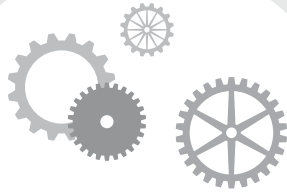


THE IMPACT OF PRIVATE GAME FARMS ON LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Dr A Giampiccoli (andrea.giampiccoli@gmail.com)
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Prof P van der Merwe
NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

Prof M Saayman (Melville.saayman@nwu.ac.za)
NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Nature-based and wildlife tourism is a growing economic sector with associated increases in privately protected areas. The history of South Africa suggests a conflicting relationship between privately-owned game farms (PGFs) and their surrounding communities. There is an increased recognition of the contribution of PGFs to issues such as biodiversity and community development. However, few investigations, if any, on the relation between PGFs and community development can be discovered. The aim of this paper is to investigate and understand the current role and contribution of PGFs to community development, using a South African case study. To investigate the topic, telephonic interviews were conducted. The study suggests that PGFs are active in local community development albeit that their involvement is still in its early stages and could be enhanced. The present scarcity of research on the topic posits this investigation as a channel towards further research. The paper will suggest various strategies and projects that could help to facilitate the intervention of PGFs in community development.

KEYWORDS

Community development, Private game farm, South Africa, Wildlife tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest economic sectors in the world and it is linked to issues of socio-economic development (Frey & George, 2010: 622). South Africa does not differ from this trend. In the country, both the Government and the private sector have recognised the potential of tourism for the South African economy indicating tourism as one of the fastest growing and key sectors of the economy (George, 2010: 1; South Africa Yearbook, 2008/2009: 499). However, the generally positive economic impact of tourism needs to be scrutinised. It is important to understand the impact of tourism on local people as it reflects on issues such as employment and other community development opportunities. In fact, despite its growing importance to the South African economy, various challenges still exist and tourism remains as a sector that is not “truly representative” of the South African population (Frey & George, 2010: 622). In addition, despite tourism growth, “the number of tourism jobs (direct and indirect) decreased by 7.4 % from 993,400 in 2008 to 919,800 in 2009” (South African Tourism, 2010: 5).

Coupled with the overall growth of the tourism sector, tourism in natural areas is growing rapidly worldwide (Kepe, 2001: 155). According to Saayman, van der Merwe and Rossouw (2011: 120), nature-based tourism “is attracting increasing interest from governments, the tourism industry and researchers alike”. In the South African context, the natural resources and conservation areas should, through tourism, contribute to economic development (Hill, Nel & Trotter, 2006: 163). According to Geldenhuys and Saayman (2009: 30), “privately protected areas are proliferating throughout the world”. South Africa has followed this trend where Private Game Reserves (PGRs) or Game Farms (PGFs) form key features in the wildlife tourism sector. PGRs can be private reserves that are: “(1) larger than 5 ha, (2) not owned by a government entity, (3) visitors permitted, either as tourists or students, and (4) managed with the intent of preserving the land in a mostly undeveloped state” (Langholz, 1996: 272). Game farms can be defined “as land that is adequately fenced, with a variety of game species that can be used for hunting, photographic opportunities, environmental education, meat production, live game sales and which provides infrastructure and superstructures for ecotourists. It includes both consumptive and non-consumptive utilization of wildlife” (van der Merwe & Saayman, 2005: 1).

Purpose/objectives of the article

The aim of this paper is to investigate and understand the current role and contribution of PGFs to community development, using a South African case study.

The problem investigated

It has been proposed that Private Protected Areas (PPAs) serve as a vehicle to enhance sustainable development and indications are present that they play a positive role in protecting biodiversity, facilitating development and being financially successful (Langholz & Kerley, 2006: 2). It is therefore important to determine how well privately owned reserves are managed for nature conservation and community benefits (Mitchell, 2005: 4). The problem that this research investigates is to determine the impact of PGFs on local community development.

Research objectives

This research intends to verify if, and how, PGFs contribute to community development. The historical context of South Africa marks possible hesitation and conflict concerning the relationship between PGFs and their surrounding communities. The objective of this paper is to shed some light on this issue and to verify the current role of PGFs in community development.

LITERATURE BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Conservation strategies, for a long time, have somewhat down-played any concern for the well-being of the local community as nature conservation strategies have to date displayed an historical Western ideological bias and dominance concerning the establishment and management of National Parks (Rosa & Joubert, 2009: 176; West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006: 14: 6; Ramutsindela, 2004: 2). In most African countries the establishment of protected areas has often led to a conflict-relationship with local community thus leading to the so-called "fortress conservation" (Brockington, 2002). However, and more productively, "the main approach to recent wildlife management schemes has been to include the local people to gain their cooperation and support" (Johannesen & Skonhofs, 2005: 209). In South Africa, between 1948 and 1990, tourism was 'non-developmental' and most indigenous communities were not involved in the tourism sector (Frey & George, 2010: 622; Faasen & Watts, 2007: 36). However, various entities are moving, albeit with many difficulties and contradictions, away from these historical approaches and legacies. South Africa National Parks Board (SANParks), for example, now also promotes involvement in, capacity building of, and benefits to communities surrounding the parks in its approach to park management (Saayman & Saayman, 2006: 619; see also Saayman, 2009: 80). Research carried out on South African Game farms as a sustainable ecotourism attraction by van der Merwe and Saayman (2005: 9) suggests that, amongst other factors identified as being neglected by farmers, community involvement is crucial.

Since 1994, and thanks to the re-opening of South African tourism through the elimination of economic sanctions, a very positive outcome of the development of consumptive wildlife tourism has been achieved (Mbaiwa, 2008: 148). The reintegration of South Africa into the global market underpins its tourism growth and favours the shift from commercial farming to game farms or to a mixed solution. This conversion has also altered labour requirements (Luck & Vena, 2003: 85). Quantitative data regarding the number of South African game farms, as well as the extension and economic values are, unfortunately, both scarce and confusing. The relevance of the PGR tourism sector's contribution is however evident. Yet, while the relevance of the hunting sector is, according to Damm (2005: 1), well-recognised, available statistics on the sector "lack accuracy and depth".

The issue linking conservation with community participation and development has long been recognised. In 1996, Shackely (1996: 82) stated that the success of tourism and conservation projects "depends on local community participation". Even so, within this understanding was the caveat that "wildlife management (exists) within the ambit of the development of poor, communal rural communities and, as a consequence, it inherits all the problems related to rural development. The game farms cannot escape from or ignore this situation" (Els, 2002a: 650). It is this view that issues of conservation (in this case, the role of PGFs) and community development have to be investigated.

The meaning of the concept of development has also changed. Initially, development was mostly linked to economic issues but has since become more holistic in perspective. Saayman (2009: 79) also considers the concept of economic benefit to be inadequate, thus "development must not only benefit communities economically, but also socially. The quality of life of the local community must be improved".

In addition, because PGFs can differ greatly in size and resources, it is unrealistic to believe that each PGF can elaborate and facilitate the same level of community development projects; thus each PGF contribution to community development should proportionately represent its capabilities and resources. To exert a greater impact, smaller PGFs could work together to conduct specific community development projects. In this study, the local community is identified as comprising people belonging to the previously disadvantaged groups of South African society.

Tourism, especially ecotourism or nature based tourism, has been linked to issues of development and conservation (Stone & Wall, 2003: 12). In South Africa, the link between tourism development, PGRs and community development has also been recognised (Viljoen & Tlabela, 2007: 13); this approval is also followed by the North-West Park and Tourism Board (Saayman, 2009: 81). In addition, community development supported by government protected areas and privately conserved areas can include a wide range of benefits such as jobs and general welfare activities (Jones, Stolton & Dudley, 2005: 73). Within the PGR context, ecotourism is more profitable and offers the potential for significant community development spin-off when compared to other land usage (Sims-Castley, Kerley, Geach & Langholz, 2005: 6).

An almost reverse understanding of the relationship between conservation and community development is considered to be possible, where “conservation is not the primary stated objective. Nonetheless, it will emerge as a powerful secondary objective, either as a stated management plan or as a natural spin-off” (Els, 2002b: 673). Conservation, therefore, becomes a consequential spin-off from the community development; “(i)f local communities and the region as a whole can benefit through jobs and business opportunities that are created or generated, then firm support for protected areas will be achieved and important conservation objectives will be met as a secondary or spin-off benefit” (Saayman, 2009: 83). At the same time, the implementation of specific strategies has to favour community development; therefore, community empowerment should be promoted through a facilitative process (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2012: 35; Cernea, 1985: 10). The facilitative process or at least aspects of it should also be recognised by game farmers. Accordingly, game farmers “should always facilitate rather than conduct projects on their own, then any projects that fail will not reflect poorly on them” (Els, 2002c: 684). A facilitator (or development officer) could be useful. In this context, a facilitator can be defined as “a person whose objective is to help individuals or groups in achieving their goals. The role of a facilitator is limited to providing proper methods and tools to the people he/she is facilitating in order to make it is easier for them to reach their goals” (Lecup & Nicholson, 2000: 11). Such a development officer or facilitator could be employed by a PGF alone or by a number of PGFs in order to facilitate better linkages with the local communities.

The practical impact of PGRs on community development is difficult to establish, as very few studies have been conducted in this regard and it appears that more studies that would yield more in-depth data are necessary. However, some data is available. In South Africa, it has been estimated that “approximately 49,000 jobs are created on privately owned game reserves in the country, with an average of 7 employees per reserve” (Porter, Ferrer & Aylwards, 2003: 297). Van der Merwe and Saayman (2003: 111) suggest that game farms “employ approximately 63,000 people”. Direct jobs are not the only sources of income nor do they offer the only possibilities for employment and benefits. Even if most game farm operations occur on private land, “benefits do spread to other sectors of society. Between 5,000 and 6,000 jobs are provided by the (hunting) industry and an estimated 63,000 jobs are provided by secondary industries such as tourism. Other benefits occurring include tips, revenue for conservation authorities and communal landowners, education/training/capacity building, conservation levies, meat, and eco-tourism opportunities” (Patterson & Khosa, 2005: 4). The multiplier effects of tourism services on PGRs must also be borne in mind in order to obtain a more holistic view. For example, a study carried out in KwaZulu-Natal suggests that high-end tourism facilities favour more job creation compared to low budget facilities and that wages in the public sector are much higher in comparison to those in the private sector as a reflection of specific legislation and policies that parastatal bodies should seek to follow (Aylwards, 2003: 24). Conversion issues regarding the use of land have also been relevant in promoting additional employment. In the case of the Eastern Cape, “changing from farming to wildlife-based ecotourism, employment numbers increased by a factor of 3.5” (Sims-Castley et al., 2005: 10). Finally, in a study carried out on PGRs in the Eastern Cape (South Africa), an improvement in workers’ living and contractual conditions was noted after the conversion of the

farm into a game farm (Sims-Castley et al., 2005: 10). Importantly, the same study also suggests that “there is an urgent need for national and provincial governments to acknowledge the important contribution this industry is making towards the country’s economy, and to provide assistance and support in both the establishment and management of private reserves” (Sims-Castley et al., 2005: 14). Ultimately, the continued existence of protected areas is directly linked to the benefit that the local community can reap from the protected areas (van der Merwe & Saayman, 2002: 7).

METHOD OF RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

As this research could be considered to be the first investigation related to the specific topic, the result should be viewed as a channel towards further research. This research must be understood to constitute an entry point investigation into this topic. A mix of close-ended and open-ended questions (although with short answers) were completed during telephonic interviews held during August 2011 by a total of 21 respondents. The phone calls were made during the evening when the farmers were expected to be more available. The PGF owners to be interviewed were selected randomly amongst the owners found in the database of the South Africa Game Farm Association. Telephonic interviews (quantitative and qualitative research) were conducted across all nine provinces of South Africa in order to yield nationwide results, even though the number of respondents was limited. Restrictions of time and resources limited the scope of the paper, but it must be noted that the aim of the research was to open the topic. While the sample size could be amplified so as to make generalised assumptions, it is sufficient for the aim of the research, that is, to initiate debate with regards to a previously generally neglected topic.

The questionnaires were divided into four sections: (1) owner demographic profile; (2) PGF profile; (3) PGFs and tourism, and (4) PGFs and local community development. The first two sections of the questionnaire were more structured so as to understand the basic profiles of the PGFs and their owners. The third and, in particular, the fourth sections have to be viewed as the core sections of this study, that is, the questions investigating the relation between PGFs and the local community. These parts were more semi-structured in nature with a mix of close and open ended questions so as to gain a better understanding of the investigated issue. These sections were developed by extrapolating issues from the study carried out by Els (2002a,b,c), Sims-Castley et al. (2005), and van der Merwe (2004), as well as including questions concerning such issues as employment, training, food purchase, management of tourism activities, and PGF involvement in community projects.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

PGF data

The profile of the PGF owners indicates that they are mostly male (80.95 %) and Afrikaans-speaking (76.19 %), have a good educational level (diploma/degree, 57.14 %; postgraduate qualification 23.81 %; lower qualification 19.05 %), with an average age of almost 52 years, ranging between 36 and 66 years. The majority (76.19 %) of the owners live on the farm whereas only 28.57 % do not. While most of the owners living off the farm state that they live in South African urban centres; in one case, the owner records living overseas in New Zealand.

The results register a variety of different types of business (Trust, 19.05 %; sole proprietorship, 19.05 %; close corporation and partnership, 14.29 % respectively; private company, 9.52 %). From a tourism perspective, it is noteworthy that more than a quarter (28.57 %) of the PGF owners

categorised their facilities as a lodge, and 14.29 % as offering bed and breakfast accommodation; guest house (4.76 %), self-catering (4.76 %), and other tourism categories (4.76 %) were also recorded. Almost one-fifth (19.05 %) is not registered under any of the tourism categories.

Most PGFs have been transformed from a commercial farm which prioritised types of business other than that of a game farm (see also Van der Merwe, 2004:103). Van der Merwe (2004:67) points out that while earlier game farms were viewed as having “NO value in South Africa”, they later became valuable ecotourism and conservation products. In particular, the majority (54 %) of farms were livestock farms prior to becoming a PGF, whilst the PGFs practising crop farming as their former main activities amount to almost a quarter (23 %) of the respondents. Two PGFs of the other 23 % previously prioritised hunting, that is, already within a PGF context. The high level of conversion agree with other studies (see van der Merwe and Saayman, 2005; and Luck and Vena, 2003). A large majority (80.95 %) of the PGFs are member of some or other form of association such as a hunting association, a wildlife association, or Wildlife Ranching South Africa.

PGFs and community development

The focus of this research falls on PGFs and community development as discussed in this section. Figure 1 depicts the level of community involvement in providing services for the PGFs. The result indicates a low level of involvement of the local communities in PGF services as only four sectors report community involvement (only in one instance each). The sectors in which the communities are involved are game viewing, hunting, music, and arts and craft. Game viewing and hunting are managed together with the community by one PGF while music as well as arts and craft are managed with the community associated with a PGF in one case each. For example, only 4.75 % of respondents (that is, one PGF) promotes community involvement in the music sector, and the same is true for arts and craft, while the same PGF involves the community in game viewing and hunting. For the rest, all the activities fall under the full control of the PGFs themselves. In the case of game viewing, 13 PGFs offer this activity (61.9 %) with only one (4.75 %) stating that the community is involved in its delivery, while all other PGFs who offer game viewing (57.14 %) do not involve the community in this activity. However, once again, it must be remembered that the size and resources of a PGF could influence the capacity of the owner to involve community members in the PGF activities or to be involved in community projects.

Figure 2 examines the food supply of PGFs. In this specific case study, the purchase of food from the local community could have a tangible positive impact on the community if PGFs, especially the ones more involved in tourism, purchase food from them (especially fruit and vegetables that could be linked to a small garden development in the community). Instead, the results indicate a minimal, almost negligible, link between the PGF food requirements and their local community. Figure 2 also illustrates that most of the food is purchased in nearby towns or shops. In this context, PGF owners support the local community in the sense that they buy their food requirements in the formal shops in the local town, which might be owned by anyone; often they are not owned or managed by members of the local community. In relation to this case study, formal shop owners are not viewed as being disadvantaged community members (the communities under scrutiny here) therefore their impact on community development is minimal. However, in small rural farming towns, there is often little choice or variety in the shops available. This, therefore, leaves the farmers with little, if any, choice. In this instance, a solution could be to favour new entrants (people from disadvantaged communities) in the formal trade through projects and policies. The results also reveal that the purchase of fruit and vegetables have a visible, although very small, presence in relation to local community involvement. PGFs acquire almost 10 % (9.52 %) of their fruit and vegetables from local communities. Acquiring meat from the local community is even less relevant to PGFs; only a

meagre 4.76 % do so. Meat, however, is a specific product that needs greater attention concerning hygiene and safety; therefore consumers and tourism businesses that buy meat for the tourists may well search for accredited and formal butcheries.

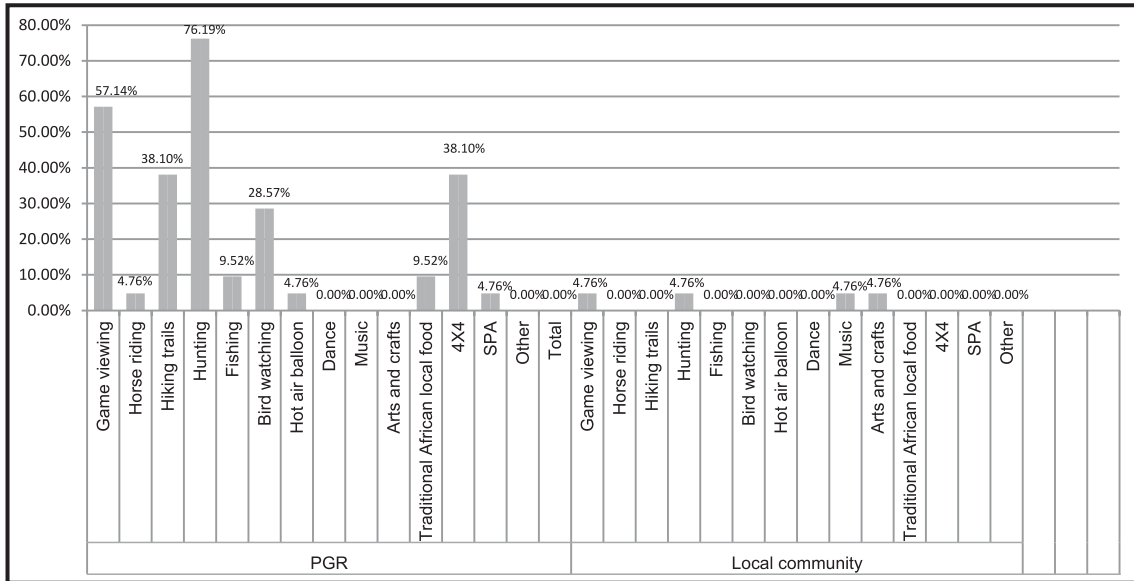


FIGURE 1: TOURISM ACTIVITIES MANAGEMENT FACTORS IN PGFS

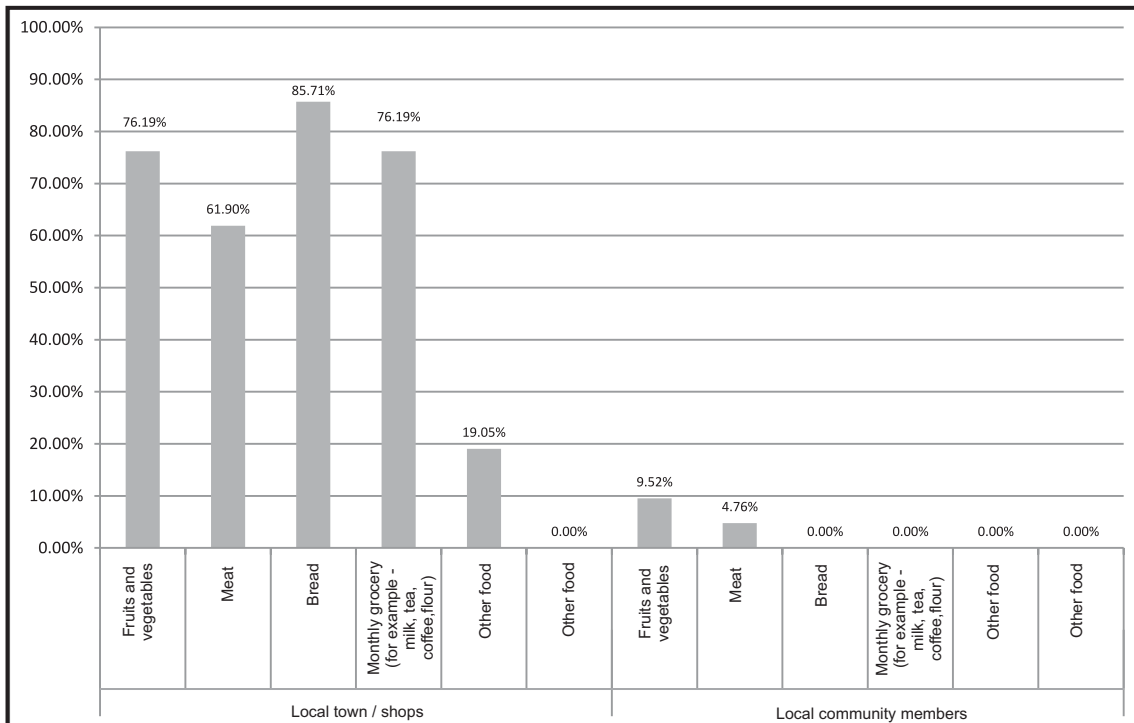


FIGURE 2: PGFS FOOD PURCHASE

Training and education are key empowerment factors concerning comprehensive community development. Therefore, it is crucial that the quantity and quality of training/educational opportunities that can be offered by PGFs to their workers and/or community members in general (see next section related to community projects) is appropriate. The results (see Figure 3) of this case study clearly reveal that a high percentage (61.9 %) of PGFs indicated that some form of training is compulsory. Therefore, from a quantitative perspective, even though not ideal, it appears that the training is surely heading in a very positive direction. However, the quality of the training appears to be less positive if it is considered that it should be formal and accredited. The gaining of accredited formal training empowers the trainee by not only giving them a more official, and often, greater technical skill (thus being able to work more skilfully on the farms), but would also offer greater gains from a psychological perspective. Achieving an official form of qualification offers the trainee gaining the qualification self-confidence and self-esteem. Formal training/education is supported by less than half (42.86 %) of the respondents against the informal training that does occur for more than half (57.14 %). The result is even more negative when only 14.29 % of the PGFs declare that they support training that is accredited against the 23.81 % who state that the training forms part of in-house training and non-accredited external training.

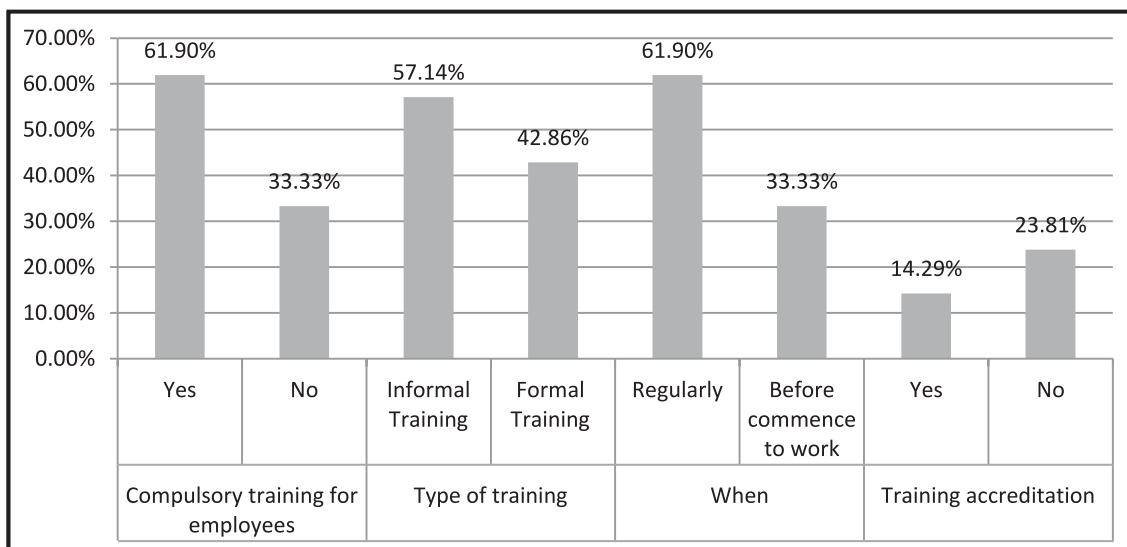


FIGURE 3: PGFS' WORKERS TRAINING

However, it is important to remember that formal training can be useful only if the persons involved possess a sufficient educational background. As many workers on PGFs hail from rural communities, many of them, particularly the older workers, often possess very low levels of formal education background or are illiterate. In this case, informal training might well be the only option. Nonetheless, training that is more formal could, and should, be offered to younger people. The issue is to provide (possibly on a regular basis in order to foster long-term improvement) the workers with the best possible training in proportion to each workers capacity and ability at the specific point in time. This will contribute to a better relationship between the worker and employer, will improve worker capacity and self-confidence, and will further advance the PGF in its management and image as tasks would be completed more professionally.

Training and educational support, as already mooted, can be promoted through community projects for the employees of PGFs or to other community members. A good and often encountered example is the helping of a local school. PGFs can therefore contribute to community development, not only in respect of the people directly involved in the PGF such as its workers, but also by means

of development projects for the broader community. This type of strategy can also develop and maintain better relationships between a PGF and the local community in general. The results in Figure 4 indicate that a third (33.33 %) of the PGFs is already involved in some form of community project. These projects include the support of a school, school sport teams, a soccer tournament or a local church. Interestingly, the response to the question concerning a willingness to be jointly involved in community projects with other PGFs, the number of positive responses increased from 14 % to 47.62 % when compared to those already involved. However, from a more comprehensive perspective, this percentage remains low as it represents less than half of the PGFs. There is ample space for further improvement. In addition, and very importantly, the reasons behind the unwillingness to be involved in community projects, as expressed by 42.86 % of the PGFs, urgently need investigation.

In this latter context, answers concerning the reasons determining the willingness of PGFs to be involved or not with collaborative community projects are largely favourably oriented with responses such as 'Good things, positive', 'must contribute to game industry, development/training education about nature', 'would be interested but very dependent on the time it will take', 'do not have a problem, want to help with projects' and 'too far from the local community'. On the other hand, the negatively oriented answers are: 'Not near any community that could benefit', 'do not spend much time on the farm', 'not sure', 'afraid of poaching', and 'Livestock theft'. While some negative answers seem very radical concerning an unwillingness to be involved in community projects, others seem unwilling because of lack of knowledge about community issues/problems (or perhaps being unaware of how to approach them). Poaching (as determined from a questionnaire specific to rhinos – therefore a broader look at the problem seeking an increased understanding of the reasons and dynamics behind the problem was required) and livestock theft are viewed as a major and critical factors in building an antagonistic barrier between PGFs and the local community. In the latter cases, a development officer could fill the gap. Development officers who work with the community would be viewed positively inasmuch as such advisers are properly equipped for the job. Development officers in this context could also aim at educating the farmers. Most PGF owners have become involved in tourism only recently owing to the conversion of their farms from traditional farming (crop and livestock) to game farming and ecotourism. As a consequence, most farmers are not adequately informed regarding issues relating to community development. This does not mean that normal (crop and livestock) farmers should not be involved in community development, but it does emphasise that the nature of the tourism business and the new direction of the farms should enhance the probability that the PGF owners would become involved in community development. Tourism, in fact, relies very much on local community support; therefore people need to learn different and very specific skills. On a positive note, a great number (52.38 %) of PGFs (compared to the ones willing to be involved with others PGFs) appear to be in favour of employing a community development officer to deal with community relationship issues and projects. This fact should be viewed positively. On the other hand, while the study found that almost half (47.62 %) of the PGFs declared a willingness to operate community projects in association with other PGFs, a much smaller number (19.05 %) would like to employ a development officer in association with other PGFs.

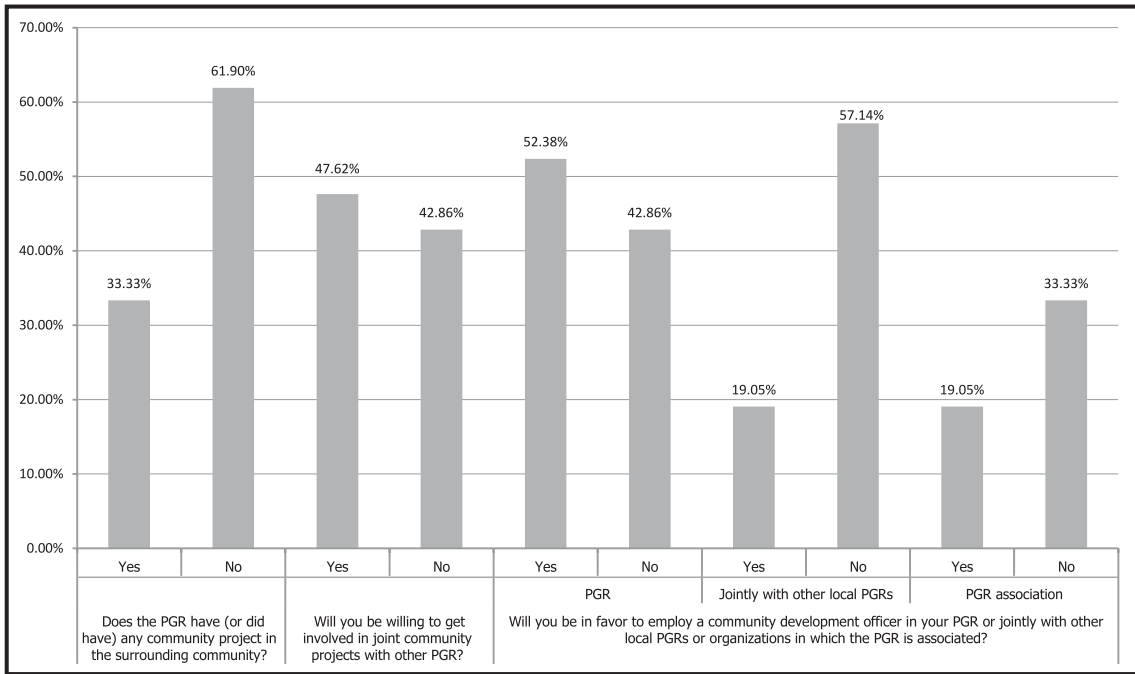


FIGURE 4: PGFSAND COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Figure 5 in particular illustrates the increase in the number of owners of PGFs from those who are already active in community development projects (7 PGFs), those who are in favour of employing a community development officer (11 PGFs), and those who would be willing to participate together with other PGFs (10 PGFs). Although still weak, this trend should be viewed positively in the long term as it reveals a declared interest (although it remains yet to be verified if the declaration will be translated practically on the ground) of PGFs to be involved in local community development and, possibly, to formalise such involvement by employing a development officer.

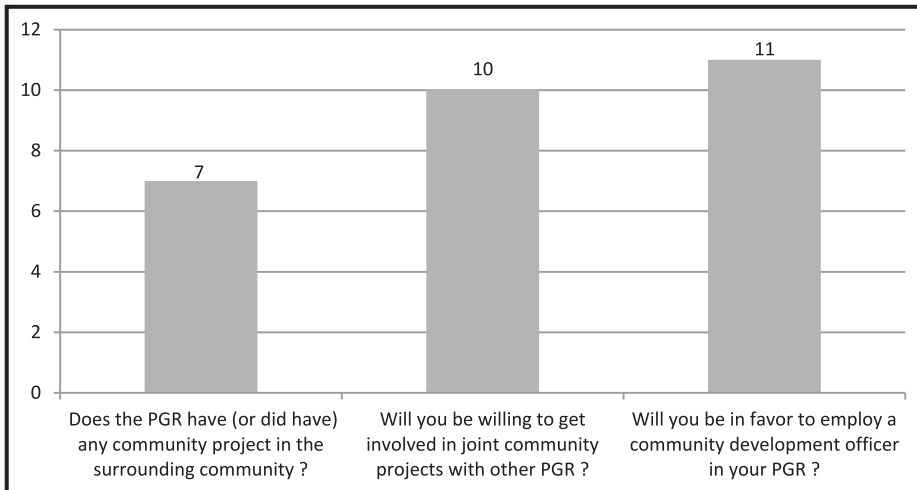


FIGURE 5: TREND OF ON THE RELATION OF INVOLVEMENT OF PGFS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted, “there is a real need for all game ranchers and managers to foster a new social consciousness regarding the life prospects of all the rural communities in their vicinity whose survival potential directly influences the livelihood and environmental sustainability of the game

ranches” (Els, 2002c: 676). In addition, and perhaps because of the very difficult conditions in which rural communities exist, the issue “is no longer whether game ranch owners or managers should become involved in the development of their rural communal neighbours. Rather, it is more a question of where and how quickly and effectively they can become involved” (Els, 2002c: 679). In this context, a series of strategies that take into consideration both traditional and new ways for PGFs to foster community development should be initiated and developed. Implementing new strategies, in parallel with the reinvigoration of old ones, is paramount, because “(a)s the situation in each rural community and game ranch is different, the development and implementation of effective strategies require innovative ideas” (Els, 2002c: 680). In the final outcome, community development, although it requires considerable effort and beneficence on both sides, offers many advantages to the PGFs (Els, 2002c: 680).

Firstly, it is important to understand the type of ‘working strategies’ that PGFs could adopt in community development. Various issues are relevant here: facilitation versus participation; fostering joint local knowledge of the PGFs and community knowledge; honouring local knowledge of community needs; improving game rancher skills and knowledge; and developing communication and trust.

It is recognised that community development should remain the responsibility of the community itself once proper facilitative support has been given; however, game ranchers should facilitate rather than directly implement projects so that a possible failed project “will not reflect poorly on them” (Els, 2002c: 684). Ultimately, while much facilitation could (and should) occur, “people cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves” (Nyerere cited in Graham, 1976: 70).

A second issue is to decide what appropriate knowledge should be used for both conservation and community development. In both these matters, the knowledge held by the local community and the game farmers should be taken into consideration equally. The IUCN World parks Congress has consistently proposed that local knowledge should be appreciated and considered valuable (Figgis, Humann, & Looker, 2005: 20). With respect to community development, it seems redundant to state that it is the community that best knows its specific needs and often game farmers are unaware of the specific needs of each community. Existing community development committees (often communities have some form of committee in charge of the broad development issues) could be approached in this regard. The help “should be based on the needs of the community”; not imposed from outside the community (Els, 2002c: 681). For instance, projects should fall in line with needs that are recognised by the community in order to achieve good results; thus “programs that have responded to people's felt needs, that have brought out people's initiative, and that have been genuinely participatory, have been successful” (Bhattacharyya, 1995: 64). At the same time, the PGF owners, as most of the staff in conservation entities are usually and understandably not expert in community capacity-building and development approaches. Nonetheless, “this deficiency must be addressed” (Els, 2002c: 677) at least in part in order to ameliorate the relationship between PGFs and their neighbouring communities for their mutual benefit. In this case, the employment of specifically-qualified development officer could assist. Finally, to be able to facilitate proper community development projects to foster mutual benefits, there is the need for proper, accurate and fluent communication amongst the actors involved, thus leading to an acceptable level of trust. Problems in the PGFs cannot be resolved without proper communication with the neighbouring community. At the same time, a community needs to be able to contact the PGF owners in case of needs. In other words “effective two-way communication is a key to success” (Els, 2002c: 680). Besides effective communication, trust amongst the parties is fundamental. It is necessary to recognise that to build mutual trust is a long and difficult process and is fundamental to promote good relationships, especially in view of the recent history of South Africa where “many groups of people formed negative perceptions of one another” (Els, 2002c: 681). Establishing regular meetings between the PGF management and the community committee should be viewed as a priority.

Help and support should not be denied to anyone in society if the person is honestly in need. However, in specific circumstances, such as a crime-ridden social context, help and support can be difficult and specific skills and resources may be required to improve the situation. In such cases where criminality could hamper community development, PGF farmers, even if genuine, could face difficulties and obstacles beyond their control in promoting community development. In these specific cases, it is of fundamental importance that PGF farmers are not left alone in their efforts. The state institutions should (must) step in and become involved (more so than in other less difficult communities) with the farmers in the process of community development. Farmers and state institutions should both be involved, each in proportion to their capacities and resources. This is especially true in crime-ridden communities where PGF farmers cannot engage in community development alone. PGF farmers can play a coadjutant role of state institutions in these plans. The need is to understand the cause of the criminal activities and, thereafter, promote collaboration between PGF farmers and state institutions with regards to plans in order to eliminate the causes of the problem. For example, when social conditions of poverty constitute the initiator of specific forms of crime such as livestock theft or poaching for meat, the need is to work towards the eradication of poverty to eliminate the possible consequential fraudulent acts. In this study, the unwillingness to be involved in community projects by two PGFs appears to stem from the fact that in one case, the community members 'steal sheep', and in the other case, the community members 'poach animals' (probably rhino, as the same PGF is a member of the South African Rhino Association). The two examples indicate that antagonism will not lead to anyone's long-term success, whereas to start a process (although it can be slow and difficult) to rebuild trust, respect and understanding of one another's circumstances could lead to an improvement of the conditions of both parties. In addition, the specific case of poaching (assumably rhino poaching) should not be necessarily directly associated with the local community as the problem is internationally related and much more complex in nature (however, this does not justify their actions). Experience in matters of stealing and poaching shows that good relationships between the parties involved lead to fewer poaching activities and a decrease in the number of cattle straying into protected areas (Els, 2002c: 680). Examples of how greater local community engagement could serve to decrease poverty and promote conservation exist (see Timmer & Juma, 2005: 30; Thomas & Brooks, 2003: 10).

Importantly, as much as the game farmers should strive to be involved in community development projects, the community should not play a passive role. To work properly in the mutual benefits process, both players (game ranchers and communities) need to be involved; for as much as the PGF owners should facilitate the development of poor neighbouring communities, the communities should be also active, dedicated and honest in the process. The process of mutual benefit requires the contribution of both sides (PGFs and communities), each party with own resources, capabilities, limits and responsibilities. Communities should not take the assistance of the PGFs for granted, but should rather view it as a game rancher's voluntary contribution towards better relations and community improvement. Communities should not be merely passive receivers that maintain a dependent mentality. As noted previously, farmers and state institutions should be collaborative (especially in more difficult social contexts) in order to facilitate the desired community development. For example, farmers should be able to apply for funding from government agencies to use in community development projects.

Based on these premises and on the fact that the contributions of PGFs will depend on each PGF's specific circumstances and capabilities (such as level of availability of financial resources), various possible 'practical projects' on how PGFs could contribute to community development are illustrated below (also from van der Merwe & Saayman, 2005; Els, 2002c).

Creating employment and development of local expertise;

Facilitation of the acquisition of funding and procurement of possible needed expertise;
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Working closely with the local community to develop new products;

Developing partnerships and joint ventures in which the community has a significant stake;

Fostering the development of community-based tourism products by providing marketing and mentoring support;

Using local entrepreneurs in developing community initiatives;

Encouraging tour operators to be more innovative in their itineraries by, for example, including shebeens, local museums and arts and craft shops in their tour itineraries;

Identifying projects that can support entrepreneurial activities;

Specific environmental education;

Community project development that benefits the wider community (example, support a local school, drilling a borehole, and so on). Focus on education in schools should be seen as a long term beneficial strategy (if possible, sponsor higher education for children from the community);

Establish more linkages between PGFs and community – especially PGFs that are well established in tourism (for example, the supply of certain foods);

Reinforcement and enlargement of already established linkages such as community involvement in already existing tourism services such as music, dance and so on); and

Agreement of traditional use of the PGFs natural environment (for example, controlled use of traditional food and medicine or provision of a nursery).

A schematic representation of the correlation between PGF benefits, community development and nature conservation is proposed in Figure 6, beginning with improved mutual trust and communication. The 'working strategies' approaches (outlined above) could begin to build good relationships between the two parties (the PGF and the community). It is only when good relationships and mutual trust and understanding are achieved that practical matters and projects can be proposed, planned and executed. That is, the mutual respect and good working relationships will increase the chances of proceeding towards 'practical projects' facilitated by the PGFs in order to promote community development. The type and speed of the project will depend very much on community specific needs and the combined capacities of the farmers and communities and the resources for the project should be carried out collaboratively. The above list of possible projects is therefore merely indicative, as specific circumstances could promote alternative solutions or restrain the current proposed ones. As much as the process can be slow, once good collaborative projects are started and are properly and honestly managed, positive results will begin to occur with regard to both parties. As a 'spin-off', the mutual benefits of the good relationship will, in turn, improve nature conservation, especially if the farmer and the local community have agreed on its use and management. Since nature conservation, as a fundamental concern of the PGF business itself, is a major goal of the PGF farmers, it is optimal for the farmers to involve the local community as much as possible in nature conservation management and specifically, for the PGF to reach agreement with the local community on matters related to the traditional use of natural resources. This collaboration regarding natural resources, together, with other possible projects, will contribute to and further strengthen the mutual trust ('working strategies') between the two parties, consequently allowing still further progress in collaboration, community development projects and nature conservation.

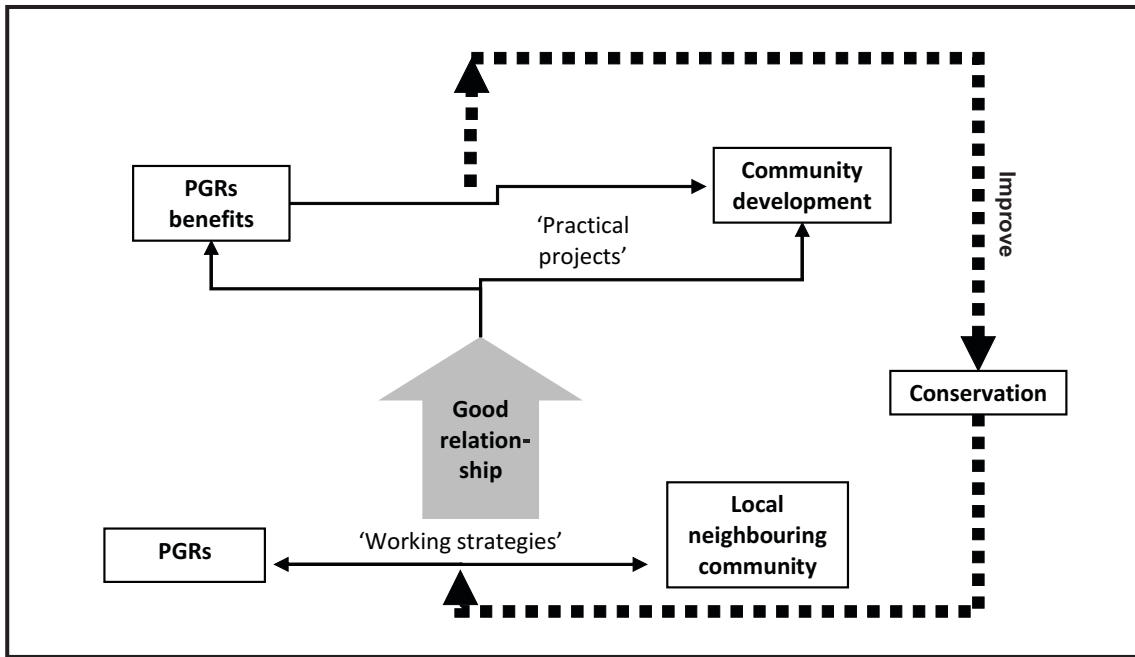


FIGURE 6: CORRELATION BETWEEN PGFS BENEFITS, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND NATURE CONSERVATION.

CONCLUSION

Relationships between PGFs and their surrounding local communities have been historically difficult and contradictory, if not antagonistic. However, in order to foster mutual benefits, good relationships, mutual trust, and understanding need to be built even though this may take time and the process might be difficult. PGFs can benefit greatly by maintaining good relations with their neighbouring communities. Different processes and strategies need to be implemented within the specific context of each PGF and community. This study, although limited in its scope, indicates that the situation is varied and, arguably, has moved some way along a positive, although slow, course. While some PGFs are already involved in community development, others are not yet involved but are willing to commit to this even though, unfortunately, there still remains a group opposed to this task.

The paper is limited in its scope. Its aim is to begin to disclose a topic which is to date has mostly not been-researched. Therefore, the results of this study, while they should not allow for any generalisation, they should be used as a starting point or baseline data to conduct further research. Amplification of the sample size and an increase in the variety of questions should be performed in order to advance more conclusive generalisation on similar issues and to facilitate better understandings of the matter investigated.



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