015).

Generally, CBNRM projects that operate in buffer zones have achieved success, notably in the Okavango Delta region in the northern part of the country, which is a World Heritage site and a major tourism hub (Arntzen et al. 2003; Thakadu 2006; Mbaiwa 2008, 2013). In contrast, communities in Botswana's southwestern Kgalagadi district have also established CBOs/Trusts, but have lacked similar success due to various constraints (Moswete et al. 2009). For example, communities in the Matsheng area, which is a remote region within the district, established a CBO/Trust (the Nqwaa Khobee Xeya Trust) and entered into a joint venture with a private operator to permit exclusive rights for hunting and photographic safaris (Moswete et al. 2009). Based on this relationship, other tourism-related activities were leveraged, such as jobs (e.g., animal trekkers and skinners), accommodation facilities, handicraft production, etc. However, individual benefits were reported for only a few community members, while a majority registered low participation, involvement, and benefits (see Moswete et al. 2012).

Overall, Botswana's southwestern region, which is situated in the Kalahari Desert, is in dire need of economic advancement (Moswete et al. 2012), as the poor and marginalized people living there are hampered by limited formal training and tourism-related business skills (Arntzen 2003), inadequate education (GoB 2001), weak policies, and poor leadership (Chanda and Magole 2001). It has been recommended that CBNRM-based tourism initiatives and labor-based public work schemes should be made a permanent feature of the

region's rural areas to alleviate poverty (GoB 2007). This region is understudied, but given the proximity of the communities to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP), opportunities to derive economic benefits and achieve conservation outcomes via a CBO/Trust are evident. Hence, there is a need to further examine the relationship of local communities, CBO/Trusts and KTP.

Site context

A *transfrontier park* refers to wildlife conservation areas with common international boundaries managed as a single unit by a joint authority that consists of representatives from the participating countries (Sandwith et al. 2001; Ramutsindela 2009). KTP was planned in the 1990s and formally declared in 1999 by Botswana and South Africa, and comprises Botswana's Gemsbok National Park and South Africa's Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (Peace Parks Foundation, 2011). KTP's key objectives are to (1) fully realize the economic potential of the parks and the surrounding areas in order to bring economic benefits to both countries, especially to the local adjacent communities; and (2) mitigate the undesirable impacts of existing and potential land-use conflicts between the park and local communities (SANP and DWNP 1997: 9). KTP was established on the premise that there be dual ownership and management of the resources (natural and cultural) with the motivation to engage nearby rural dwellers in both countries (Peace Parks Foundation 2011).

The unique ecosystem in and around KTP, along with its rare and endangered animal and plant species, attract local, regional, and international visitors, especially to the various protected areas that include nearby game reserves such as the Central Kgalagadi Game Reserves, Kutse Game Reserve, and Jwana Game Park (CSO 2006). While the Kalahari Desert region's image as a nature-based tourism destination has improved recently (Schoon 2008), tourism development lags behind in terms of attracting the high-paying clientele who frequent Botswana's northern protected areas—particularly Chobe National Park, Moremi Game Reserve, and the Okavango Delta (Magole and Gojamang 2005). Moreover, in KTP the tourism activities and enterprises are concentrated on the South African side of the park (Schoon 2008; Thondhlana et al. 2015). On the Botswana side, the tourism infrastructure is situated far away from the park's boundary, in the villages of Tsabong and Kang. Tourist facilities such as campsites and game farms are found there. KTP offers opportunities to further capitalize and develop tourism initiatives in the greater Kalahari region of Botswana, and some communities have begun to derive nominal tangible and indirect benefits from community-based ecotourism (Moswete and Thapa 2015). Benefits include but are not limited to tangibles (e.g., game meat, production of garments and other merchandise from wild animal skins and hides, cash income) and intangibles (e.g., pride in local/national heritage of flora and fauna, revival of craft skills in making handmade head and arm bands, social capital, and socialization of villagers, especially older women, youth, and children) (Moswete et al. 2009).

Tourism development has generated direct and indirect benefits to individuals and communally owned projects and enterprises situated near KTP on the Botswana side (Moswete and Thapa 2015). Recent emphasis on protected area tourism requires that local involvement and participation be increased (Thakadu 2006; Stone and Rogerson 2011; Silva and Mosi-

mane 2012), especially among those most affected, such as indigenous residents (Mbaiwa 2008; Thondhlana et al. 2012). Thus, CBOs/Trusts play a vital role in securing benefits for local residents and their respective villages and communities. CBNRM-based CBO/Trusts have been promoted as an instrument to achieve conservation and development initiatives at the local level, and success has been mixed and site specific.

Study objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the local residents' assessment of their CBO/Trust and people-park relationships within the context of the Botswana side of the KTP. More specifically, the objectives were to:

1. Assess local residents' use of KTP and its resources;
2. Evaluate local residents' awareness of their CBO/Trust;
3. Examine the extent to which local residents derive benefits from their CBO/Trust;
4. Assess local residents' involvement in their CBO/Trust; and
5. Examine local residents' level of support for KTP.

Methods

The Kgalagadi district comprises some 42,000 residents, with approximately 26,000 located in the north and 16,000 in the south (CSO 2001). Nine villages were selected based on their location, distance from the boundary of KTP, and existence of a CBO/Trust. The communities included five in the north (Kang, Ncaang, Ukhwi, Zutshwa, Tshane) and four in the south (Khawa, Struizendam, Bokspits, Tsabong). The villages of Ncaang, Ukhwi, Zutshwa, and Khawa are located within WMAs, where the main rangeland utilization is wildlife conservation. Among the sites, Tsabong has the largest population and is the administrative center of the district. The village has become a popular tourism destination since the Trans-Kalahari Highway (TKH) was completed. The TKH also runs through Kang, the second-largest village, and this has created similar tourism business opportunities there. Most of the communities in the district offer safari hunting to both local and overseas hunters, and have established CBOs/Trusts for conservation and tourism activities (Moswete et al. 2009).

The sample size was based on the population. Stratified sampling based on distance from the park was used to identify households. The head of household (18+ years of age) was identified and requested to participate. Only residents who had lived in the village for twelve months or more were selected. The questions¹ covered sociodemographics (12 items); park use and frequency of visit (3 items); awareness, benefits, involvement, and support of CBOs/Trusts (11 items); and support for the park (5 items). Since levels of illiteracy are high among residents, the lead author, who is a Botswana citizen, read the questions to participants in their native language and documented the responses. A total of 746 household surveys were completed, with a response rate of 75%. The analyses were based on descriptive frequencies due to the exploratory nature of the study.

Results

Profile of respondents. The sociodemographic characteristics were based on the head of the household; some highlights of our findings follow. Females were more representative (55%) than males (45%).² Age ranged from 18 to 92 years, with 41% between 18–30 and 24% in the 31–40 bracket. The education level varied as there were noticeable differences based on the sampled sites. About 31% had formal employment, and 24% were self-employed, mainly in the informal sector such as handicraft production for tourist consumption. However, 25% were unemployed and were largely those who were aided via the government welfare projects. Almost 80% reported that at least 1–2 persons in the household had a job, while 10.5% reported that 3–4 persons in their home had paid employment. The median annual household income ranged between P1001–1500 (US\$143–214). The size of the household varied; 30% noted between 2–4 individuals. The ethnicity varied with Bakgalagadi (28%) and Batharo (21%) as the top two among nine groups reported. Approximately 67% were native residents born and bred in Kgalagadi, while 10% had lived in the area for 10 or more years.

Park use. Respondents were asked if they had ever visited KTP. About 58% indicated that they had never done so during their lifetime, and of them, 27% could not estimate the distance of their household to KTP. Those who had visited the park (42%) were requested to provide reasons for their visit(s). About 23% noted for recreation/tourism, and 24% reported to see wild animals, birds and nature. Almost all respondents (98%) had never visited the park for veldt or forest food collection. Similarly, 96% had never visited for any meetings associated with park management (see Table 1). Respondents were also asked to indicate the frequency of their visits to KTP based on a twelve-month period. The majority (92%) indicated not to have taken any trips during that period. Among those who had, only 9% visited to see wildlife, birds or nature, while 4% went for recreation/tourism activities. Other respondents (6%) had entered the park only once during the period, for myriad reasons (e.g., shopping, attending funerals, visiting friends and relatives, or transiting to other villages and towns in South Africa).

Awareness about CBOs/Trusts. Respondents were queried if they were aware of a CBO/Trust in their respective area/village. Only 45% were aware, while 47% were able to name the existing CBO/Trust. For example, some respondents (12%) were able to name Nqwaa Khobee Xeya CBO/Trust in KD1 (refer to Figure 1); 10%, Khawa Kopanelo Development Trust in Khawa village; 7%, Qha Qhing Development Trust in Zutshwa; and 6%, BORA-VAST CBO/Trust in Bokspits, Rapelspan, Vaalhoek, and Struizendam. In summary, about

Table 1. Reasons for visits to Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Outdoor recreation/tourism	171 (23%)	574 (77%)
See wild animals, birds & nature	176 (24%)	569 (76%)
Veldt resource collection/harvest	8 (2%)	737 (98%)
Park management meeting	24 (4%)	721 (96%)
Other reasons	140 (19%)	605 (81%)

Respondents were permitted to give more than one response.

half of all respondents demonstrated lack of information and knowledge of the existence or availability of CBOs/Trusts.

Benefits from CBOs/Trusts. Since the role of a CBO/Trust is largely to assist in economic development and disbursement of benefits via tourism, respondents were asked to report whether there were any benefits accrued at individual and community levels. At the individual level, only 17% of the respondents indicated to have personally benefited from tourism in their particular area, while 64% noted otherwise, and 19% were unsure (see Table 2). Those who had accrued benefits reported individual gains such as part- and full-time employment (e.g., assisting safaris, acting as watchmen or camp caretakers), procurement of game meat, and business opportunities (e.g., production and sale of handcrafts). At the community level, 29% noted that the CBO/Trust had benefited from tourism activities while 29% were unsure. Similarly, 29% of respondents felt that their community benefited with the existence of a CBO/Trust there, while 45% disagreed. Only 21% noted that the CBO/Trust had created business opportunities in their area, while 53% indicated otherwise. Responses were also mixed about whether the CBO/Trust had brought positive changes to their area, as 26% acknowledged the changes while 48% noted otherwise. Benefits at the community level were not limited to employment opportunities. For example, infrastructural developments such as the presence of the CBO/Trust office and craft outlets, were noted.

Involvement in CBOs/Trusts. Respondents were requested to indicate their level of involvement in their CBO/Trust activities, which were measured by four items based on a Likert-type scale (1 = not at all involved to 5 = extremely involved). Based on the varied responses, the scale was recoded as two binary categories to reflect involvement³ or no involvement. Overall, there was low level of involvement (see Table 3)—for all four items, lower than 20%.

Table 2. Benefits from CBOs/Trusts.

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)
Have you benefited from tourism in your area?	128 (17%)	472 (64%)	139 (19%)
Has your CBO/Trust benefited from tourism?	209 (29%)	11 (43%)	210 (29%)
Has your community benefited from CBO/Trust?	212 (29%)	328 (45%)	194 (26%)
The CBO/Trust has created business opportunities in my village	151 (21%)	388 (53%)	194 (26%)
CBO/Trust has brought positive changes to my village	191 (26%)	351 (48%)	188 (26%)

n = 746; missing data excluded

Table 3. Involvement with CBOs/Trusts.

	Not at all Involved (%)	Involved (%)
Involvement in tourism activities of the CBO/Trust	595 (81%)	143 (19%)
Involvement in the decision making about the CBO/Trust	611 (83%)	127 (17%)
Involvement in the management of CBO/Trust finances	651 (88%)	87 (12%)
Involvement in the CBO/Trust daily activities	642 (87%)	96 (13%)

n = 746; missing data excluded

Support for KTP. The level of support for KTP was also measured by five items based on a Likert-type scale as above (see Table 4). A large majority of respondents (96%) expressed support for protection of KTP as a conservation area. Seventy-two percent expressed support for KTP as a transfrontier park, 66% for current KTP management staff, 79% for the creation of KTP buffer zones and WMAs, and 73% for regulations and guidelines that maintain KTP as a transfrontier park.

Discussion

In Botswana, rural communities, especially those situated close to protected areas, are encouraged to actively participate in natural resource conservation and community-based ecotourism (Moswete and Thapa 2015; Stone 2015). Given the dual conservation and development objectives of CBOs/Trusts, communities have accrued direct and indirect benefits from them (Moswete et al. 2009; Mbaiwa 2013). Since local involvement, participation, and equitable distribution of benefits are key aspects for a successful CBO/Trust, this study examined residents’ perspectives with respect to these topics within the context of villages/communities adjacent to the Botswana side of KTP.

In this study, people–park relationships appeared to be very minimal, as more than half of the respondents had never even visited KTP in their lifetime. Those that had visited essentially did so for leisure and wildlife observation activities. The collection for veldt and/or forest food by residents inside the park was nearly non-existent—a fact which is compliant with the country’s National Park Act of 1992. Resident interactions with park management were extremely limited, as the vast majority reported to have never attended meetings in relation to the park. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority had not visited KTP in the past twelve months. Overall, only a small proportion of the residents were actively engaged with KTP for any reason. A plausible explanation is the distance to the park from the villages/communities. Supplementary analysis was conducted to discern differences based on location of the respondent. The results confirmed that respondents from Bokspits, Khawa, Struizendam, and Zutshwa were more actively engaged (e.g., by escorting safari tourism clients, securing the park’s boundary fence, holding part-time jobs) with KTP, being in closer proximity (53, 23, 21 and 72 kilometers, respectively).

Table 4. Support for Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

	SO (%)	O (%)	N (%)	S (%)	SS (%)	Total
Support protection of KTP as a conservation area	<1	1	3	66	30	743
Support KTP as a transfrontier park	9	12	7	52	20	744
Support current management staff at KTP	1	15	19	52	14	745
Support creation of KTP buffer zone and Wildlife Management Areas	2	6	13	59	20	744
Support regulation and guidelines to maintain KTP as a transfrontier park	4	8	15	54	19	745

Items coded on a five-pt scale: 1=Strongly Oppose (SO), 2=Oppose (O), 3=Neutral (N), 4=Support (S), 5=Strongly Support (SS)

n = 746; missing data excluded

These results illustrate the importance for park management staff to conduct outreach initiatives to various villages and communities. The lack of community conservation and capacity-building programs designed by KTP management to reach out to adjacent communities was evident. Further, it could be that residents in areas distant from the park are not engaged largely due to a lack of understanding of its role and existence (see Stone and Rogerson 2011). Overall, lack of engagement is of major concern and is contrary to the objectives of KTP (Schoon 2008; Moswete et al. 2009; Thondlana et al. 2012).

With respect to CBOs/Trusts, slightly less than half of the respondents were aware of their existence. This finding was a surprise since there is a CBO/Trust for tourism in almost all the sampled villages and communities. It is obvious that awareness programs are needed to inform residents about CBOs/Trusts and their benefits at the individual and community levels. In addition, only a small percentage of residents were beneficiaries of tourism in their villages and communities. Benefits at the community level were more noticeable, and were not limited to employment opportunities but also included infrastructure development. Although the individual and community benefits accrued were relatively small, they are still significant since community-based tourism is fairly new in the region (Moswete et al. 2009). This should be a catalyst to further develop and enhance tourism-based products, as well as create additional business opportunities.

While a quarter of the residents noted positive changes due to the operations of a CBO/Trust, there was a sizeable percentage that stated otherwise, or was unsure. This is an area of concern as perceived lack of benefits usually leads to lack of support for a CBO/Trust. Also, in some cases, based on previous findings in the KTP region, community elites tend to be dominant and actively involved with others being marginalized (Moswete et al. 2009). Such dominance by a few likely creates fissures within the community and compromises the ability of a CBO/Trust to fully function. It was discouraging to find a low level of involvement in tourism activities, decision-making, management of finances, and daily activities. These findings demonstrate the vital importance of broad engagement within the village/community in order to establish a successful CBO/Trust that is inclusive and provides equity for all residents.

The notable lack of involvement of locals indicates that community tourism via CBNRM in and around KTP has been relatively unsuccessful. This calls for a more efficient implementation strategy coupled with a robust monitoring system with regards to involvement and participation of adjacent local communities. The issue of involvement and participation in tourism is often associated with derived benefits, and influences people-park relationships (Silva and Mosimane 2012; Moswete and Thapa 2015; Molina-Murillo et al. 2016). Similarly, this issue also resonates with community sentiments and displeasure towards nearby protected areas in neighboring countries, notably in Kruger National Park in South Africa (Brandon 2007) and Kasanka National Park in Zambia (Himoonde 2007).

The near-unanimous support for KTP as a conservation area denoted that communities valued the park. Also, a majority of the residents were supportive of the transboundary nature of the park, management staff, associated regulations/guidelines, buffer zones, and WMAs.

While overall positive support was in evidence, a sizeable proportion of residents were not convinced. The reasons could be varied, but likely relate to access to resources, lack of involvement and benefits, etc. It is apparent that additional community outreach activities by KTP staff are needed. Similar ideas regarding adjacent communities have been emphasized in other studies, such as in Botswana's northern region at Chobe National Park (Mosetlhi 2012). KTP management needs to institute participatory governance with local villages and communities in order to meet the park's mission. Essentially, effective management of protected areas relies on good governance (Sandwith et al. 2001; Mosetlhi 2012; Mulale and Mbaiwa 2012; Shields et al. 2016) with active local participation of the poor and disadvantaged communities (Simelane et al. 2006; Himoonde 2007;).

Conclusion

This study revealed a limited people-park relationship, along with minimal involvement of residents with their local CBO/Trust, in the areas around KTP in Botswana. Local communities derived only nominal benefits from KTP-based tourism and CBO/Trust activities associated with tourism. The majority of remote local communities lacked engagement, and signs of imbalances in derived benefits and involvement with KTP were identified. Since CBNRM and CBO/Trusts were introduced in Botswana as proposed solutions to the socio-economic challenges of rural dwellers, this study discovered that there are still major issues to resolve. This appears to be specific to the Kgalagadi district, and it is recommended that local communities should not be isolated but rather be considered as stakeholders in KTP's management. Local people's involvement in decision-making regarding tourism development can foster positive impacts and support for community-based tourism development. CBOs/Trusts have created part- and full-time jobs, and other income and business opportunities for households, but they need to be more inclusive of the wider community, regardless of age, ethnicity, or education level, to better involve residents and achieve equity of benefits. Further, programs on conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage resources, tourism awareness, and skills and enterprise development are also recommended to encourage employment and poverty alleviation within the villages in the periphery of the Botswana portion of KTP.

Endnotes

1. Survey consisted of nine sections as part of a larger study but only the relevant items are reported in this paper.
2. More females were home since males were engaged in their farms, fields, and cattle-posts. In addition, the rural communities have also experienced out-migration of males to other communities for employment and job opportunities.
3. Involvement (somewhat involved, moderately involved, and very involved responses combined).

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