RURAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM-BASED DEVELOPMENTS: THE CASE OF THE MBILA COMMUNITY IN MAPUTALAND, KWAZULU-NATAL

By:

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Rural community participation in tourism-based developments: The case of the Mbila community in Maputaland, KwaZulu-Natal

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ABSTRACT

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: Rural Community Participation in Tourism-Based Developments: The Case of the Mbila Community: Sodwana Bay National Park, KwaZulu-Natal

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Rural community participation in tourism-based developments in and around protected areas has emerged as a major trend in the Developing world during the last three decades. The basic design of rural community participation in tourism-based developments involves the empowerment of rural communities to participate in such a way in the planning and management of these developments that they have a greater level of control on the effects that these developments have on them and on their environment. The motivation behind the popularity of the approach towards participatory development stems from the dissatisfaction with the centrally driven, top-down type of development that originated during the previous century and out of a desire to purposefully involve rural communities to the extent where they can effectively and sustainably develop and manage their resources.

The research of this study presents an analysis of the participation of the Mbila community of the Sodwana Bay National Park in the tourism-based developments of the region. The literature in the study revealed that the principal fundamentals of rural community participation in tourism-based developments reside in the empowerment of the community to be able to involve themselves sufficiently in the tourism-based developments of their region. The focus of the research was therefore on determining the quality of the empowerment that the Mbila community enjoy and on the subsequent levels of control that this empowerment provides them with. The research results

revealed however, that although the community seems to be sufficiently empowered to legally participate in the tourism-based developments of their area, they are still not involved to the degree that this participation generates meaningful changes to their overall livelihood.

The reasons for these low levels of participation include aspects such as the harshness of the physical environment and the subsequent limited development opportunities in the area; the prevalence of insufficient levels of education and training; difficulties experienced in the communication between some of the institutions and the presence of certain forms of restrictive legislation. The study argues that satisfactory levels of participation can only be achieved if these difficulties are overcome to the extent where they permit community participation that achieves the enhancement of the quality of life for the Mbila community.

SAMEVATTING

TITEL VAN VERHANDELING: Deelname van Landelike Gemeenskappe aan Toerisme-gebaseerde Ontwikkelings: 'n Gevallestudie van die Mbila-gemeenskap, Sodwanabaai Nasionale Park, KwaZulu-Natal

Die deelname van landelike gemeenskappe aan toerisme gebaseerde ontwikkelings in en om bewaringsareas, het oor die afgelope drie dekades as 'n belangrike tendens in die Ontwikkelende wêreld ontluik. Die basiese beginsel waarop sodanige deelname van landelike gemeenskappe berus, is die bemagtiging van landelike gemeenskappe om aan die beplanning en bestuur van toerisme gebaseerde ontwikkelings deel te neem en sodoende meer beheer uit te oefen oor die uitwerking van sodanige ontwikkelings op die gemeenskap en sy omgewing. Die gewildheid van hierdie benadering tot deelnemende ontwikkeling spruit uit grootskaalse ontevredenheid met die sentraal beheerde ontwikkeling wat van regeringsvlak af afgedwing word, en uit die behoefte om landelike gemeenskappe doelgerig by die ontwikkeling te betrek, tot op die punt waar die gemeenskappe self hul hulpbronne op 'n effektiewe en volhoubare wyse kan ontgin en bestuur.

Hierdie studie bied 'n analise van die Mbila-gemeenskap van Sodwanabaai Nasionale Park se betrokkenheid by toerisme gebaseerde ontwikkelings in die omgewing. Die literatuurstudie het daarop gedui dat die grondslag van ware gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid lê in die bemagtiging van 'n Gemeenskap om voldoende betrokke te raak by toerisme gebaseerde ontwikkelings in hulle omgewing. Gevolglik was die navorsing daarop gerig om die omvang van bemagtiging van die Mbila-gemeenskap vas te stel en die mate van beheer wat hulle kan uitoefen, te bepaal. Uit die navorsingsresultate het dit egter geblyk dat, alhoewel die gemeenskap voldoende bemagtig is om aan toerisme gebaseerde ontwikkelings deel te neem, hulle steeds nie betrek word tot die vlak waar hulle betrokkenheid tot betekenisvolle veranderings aan hulle lewensomstandighede kan lei nie.

Die oorsake van die lae betrokkenheidsvlakke kan onder meer gevind word in die ongenaakbare fisiese omgewing en gepaardgaande beperkte ontwikkelings moontlikhede, die ontoereikende onderrig en opleiding wat die omgewing die gemeenskap bied, onvoldoende kommunikasie tussen sommige van die instansies en die aanwesigheid van beperkende wetgewing. Die studie voer aan dat bevredigende vlakke van gemeenskapsdeelname slegs bereik kan word indien hierdie struikelblokke in so 'n mate oorwin kan word dat gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid moontlik is wat die lewenskwaliteit van die mense van die Mbila gemeenskap sal verhoog.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

1.1 MOTIVATION

Examples of rural community participation in tourism-based developments such as that of the Mbila Community in the Sodwana Bay area, have emerged as a major trend in the Developing world during the last three decades (Boo, 1993; Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1993; Ashley and Jones, 1999). There are many reasons for this, the most accepted of which probably stemming from the persistent influences of the environmentalist movement and the strong community participation convictions of the modern day sustainable development Imperative (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Ghai, 1994; Little, 1996). Additional aspects which contribute almost naturally towards this trend include the substantial comparative advantage of the Less Developed Countries in terms of the variety and extent of their unspoiled natural environments as well as a huge increase in the interest of tourism to these areas (Cater, 1994; Ashley and Jones, 1999).

The idea of rural community participation in tourism-based developments basically entails the empowerment of rural communities to be sufficiently involved in the planning and implementation of developments that have an influence on them and the area they live in (IIED, 1994a; Little, 1996; IUCN, 1997a). The involvement of rural communities does not only aim to resolve the possible negative impacts which the developments may have on these communities and to increase the extent of the benefits accruing from the venture, but also concentrates on maximizing the level of control which communities have in the planning and management of current and future tourism developments in their area (Hall and Lew, 1998; Inskeep, 1998; Goodwin and Roe, 1999).

Today it is an often-cited fact that tourism is the world's largest and fastest growing industry (Lindberg and Hawkins, 1993; Inskeep, 1998; Muller, 2000; Hall, 2000). Consequently, many governments and development consultants have regarded tourism as the answer to the majority of the development needs within rural areas (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Little, 1996; Inskeep, 1998). History has shown however, that although tourism can indeed function as a powerful rural development tool, it is significant not only because of the number of tourists and money it brings to a destination and how many people it employs, but also because of the immense impact it has on people's lives and on the places where they live (Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994; Hall, 2000).

Cases where the tourism market entered sensitive areas and caused considerable long-term damage in their social, economic and ecological sectors are well documented (Inskeep and Kallenberger, 1992; Turner and Ash in Prosser, 1994; Hunter and Green, 1995; Kandelaars, 1997; Hall, 2000). Classic examples are those of the large-scale luxury hotel developments of the mass tourism era. In the case of the Maldivian and Mauritian islands of the Indian Ocean, for instance, hotel developments caused environmental degradation such as pollution in the areas around the developments and in the ocean, which in turn led to a decline in tourism and a subsequent decline in tourism income for the local rural communities (Ramsamy, 1994; Brown et al., 1995).

In the African context, the repeated removal of rural communities form their traditional territories for the sake of conservation and tourism developments constitutes some of the harshest influences inflicted upon rural communities. Initially motives for the proclamation of many of the protected areas may have seemed to focus on the conservation of natural heritage only, but signs that noticeably tie these areas with early tourist experience are clearly visible (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Fuggle and Rabie, 1992). The writings of Earnest Hemingway (1936), Karen Blixen (1937), and Elspeth Huxley (1959; 1962), for instance, 'bear eloquent witness to the function of Africa as a wilderness in which European man sought to rediscover a lost harmony with nature and the natural environment' (Marx, 1964; Olwig and Olwig, 1980 in Anderson and Grove 1987).

Since these early times rural communities have had to share their resources with conservationists and developers to an increasing extent. The Makuleke community of the Kruger National Park, South Africa, for example, was forcefully removed from their ancestral land so that the park could be enlarged (Harries, 1984; Carruthers, 1995; Gilfillan, 1997 in Tapela, 2001). Other communities such as the Kakumbi and Nsefu communities of South Luangwa National Park, Zambia (Butler, 1999), and the Richtersveld community of the Richtersveld National Park, South Africa (Meintjies, 1989; Boonzaier, 1991; Deacon, 1993 in Mosidi 1996), were removed from their land with the promise of adequate compensation in return for the land and resources, which they would lose.

In most of these instances, however, rural communities found themselves in situations where they were cut off from significant tracts of their natural resource base whilst the benefits which they were promised in return, did not yield sufficiently to provide for their needs. Development and conservation, which were supposed to be representative of

prosperity and a better future according to conservationist views (Bell, 1987; Fuggle and Rabie, 1992; Tillman Lyle, 1993), therefore became ideas which the rural communities in Africa associated with inequitable benefits destined only for the limited group of wealthy Europeans who owned and visited these reserves (Els, 1995; Vivian, 1995; Little, 1996).

Tourism-based community development emerged as part of a new form of tourism development that materialized in accordance with the emergence of the sustainable development paradigm (Lindberg and Hawkins, 1992; Inskeep, 1998; Zeppel in Hall and Lew, 1998; Hall, 2000). Policy changes such as those initiated at the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environments began shifting towards integrated development and resource management strategies which canvassed for greater levels of participation of rural communities in rural development projects, and therefore also greater levels of control over decision-making and over the benefits that would flow to the rural communities (Hall and Lew, 1998).

Rural community participation gained further momentum when, in 1987 the concept and practice of sustainability and sustainable development came into public acceptance use with the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development – Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report. Five basic principles of sustainability were identified in this report, two of which addressed the issues of human diversity conservation and a better balance of fairness and opportunity among nations (World Commission On Environment And Development in Hall, 2000).

At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), popularly known as the Rio Summit, the sustainable development approach was further elaborated and expressed in Agenda 21 (Yeld, 1991; Inskeep, 1998). Agenda 21 represents a blue print for action and carries a strong moral obligation to ensure the full implementation of the sustainable development strategies adopted by the 178 countries at the summit (South Africa, 1998a). Chapter 26 of the document specifically recognizes the value of the traditional knowledge and resource management skills of the rural communities and their role in sustainable rural development practices (South Africa, 1998a). Furthermore, the document also describes the importance of promoting rural community participation in order to maximize the rural community's ability to own and to manage their environments (South Africa, 1998a). The conference subsequently adopted Agenda 21, which was followed by Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry, issued by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 1995 (Inskeep, 1998).

As a result, the international surge towards sustainable development as well as the contributions of international and national tourism authorities in conjunction with the rural communities of the world have managed to create a framework aimed at enabling sustainable tourism developments. These developments would ultimately make it possible for the tourist, the tourism developer and the rural community to benefit. This new form of sustainable tourism, which has also been described as 'new tourism' (Poon, 1994) or 'alternative tourism' (Prosser, 1994) prescribes a form of tourism and tourism development, that is progressively more aware of and sensitive to the natural and cultural environments in which it develops (Bosselman, et al., 1999). It also advocates 'small-scale developments with local ownership and control, and tourists who are well versed in the ethics of sustainable travel' (Wheeler, 1993 in Queiros, 2000).

In Southern Africa, as in many other international destinations, sustainable tourism developments emerged in the form of joint ventures between rural communities and tourism developers in and around protected areas (Butler, 1999; Goodwin and Roe, 1999; White, 1999). Ashley and Jones (1999) describe the emergence of contractual partnerships between rural communities and private investors to establish and operate tourism ventures in which both the developers and the rural community have the right to benefit from and the responsibility to contribute to the enterprise.

The South African scenario does, however present its own set of unique challenges to the idea of rural community participation in tourism-based developments and this is largely due to its unique environments and the multitude of external influences (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Poulthey and Ngubane, 1990; Els, 1994). Colonialism and Western development initiatives have for instance caused some of the major challenges in Africa and Southern Africa's past and present development history. Aspects such as land tenure, ownership of wildlife resources, the chasm in perception between scientists, developers and donor agencies of what real sustainable development in the rural context is, as well as what the needs and aspirations of rural communities are, sensitive to the rural community's traditional background but within the context of modern day development, present some of the principle of these challenges (Bell, 1987; Els, 1995; Goodwin and Roe, 1999).

In the case of Maputaland and the Mbila community of the area around to the Sodwana Bay National Park, it is evident that this region and its indigenous rural communities have also suffered the consequences of foreign settlement, alien conservation policies and its associated environmental problems. In addition to being relocated several times, the Mbila community have also had to contend with a harsh environment that holds very

limited development prospects. These factors have contributed significantly towards the extreme levels of poverty and other social deficiencies such as the inappropriate levels of skills and training in the area.

What is equally true however is that some examples do exist of developments where the essential ingredients, which are necessary to make sustainable rural developments happen, are present and where these developments are successful. Various examples exist, of instances where different governmental departments, conservation agencies as well as developers and rural communities have come together and demonstrated the will to aid each other in the process of developing sustainable rural developments (Pinnock, 1996; Robinson, 1996; SANP, 1998; Wilderness Safaris, 1998a; Wilderness Safaris, 1998b).

The author therefore perceives the challenge to be that of introducing sustainable tourism development into this culturally diverse and naturally sensitive environment as a form of environmentally sensitive development. The aims of these developments would be to provide a unique experience for the tourist, equitable socio-economic involvement and benefits for the rural communities as well as worthwhile monetary returns for the developers. This study will now endeavour to examine the question of the present state of rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of the Sodwana Bay area.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Mbila community of the Sodwana Bay area is a typical example of a rural community that inhabits a rural area that is failing to provide sufficiently for the needs of the people. The difficulties faced by the community are of a very complex nature and arise predominantly from the relationships between the community and their social and natural environments. A simple illustration of one of these relationships is that of the limited range and depth of participatory opportunities available in the local tourism industry at present, set against the reality of the constant rise of the community's population.

The unemployment rates are also soaring thus leaving the majority of the community in a state of moderate to extreme poverty. These difficulties are exacerbated by other factors such as limited rights to the use of the land and its available natural resources, insufficient access to funding for development programmes as well as a low level of applicable training. From a different viewpoint, there is also a perceived lack of scientific knowledge regarding the potential of tourism-based activities to effect viable socio-

economic development in the area in addition to a lack of understanding on how to effect economic upliftment whilst protecting the natural environment and the cultural identity of the community. The research emphasis will therefore be on answering the following questions:

1.2.1 The Issue of Control

- What level of control do the Mbila community possess with regard to the resources in their area and how does this influence the community in relation to their participation in tourism-related developments?

1.2.2 The Issue of Opportunity

- Do the current tourism opportunities in the Sodwana Bay region possess the specific requirements that will allow long-term active community participation?
- How can present and future tourism opportunities in the region be enhanced to increase equitable community involvement, thereby improving the region's levels of socio-economic and ecological sustainability?

1.2.3 The Issue of Responsibility

- What are the responsibilities of the government, the local tourism industry and the Mbila community in terms of enabling maximum rural community participation in the Tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay?
- What are the changes that need to be made to allow for better integration of all the relevant stakeholders into the tourism developments in the region?

1.3 STUDY AREA

The study area is situated in Maputaland, in the northeastern part of the KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa (see Fig. 1.1). Geographically, the Mbila tribal area and the Sodwana Bay National Park are located in the region between Lake Sibayi and the northern shores of Lake St. Lucia. Although the Mbila community effectively occupies the whole of this area, it was discovered that the bulk of the tourism-based activities and the involvement of the Mbila community therein, resides in and around the Sodwana Bay National Park itself. The study therefore focused on the areas where heightened tourism activity takes place and where the Mbila community interacts with this, although a few interviews were also conducted deeper within the Mbila community territory.

Figure 1.1: Map of the General Location of the Study Area

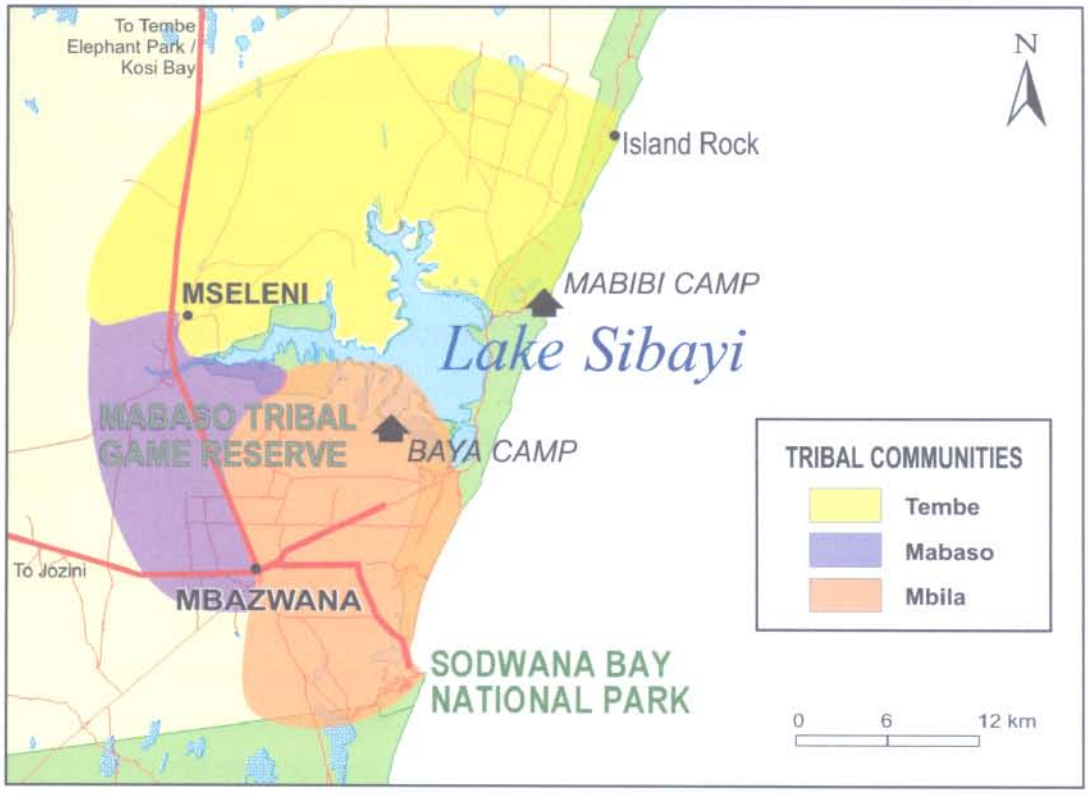
The remainder of the territory around the study area is occupied in the following manner; The Tembe community occupy on the northern shores of Lake Sibayi, up until the Mseleni Mission station and northwards from there; the Tembe's are neighboured by the Mabaso community, which occupy the region from the Mseleni Mission to about 5 Km around the western tip of the Lake; from there the Mbila community occupies the area stretching towards the Indian Ocean in the east and Sodwana Bay in the west. The Mbila community is therefore the most prominent of all the communities in the study area. (see Fig. 1.2).

1.3 AIMS

In the light of the past and present developments in the fields of rural community participation and tourism-based developments in and around protected areas, this study will aim at providing insights into a number of questions concerning the traditional

methods of conservation of natural resources and into the manner in which rural communities were involved in this regard. The study will also explore the current situation in terms of the level of rural community participation in the tourism-based developments at Sodwana Bay. Upon completion of the abovementioned tasks, the study will then aim to establish a framework on how the present levels of participation can be changed to permit a greater degree of rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay.

Figure 1.2: Distribution of Communities in the Study Area



1.5 OBJECTIVES

- To conduct a literature study on the subject of rural community participation in Tourism-based developments, in and around Protected areas: what it is, how it developed, and what its potential and pitfalls are (see Chapter 2)

- To use the literature study to develop a set of fundamental elements deemed to be critical to the success of rural community participation in tourism-based developments (see Chapter 2)

- To provide a short background to the Sodwana Bay area: its history, its natural and cultural resources, and the land tenure (see Chapter 3)

- To paint an objective picture of the resident tourism industry: the protected areas, the tourism activities and facilities, the current involvement of the community and the contributions of the private tourism developers and the government institutions (see Chapter 3)

- To determine the level of control that the Mbila community have over their resources, how this is influencing their participation in the tourism-based developments and to verify the benefits that accrue from this participation (see Chapter 3 and 4)

- Based on all of the above-mentioned information, to provide recommendations that could direct future tourism-based community participation at Sodwana Bay (see Chapter 5).

1.6 RESEARCH METHOD

1.6.1 Methods of Data Collection

The study made use of both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources included the following:

- **Workshops** – Workshops were held at the Universities of Pretoria and Zululand as well as at the Sodwana offices of the KwaZulu-Natal Conservation Services. The workshops were attended by academics, field researchers and environmental managers involved principally in the fields of conservation, tourism and rural development. The workshops were held during the initial stages of the research as well as later on during the study and aided the study essentially, by defining the real issues that needed to be studied.

- **Open-ended group interviews** – These interviews were conducted with any interested or affected party in the Sodwana Bay area, with the primary undertaking of getting to know the area from a local perspective.

- **Interviews** with the focus groups in the area (e.g. males, females, youth groups, carvers, weavers, literate and illiterate people, Mbila tribal leadership, KwaZulu-Natal Conservation Services staff, etc.) – Interviews with these groups were held with the aim of gaining information about their specific fashion of participation in the tourism-based developments of the area, in the past and at present, and how

this involvement has influenced their livelihoods in Sodwana Bay. The interviews were conducted in groups in order to assess the outcomes of the interviews within the position of the group dynamic and to verify these outcomes in terms of the individual and other interviews.

- **Individual interviews** – These interviews were also conducted with specifically chosen members of the Mbila community, the local tourism industry and the KwaZulu-Natal Conservation Services, and so, to gain information from their specific vantage points.

- **Participant observations** – This form of interview was held with all the abovementioned groups but in a way that gave the participant the freedom to discuss whatever he/she/they wanted to, within the general confines of the research question, but without the interview being led by the researchers questions. This method was preformed to allow issues to be raised from the local viewpoint and not only those anticipated by the research.

Qualitative research methods were favoured over quantitative research methods mainly because of the high level of illiteracy in the area, and because of the anticipated limitations of quantitative methods in capturing the grass root socio-economic issues of the region. Secondary data sources consisted of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) based maps and other maps, published and unpublished texts by governmental and nongovernmental institutions, academics and other researchers. Data collected in this fashion is presented in diagrams, tables, maps and textboxes.

1.6.2 Methods of Data Analysis

Chapter 2 of the study introduces the reader to the relevant literature concerning rural community participation in tourism-based sustainable development. The information contained in the literature is portrayed in a manner, which aims to highlight the failures and victories of sustainable development, sustainable tourism-based development and rural community participation initiatives, during the history of these initiatives. The current situation of the Sodwana Bay tourism industry (described in Chapter 3) is then tested against a defined set of fundamental elements (developed in Chapter 2) derived from the literature on these initiatives.

1.7. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the relevant aspects of rural community participation in Tourism-based developments similar to that of Sodwana Bay. It also states the research problem, the location of the study area the study's aims and objectives as well as the research procedures used. Lastly, it describes the structure of the study.

Chapter 2 contains the literature study and discusses the central issues regarding rural community participation in Tourism-based developments within and around protected areas. This chapter will aim to define a fundamental set of elements against which the present rural community participation situation in Sodwana Bay will be tested.

Chapter 3 provides a background to the Sodwana Bay area: the history of its tourism industry and the involvement of the Mbila community in that industry, its natural and cultural resources and land tenure. This chapter will also shed light on current tourism activities and facilities in the area as well as the existing local community-based tourism involvement and how the communities are benefiting from these activities.

Chapter 4 of the study contains the analysis of the findings. The analysis relies on the fundamental set of elements (which are described in Chapter 2), measured against the present state of affairs in Sodwana Bay (described in Chapter 3). The main themes of the analysis are presented under the principal headings **Empowerment** and **Involvement**, i.e. the appropriate levels of Empowerment, which are needed to enable rural community participation in tourism-based developments and the relevant levels of **Involvement** necessary to allow rural communities to participate to their full potential in the tourism-based developments of their area. A summary of these themes is shown in Fig. 4.1.

Chapter 5 concludes the study and presents a discussion of the findings of the research. Recommendations are made on how the present debilitating aspects of the rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay can be changed or enhanced to permit greater levels of involvement, which would then hopefully lead to a better quality of life for the members of the Mbila community as well as sustainable forms of tourism development in a healthy environment.

Chapter 2: Rural community participation in Sustainable Tourism-based developments: Theoretical Overview

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Rural community participation in tourism-based developments is one of a whole range of concepts that form part of the complex framework of the sustainability paradigm. Aspects such as sustainable design, sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods predominated the focus of many of the books, articles and other publications in the social, economic and environmental fields and as a result gave rise to a vast amount of related literature over the last two to three decades.

Apart from the importance to the rest of the scientific societies of the world, the specific importance of the literature to this study will be to enable the author to extract a set of fundamental elements which are essential in the measurement of acceptable levels of participation that a rural community should have in the tourism industry of their area and the type of benefits that they should enjoy from this involvement. This set of fundamental elements can then be used as a guideline to measure the current state of involvement of the Mbila community in the tourism industry at Sodwana Bay. It can also be applied as a framework to instruct the future participation ofrural communities in the tourism-based developments at Sodwana Bay as well as in similar locations elsewhere.

The following section of this chapter will now proceed in discussing a few of the key concepts that forms part of the foundation of rural community participation in tourism-based developments.

2.2. KEY CONCEPTS WITHIN RURAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM-BASED DEVELOPMENTS

2.2.1 Sustainability and Sustainable Development

The sustainable development movement has received worldwide prominence and acceptance since the 1980s (Tillman Lyle, 1994; McIntosh, *et al.*, 1995). In essence it has become popular because it is an approach that offers the promise of maintaining a standard of living somewhat similar to that which we possess today, whilst recognizing that we cannot continue to exploit the global natural environment as we have in the past

(Fuggle and Rabie, 1992; Tillman Lyle, 1994; McIntosh, *et al.*, 1995; Van Der Ryn and Cowan, 1995). The term sustainable development has had its fare share of criticism though, chiefly because of the conflicting ideas within the term itself as well as the variation in meaning it has, for those who deal with it on a day-to-day basis (Van Der Ryn and Cowan, 1995; IUCN, 1997; Hall and Lew, 1998).

The environmental educator David W. Orr, for instance, describes two kinds of approaches towards sustainability. Firstly, technological sustainability that centres around:' . . . expert interventions in which the planet's medical symptoms are carefully stabilized through high-profile international agreements and sophisticated management techniques'; and secondly, ecological sustainability, where, in contrast to technological sustainability, the task involves a practical ecological re-design of our current forms of agriculture, shelter, energy use, urban designing, transportation, economics, community patterns, resource use, forestry, our protected areas, and our central values (Orr, 1995). Similarly Van Der Ryn and Cowan (1995:5) state that: 'On the one hand, sustainability is the province of global policy-makers and environmental experts flying at thirty-five thousand feet from conference to conference, but on the other hand, sustainability is also the domain of grassroots, indigenous peoples who have been devoted in changing their own communities and in so doing lived sustainably within their traditional practices for centuries'.

The difference in emphasis of these approaches stems from the dissimilar backgrounds of the people involved. The most popular example of this kind of divergence in approach towards sustainability is probably that of the variation in approach between the industrialized North and the developing South. The quality of life considerations, which play such a large part in dictating the political priorities of the industrialized countries, surface distinctively because of the success of the industrialist capitalism in delivering the high standards of living for the majority of its population (Redclift, 1992). Although conflicts regarding the exploitation or conservation of the natural resources in the North can be highly charged, it is found that these debates more often than not involve aesthetic concerns and unease about the general state of the environment rather than the essential survival of the people (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Bell, 1987; Redclift, 1992).

In the developing South, rural communities form the majority of the populace (Kemf, 1993; IUCN, 1997) Here sustainable development translates into the most basic needs such as strategies for survival and the preservation of these people's cultural identity (Bell, 1987; Redclift, 1992; Vivian, 1995; IUCN, 1997). Where these rural community's

traditional livelihoods historically incorporated utilization measures, which conserved the natural resources in order to ensure their future use, the Northern view usually favoured the removal of these peoples from conservation areas (usually significant sections of their traditional resource areas) and the strict protection of these areas in reserves and other protected areas (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Bell, 1987).

These people were then usually compensated for the resources they had lost (frequently in ways that were foreign to their traditional backgrounds) and expected to adapt to lifestyles without the sufficient utilization of their natural resources (Gibson and Marks, 1995). Therefore, although sustainable development practices such as natural resource conservation and protected areas did not significantly threaten the livelihoods of the people in the Industrial societies of the North, rural communities in the Developing South suffered severely because of the consequences of these measures, and in a number of cases openly opposed the sustainable development initiatives in their area (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Els, 1995).

Fortunately, research into appropriate sustainable development procedures and initiatives for the developing countries continued, and over the years, revealed various significant measures on how rural community participation should be approached to produce viable development initiatives in these developing countries (Wells and Brandon, 1992; IUCN, 1997). These initiatives would then not only focus on the conservation and protection of the environment, but also on the well-being of the scores of rural communities that live in and around these areas (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf 1993). In this way, rural community participation in sustainable development grew as one of the chief prerequisites on how to approach development in developing countries and also started to give instruction as to what kind of development initiatives would be the most fitting for the conditions in these areas (Ghai, 1994; IIED, 1994a; IIED, 1994b; Hall and Lew, 1998; Goodwin and Roe, 1999).

Nature-based tourism emerged as one of the most prominent methods of promoting the above-mentioned sustainable development initiatives in the developing countries of the world (Inskeep, 1998; Goodwin and Roe, 1999; Hall, 2000). Some of the more probable reasons for this development can be attributed to the international rise in environmental concern as well as the undeniable comparative advantage of the less developed countries in terms of the variety and extent of their unspoiled natural environments and the desire (especially of the industrialized world) to experience the natural and the cultural treasures of these last true natural havens (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1993; Cater, 1994a; Augustyn, 1998).

Although some of the tourism initiatives in these environments proved to be quite unsustainable in terms of resource depletion and cultural insensitivities (Kandelaars, 1997; Zeppel, 1998; Hall, 2000), indication exist of other instances where tourism-based developments contributed significantly to the sustainability of the local natural and cultural systems in terms of the reduction of direct environmental stresses and the contribution to the social and economic circumstances of the local communities involved (Campbell, 1998; Inskeep, 1998, Zeppel, 1998; Ashley and Jones, 1999).

Tourism has therefore exhibited its potential to meet the requirements of sustainable development in the developing countries by providing the rural communities with alternative developmental measures whereby they can supplement their basic livelihood essentials within their cultural traditions and without destroying their natural environment (Western, 1993; Zeppel, 1998; Ashley and Jones, 1999).

2.2.2 Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism developed in direct response to the age of environmentalism (see sections 2.2.1 and 2.3.2.1) and the sustainable development paradigm. It advocates a form of tourism development that is increasingly aware of and sensitive towards the various environments of the globe (especially those in the developing world) and their indigenous inhabitants (Wheeler, 1993; Inskeep, 1998). Although the different varieties of sustainable tourism have been defined in a multitude of ways (ecotourism, nature tourism, green tourism, low-impact tourism, adventure tourism, alternative tourism, responsible tourism, soft tourism, appropriate tourism, quality tourism, and new tourism), the description that was found to be most fitting for this study was that of 'alternative tourism' and this primarily due to the reality that it describes an alternative type of tourism to that of the mass tourism phenomenon of the 1970s to 1980s (Prosser, 1994; McIntosh, *et al.*, 1995).

At the onset of the mass tourism boom, the tourism industry much resembled the all-consuming nature of the industrialist era. In the book '*The Golden Hordes*' by Turner and Ash (1975), the authors describe the mass tourist of that period as ' a plague of marauders spreading across the earth' (Turner and Ash in Prosser, 1994). Others described these tourists as 'landscape eaters' (Murphy and Urry in Prosser, 1994), which further illustrated the brand of tourist and tourism packages that were marketed at the time and the concern they raised. These types of mass tourism holidays were 'standardized, rigidly packaged and inflexible; produced through mass replication of

identical packages; mass marketed to an undifferentiated clientele; and consumed *en masse*, with no real consideration by the tourists for the local norms, the cultures, the people, or the environment of the tourist-receiving destinations' (Poon, 1994; in Queiros, 2000).

In contrast to these modes of consumption and the developments that spawned from them, the Brundtland Report of 1987 and Agenda 21 (the latter having emanated from the World Summit on Sustainable Development at Rio de Janeiro in 1992) are universally known as two of the most prominent documents that guided the initial processes of changing these kinds of consumerist life styles and unsustainable developments. In addition, Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry was drawn up in accordance with Agenda 21 of the Rio Summit. It was developed because of the realization by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) that tourism, as the world's largest and fastest growing economic sector as well as one of the principal consumers of the world's natural and cultural resources, has the considerable potential to be a significant contributor to either the further destruction of these resources or the sustainable development thereof (Campbell, 1998; Hall and Lew, 1998; Inskeep, 1998; Hall, 2000).

The WTO therefore describes Sustainable Tourism as: ' Tourism that meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions whilst protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to the management of all the resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled whilst maintaining the cultural integrity, the essential ecological processes, the biological diversity, and the necessary life support systems of the places where it occurs (Inskeep, 1998:5).

With regard to the type of tourism and tourism development that occurs in the Sodwana Bay region, it is important to highlight the main varieties of tourism that is currently being pursued there as well as the overlap that exists between these varieties. In Sodwana Bay, as in many other destinations worldwide, there seems to exist a level of confusion as to what form of tourism this specific area is offering. This confusion can be attributed to the fact that although many of the activities occur within the natural environment and therefore relate to nature-based tourism (as in the case of the Sodwana Bay area), most of them also fall within the adventure tourism category and can thus also be described in this manner.

In other cases, tourism ventures frequently involve purely ethnical, heritage, cultural or rural tourism activities, which fall under the cultural tourism category but again take place within a remote natural environment. Getz and Page (1997) link these cultural types of

tourism to adventure tourism, although this type of tourism can also be seen as ecotourism if it adheres to all the fundamentals of what true ecotourism involves (Queiros, 2000). Bearing in mind the fact that a great deal of overlap exists between all of these tourism niches, the author agrees with Queiros, who states that even extensive overlap does not mean that these terms are synonymous.

According to the most recent development proposals it becomes evident that the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Conservation authorities wish to market the Sodwana Bay area as an Ecotourism destination (Hicks, 1991; Heynes and Hornby, 1994). Ecotourism can be defined as: ' an enlightening, interactive, participatory travel experience to environments, both natural and cultural, that ensures the sustainable use at an appropriate level of environmental resources, while producing viable economic opportunities for the ecotourism industry and host/local communities, which make the sound environmental management of the resources beneficial to all tourism role players' (Hattingh, 1996).

Nature-based tourism on the other hand is, as the name implies, tourism based on nature (Queiros, 2000). Although the activities of a nature-based tourism operation may involve the rural communities in various aspects of the tourism-based developments of a protected area, these operations often neglect the deeper involvement of the rural communities with the tourists where the tourists are able to interact with the rural communities in ways that foster a two-way understanding between the tourists and these communities. Therefore, according to Queiros (2000), the distinction between nature-based tourism and ecotourism lies within the level of interaction between the tourists and the rural community. Ecotourism, if it is practiced in its true form, will leave the tourist with an enlightened knowledge of not only the natural aspects of the area which they have visited, but also of that of the cultural characteristics of the host community of this area.

Currently, the Sodwana Bay area produces mainly the nature-based and adventure type of tourism activities (see section 3.4). The author feels that although the KZN Nature Conservation authorities aim to market the area as an ecotourism destination, this is not yet the case at Sodwana Bay. Reasons for this assumption originate from aspects such as the limited range of tourism activities that the area currently provides, the immature state of the tourism development in the area as a whole, as well as the specific nature of these tourism activities, which do not, at present, encourage enlightening and interactive community participation.

Fortunately, what is also true of this area is that the chief tourism administrators as well as some of the other tourism stakeholders in the region recognized these limitations and initiated the processes that they deemed to be appropriate to inform them on how to accomplish the dual feats of sustainable development and sustainable tourism development of the Sodwana Bay area (Wilson, 1999; LSDI, 2001b; LSDI, 2001c). What remains now is the implementation of the recommended measures so that Sodwana Bay can be referred to as a working example of a destination with a variety of tourism activities that contribute to sustainable tourism development and ultimately the sustainable development of the region.

2.2.3 Community participation

Rural community participation in tourism-based developments has emerged as a major trend throughout the world, but especially in developing countries where it is often promoted in association with protected areas (Brandon, 1993; Zeppel, 1998; Ashley and Jones, 1999, Goodwin and Roe, 1999; Weaver in Black, *et al.*, 2001). This form of participation has emerged from a wide range of developmental and academic interest groups and has also been described within the context of these perspectives (Drake, 1991, Cater, 1994b). Rural community participation has therefore been defined as:

- giving people more opportunities to participate effectively in development activities. It means empowering people to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors rather than passive subjects, manage resources, make decisions, and control the activities that affect their lives (Cernea, 1985 in Brandon, 1993);

- an active process by which beneficiary or client groups influence the decision and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish (Paul, 1987; in Oakley, 1991 in Little, 1996);

- organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements . . . hitherto excluded from such control (Colchester, 1994).

For the purposes of this study rural community participation embodies a process for creating opportunities for rural communities to participate effectively in the tourism-based developments of their region. It means empowering these people to mobilize their own

capacities to be able to sustainably manage their environmental resources and to eventually play the leading role in the control of their own community-based tourism developments in association with the other stakeholders involved.

In addition to the various frames of reference from which rural community participation has been described, it has also been used for the motivation of an array of political, commercial and socio-economic aspects (Drake, 1991: Ashley and Jones, 1999; Goodwin and Roe, 1999). These aspects have often provided the grounds for many of the tourism-based developments that were developed with community resources, but have more often than not failed to equitably share the benefits that accrue from these developments (Redclift, in Cater, 1994b, Butler, 1999). A number of examples exist where the tourism developers in an area have negotiated a land lease agreement with a rural community and where this agreement described the future involvement of the rural community only in terms of, for instance, the employment and infrastructural benefits that the development would provide this community (Mosidi, 1996; Goodwin and Roe, 1999).

Although the author believes that some of the tourism developers entered into these agreements with definitive ulterior motives, there is also the realization that due to the specific background of some of these developers (specifically those in the fast lane developmental fields of the Industrialist world), the meaning of what true Rural community participation in tourism-based developments consists of, is either not known or well underdeveloped. Table 2.1 describes some of the attitudes towards rural community participation and also illustrates the prevalent depth of understanding of what it entails.

TABLE 2.1: A Typology of Participation

Typology	Components of Each Type
Passive Participation	People participate by being told what is going to happen or has happened. It is a unilateral announcement by an administration or project management without listening to the people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals
Participation in Information Giving	People participate by giving answers to questions posed by extractive researchers and project managers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings, as the findings of the research or project design are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.

TABLE 2.1: A Typology of Participation (Continued)

Typology	Components of Each Type
Participation by Consultation	People participate by being consulted, and external agents listen to their views. These external agents identify both problems and solutions, and may modify these in light of people's responses. Such a consultative process does not concede any share of decision-making and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
Participation for Material Incentives	People participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash, or other material incentives. Much *in situ* research falls within this category, as rural people provide the setting but are not involved in the experimentation or process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when these incentives end.
Functional Participation	People participate by forming groups to achieve pre-determined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of an externally initiated social organization. Such involvement does not tend to be at early stages of project cycles or planning, but rather after major decisions have been made. These institutions tend to be dependent on external structures but may become independent in time.
Interactive Participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local groups or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methods that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions, so that people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
Self-Mobilization/ Active Participation	People participate by taking initiatives (independent of external institutions) to change systems. Such self-initiated mobilization and collective action may or may not challenge existing distributions of power and wealth.
Source: Pimbert & Pretty 1994 cited in IIED, 1994:19	

For rural community participation to be truly effective in the control and management of the tourism-based activities and the conservation of the natural and cultural environments within and around protected areas it is necessary that the different stakeholders involved perform the same categorical changes that Orr describes in

Section 2.2.1. Table 2.2 illustrates that although some stakeholder groups foresee the process of rural community participation to be one that empowers a rural community (to the extent where the community can exert a significant degree of control over their resources and the development that occurs there), others still foster a view that places severe limitations on the level of rural community involvement, and therefore in the long term also decreases such a development's chances of being truly sustainable.

Together Johnson (1990), West and Brechin (1991 in Brandon, 1993) and Wells and Brandon (1992) described over fifty cases of tourism-based and other nature-based development projects that were initiated to tackle the dual objectives of protecting wild lands and creating positive economic and social benefits for the rural communities. From all of these initiatives the authors concluded that only a very small number actually achieved the dual objectives of rural community participation and environmental conservation and that insignificant community benefit flows accompanied the majority of these projects (Johnson, 1990; West and Brechin, 1991 in Brandon, 1993; Wells and Brandon, 1992). Furthermore, they established that the causes for these failures seemed to originate out of the fact that socially responsible and environmentally accountable tourism developments cannot be fostered without a dialogue being constructed and controlled along rural community needs and in rural community terms and that there are only certain conditions and planning actions that will allow for positive benefit flows to the rural community and a consequent rise in conservation priority with these rural communities.

These conditions and actions include aspects such as the fact that conservation bodies and developers need to consider the substantial costs that rural communities bordering these protected areas have already borne, and that if properly motivated, the rural communities will themselves protect the resources (and the tourists that visit them) that these conservation-based and tourism-based projects aim to protect (Kemf, 1993; Els, 1995; Timothy; 1999). In addition, the viewpoint of rural community participation being a beneficiary approach should be transformed so that it embodies empowerment which, in contrast to the beneficiary approach, represents characteristics such as the broadening of the rural community's opportunities in the sense of education and training and the building of their capacities in order for them to become increasingly secure in their own abilities to manage similar initiatives of their own (Redclift, 1992; Brandon, 1993).

In the same way that literature provides examples of where tourism-based and other developments failed to implement successful rural community participation measures, it also presents instances where the developers, the conservation authorities and the rural

communities did manage to bridge the most recurrent difficulties of these types of initiatives (Brandon, 1993; Ashley and Jones, 1999; Wilderness Safaris, 1999a). In these instances the products of these partnerships often included projects which generated a rise in the quality of life of the rural communities involved, as well as increased environmental health in the midst of tourism packages that offered sought-after experiences for the tourists.

The aim of the rest of this chapter is to look at the causes of failure of rural community participation in tourism-based developments (Section 2.3.1), the changes that occurred in the face of these failures (Section 2.3.2) and to discuss a set of fundamental elements which the author considers to be crucial for true rural community participation in tourism-based developments (Section 2.4).

2.3 THE ORIGIN AND RISE OF RURAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM-BASED DEVELOPMENTS

2.3.1 History of the Rise of Tourism to Protected Areas

2.3.1.1 The Rise of the Top-Down Protectionist Approaches and the Origins of Protected Areas

The rise of the top-down protectionist approaches in Sub-Saharan Africa and in many other parts of the world seem to have originated from the initial perceptions of the Industrialized world of the bounty of natural resources in the remote rural areas of the world, especially in the underdeveloped South, as well as the need to protect this bounty for the benefit of humanity (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Kiss, 1990; Fuggle and Rabie, 1992a). Studies indicate however that the benefits that arose from these protected areas have, since the early days, been destined for a decidedly select group of beneficiaries only (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Mackenzie, 1987; Lindsay, 1987; Tapela, 2001). Furthermore, although the beneficiaries themselves were mostly from foreign backgrounds with foreign outlooks, they were usually the ones that decided how these indigenous reserves should be planned and managed, as well as how the benefits that arose from its protection should be distributed.

Bruton (1980), Mackenzie (1987) and Ghimire (1994) describe the establishment of many game parks and reserves during the late 1800s and the early 1900s. The parks and reserves in southern and eastern Africa in particular, were established during the

height of the European colonial pursuits and also as a result of the considerable impacts that these pursuits had on the resources, that the region offered (Mackenzie, 1987). Mackenzie, for example, states the importance of the hunt as one of the major colonial exploits. He continues by identifying three principal phases of European hunting, specifically in the east African region. The first of these phases involved purely commercial hunting for ivory and skins. The second phase included hunting as a subsidy for the second level of European advance that was characterized as the period of acquisition, conquest and colonial settlement. The third phase was the transformation of hunting into 'The Hunt', in which it came to be associated with the collection of trophies and natural history specimens, the establishment of records and the pursuit of manliness and moral edification through 'sportsmanship' (Mackenzie, 1987).

Colonial hunters, traders and countless columns of colonial soldiers therefore hunted profusely to provide for the needs of their various exploits, thereby decimating the existing animal populations (Mackenzie, 1987). In addition, the rinderpest epidemic (which was also introduced through colonial contact) struck the continent early in 1896 (Mackenzie, 1987). The epidemic spread like wildfire and soon stretched over the upper parts of Zambia and Zimbabwe and had reached Cape Town by the end of 1896 already. (Baden-Powell, 1897 in Mackenzie). It ruined the cattle populations of the colonists and the locals and caused the complete destruction of many of the game populations (buffalo, kudu and eland in particular) that weren't immune to the disease (Baden-Powell, 1897 in Mackenzie).

The significant reductions in the quantity of game in southeast Africa eventually compelled the colonial authorities to introduce ways of protecting the resources that were once so bountiful, but which were now nearly depleted (Bruton, 1980; Mackenzie 1987; Anderson and Grove, 1987). The motives for this protection are, however believed, not to be entirely based on the protection of the wildlife for the sake of the future existence of the species, but rather out of the need to ensure the existence of a giant playground for the benefit of these colonial rulers (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Mackenzie 1987). Protected areas in the form of game reserves and wildlife parks were therefore proclaimed and patrolled and specific hunting seasons were declared with the clear understanding that these parks were now the domain of famous travellers, high-ranking officers, politicians, royalty and the occasional aristocrat (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Mackenzie, 1987).

Protectionist policies in these reserves were preservationist in nature and contained the non-utilitarian approach of preserving selected species and guarding them as well as

large sections of their habitats against what the colonial managers of these reserves saw as inappropriate local uses (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Mackenzie, 1987; Lindsay, 1987; Tapela, 2001). Due to this non-utilitarian approach, the managers of these reserves (which usually consisted of a centralized government body) were generally unsympathetic towards the needs of the rural communities neighbouring the newly proclaimed protected areas and habitually imposed whatever measures they deemed necessary for the apt protection of the land and the animals (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Mackenzie, 1987). One rare African text of the time, written by an employee of the Methodist Episcopal Press (Jason Machiwanyika) described some of the difficulties that the rural communities in and around these areas faced. He stated that: 'Europeans took all guns from Africans and refused to let them shoot game. But Europeans shoot game. Africans have to eat relish only with vegetables. If an African shoots game with a gun, the African is arrested and the gun is confiscated' (Jason Machiwanyika, uncatalogued in Mackenzie, 1987).

To add to the difficulties of these rural communities, it was universally understood that although some of the colonial reserve managers made extensive use of the vast environmental knowledge of the rural communities during their hunting expeditions, they made no attempt to involve these rural communities when it came to the development and the management of these reserves (Mackenzie, 1987; Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994). Although rural community participation gained significant momentum in the development and management of protected areas from the 1980s onwards, the protectionist policy of the late 1800s and the better part of the rest of the twentieth century before the 1980s, clearly stipulated who would manage these reserves as well as how they would be managed. The preservationist approach effectively ignored the wealth of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) which the rural communities had developed over the years they had lived and survived in these places (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993). Preservation in protected areas was therefore employed in typical top-down managerial fashion and consisted of measures and methods deemed appropriate primarily from the European perspective (Vivian, 1995; Kemf, 1993; Tapela, 2001; Mathenjwa, 2003).

The environmental protection policies that sprouted from the protectionist perceptions proved to be generally inappropriate wherever they were implemented, however, and although many of these did initially benefit the environment, they usually became defunct quite quickly (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Mackenzie, 1987; Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993). Environmental rehabilitation resulting from the preservationist approach usually consisted of the recuperation of the animal populations and the reclamation of

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the natural environment where human settlements used to exist (Bruton, 1980; Mackenzie, 1987). These preserves were, however, effectively disconnected from the natural areas neighbouring them and soon began to suffer the consequences thereof. The preservation of selected species of animals resulted in unbalanced population growths, which in turn led to ecological imbalances such as inbreeding and habitat deterioration (Mackenzie, 1987).

Scholars like Anderson and Grove, (1987), Kiss (1990), Kemf (1993) and Els, (1995) suggest that the failures of these preservationist measures were related to the European perception of the African reality. The authors continue by stating that the problem with these perceptions lie in the nature of the colonial relationship itself, which allowed Europeans to impose their image of Africa upon the reality of the African landscape. Within this image European involvement in Africa regularly manifested itself in a wish to 'protect the natural environments of the South as a special kind of "Eden" for the purposes of the European psyche rather than a complex and changing environment in which people had actually had to live' (Anderson and Grove, 1987).

Apart from the ecological disorders, the most significant difficulties that protected areas would suffer originated from their interaction with the neighbouring rural communities. The centralized top-down fashion of conservation meant that the rural communities of the regions where these protected areas were being proclaimed would now begin to face increasing levels of alienation from their traditional territories. Furthermore, these rural communities also faced the loss of their traditional methods of managing natural resources as well as the traditional ways in which they provided for their families. The very resources with which these rural communities lived in harmony for centuries were now being controlled by a foreign agent who claimed exclusive rights to its management and who also retained the right to distribute its benefits as they saw fit. The fact that the natural environment represented such an immense part of the traditional lives of these peoples implied that they had therefore lost a significant degree of control over their traditional existence in these areas as well as in the future development thereof.

2.3.1.2 The Origins of Travel and Tourism to Protected Areas

Tourism, as described by the WTO, comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (Inskeep, 1998). Although some of the travels of the early religious pilgrims, exploratory conquistadors and traders cannot entirely be

compared with this type of travel, tourism has been around for thousands of years (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1993; Bosselman *et al.*, 1999). Formal travel narratives are often said to have begun around 1900 B.C. with the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and Homer's majestic *Odyssey,* even though the travels narrated here are decreed by their gods and not wholly voluntary or pleasurable (Bosselman *et al.*, 1999). History does, however, attest to people travelling from the earliest of times and in some cases repeatedly visiting special places where enterprising locals have, at a price, provided their visitors with shelter and sustenance as well as transportation and guides (Bosselman *et al.*, 1999).

Naturalist travellers akin to the nature-based and ecotourism forms of tourism have also been around for quite some time. Over the past 200 years people such as Humboldt and Darwin as well as Bates and Wallace travelled to some of the most distant and remote places on our planet experiencing pristine natural environments and cultures that had never been in contact with the developed world of their times (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1993; Western, 1993; Bosselman *et al.*, 1999). Although not for entirely the same reasons, ecotourism, nature-based tourism and the other forms of sustainable tourism that we know today seem to have had their origins in the same interests. In these examples of travel and tourism, the people travelling developed a keen interest in the protected areas and the last of the remaining untouched environments of the planet and spared almost nothing in their quests to reach these places.

Fuggle and Rabie (1992) and Western (1993) depict the first authentic instances of travel to protected areas in their accounts of the flocks of tourists that visited the early American public reserves during the latter years of the nineteenth century. Places like the Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks were created essentially for the protection of 'special places' with natural uniqueness for the educational and recreational needs of the 'public' (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994). Similarly, Anderson and Grove (1987) and Mackenzie (1987) describe the royal treatment that the early European and American visitors enjoyed at the game reserves and hunting parks that were established during the high point of the European colonial reign in Africa and Asia. These parks were originally established to protect the larger animals such as elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, lion and tiger, which were valued by these wealthy travellers for their safari viewing and hunting appeal (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Western, 1993; Ghimire, 1994).

In Africa especially, the original motives for travelling during the mid to late 1800s appear to have spawned out of the dual interest of exploiting the continent's natural wealth in the

name of colonial empire building as well as visiting its exceptional aesthetic features (see Section 2.2.1.1). By the mid 1900s, however, photographic and game viewing journeys as well as biological expeditions to protected areas and other regions with pristine natural attractions were decidedly more popular than hunting (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Western, 1993). These varieties of travel and tourism were however still based on the larger animals, most probably because of the countless documentaries and publications on the romantic accounts of the adventures of the European hunters, filmmakers and writers in 'deepest, darkest Africa' (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Western, 1993).

The late 1960s to the early 1970s saw the onslaught of the mass tourism era (Western, 1993, Prosser, 1994; Bosselman *et al.*, 1999). Prosser calls this form of mass package tourism a travel 'phenomenon' and compares its insatiable energy with that of a tsunami that sweeps up everything in its path. According to writers like Bosselman *et al.*, (1999) and Inskeep (1998), the reasons for its explosive growth can be attributed primarily to late twentieth century occurrences. These include increasing wealth (especially the emergence of large middle classes); changed demographics (an increase in the number of retired persons with time to travel, especially in developed countries); greater mobility (increased personal transportation); global transportation improvements (especially the increased size and number of large airplanes and other tourism-oriented transportation methods combined with the proportional reduction in travelling costs); technological change (improved communications and globalization); and the maturation of the tourism industry (as evidenced for, example, by the creation of more consistent standards and methods of service delivery and the proliferation of package holidays and other varieties of tourism such as business tourism and sports tourism).

This variety of tourism represents an almost logical reaction of the post war industrialist and capitalist sway of the Developed world. During this time mass tourism holidays were standardized and produced through the mass replication of identical packages that were consistently insensitive to the natural environment and the rural communities of the tourist-receiving destination (Poon, 1994). Holidays that included beachfront activities were especially fashionable with tourists during this time and saw the proliferation of almost identical hotel and other holiday resort developments along most of the attractive beaches of the world. Small island states in the Pacific and Indian oceans were especially hard hit by these undifferentiated developments, some of which still bear the environmental and cultural scars today (Kandelaars, 1997; Hall, 2000). In Africa especially, the mass tourism phenomenon produced a type of tourist and tourism package that were characterized by the 'harrying of animals and the ruining of their

habitats as well as a general insensitivity to the rural communities of the destination and a universal spoiling of the wilderness experience' (Prosser, 1994).

Fortunately though the rise of global environmental concern was at hand and would eventually also spread to the tourism industry. International concern about the earth's resources and the exploitation thereof was not only effecting change in development and conservation circles, but also slowly but surely initiating the creation of a new variety of tourist and tourism industry (Cater, 1994a; Prosser, 1994; Bosselman *et al.*, 1999). This brand of tourism would seek out environmentally and culturally sensitive travel experiences to environments that are being managed in sustainable ways, and would place increasing importance on the impact of tourists and the tourism industry as a whole on the tourist receiving-destinations. (Cater, 1994a; Ghimire, 1994; Prosser, 1994; Hall and Lew, 1998; Hall, 2000). Therefore, although visitor numbers would still guarantee huge challenges for tourism promoters and the tourist-receiving destinations, the tourism industry would now be able to endorse sustainable guidelines that should aid in decreasing the impact on these destinations whilst increasing the benefits accruing from its operations.

2.3.1.3 Initial Influences of Tourism-based developments in and around Protected Areas

Tourism developments have consistently been associated with the huge changes they usually bring to a destination. Sections 2.3.1.1 and 2.3.1.2 illustrated how the initial creation of protected areas and the exclusive rights that the early visitors to these reserves enjoyed influenced the environment and the rural communities that live in these areas. In section 2.2.2 and 2.3.1.2 some of the authors quoted described tourists as being a 'plague of marauders' or 'landscape eaters' who have spread across the earth and who through their shear numbers and activities have sometimes effected irreparable damage to the natural and cultural environments of the places they visit. It is therefore evident that although tourism can definitely benefit the areas in which it develops (e.g. positive economic impacts, increased job opportunities, heightened cultural identity of rural communities due to tourist interest), history has unfortunately shown that it has regularly brought more negative than positive consequences for its destination areas (Inskeep, 1998; Bosselman, *et al.*, 1999; Hall, 2000).

The negative impacts of the tourism industry on a destination are usually most visible in the decrease of the quality of the natural environment. This situation forms the basis of a

whole range of concerns on the part of the communities that live there as well as on the part of the tourism industry (Inskeep and Kallenberger, 1992; Prosser, 1992; Hall, 2000). To the tourism industry the concern is, of course, the popularity of the destination and whether it will achieve the financial returns for the investments were made have made in the infrastructure of the destination (Inskeep and Kallenberger, 1992; Prosser, 1992). The concerns for the resident rural communities are however, much greater. These types of environmental impacts not only influence their present circumstances in the sense of the possibility of increased economic opportunities but also influence their future and that of future generations, with regarding to, for example, the security of their prospective food resources (Brown, 1995; Hale, 1996; Mathenjwa, 2003).

Tourism developments associated with protected areas have unfortunately also created more negative than positive outcomes in the places that they were established. The National Park model of a protected area, which is undoubtedly the most popular form of protected area in the world, originated in the United States during the latter years of the nineteenth century (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994). Although this form of protected area was initially created for the protection of a natural resource base, it often utilized tourism as a means of generating funds for the operation of the park and for promoting the importance of the preservation of these areas to the international community. Boundaries were therefore drawn around these 'special places' so that they could be 'set aside' from the 'ravages' of ordinary use for the preservation of their natural resources and for the inspiration and enjoyment of their mainly Western and European visitors (Hales in Wells and Brandon, 1992).

One of the most famous of these National Parks, is the Yellowstone National Park, which was established on the traditional land of the Crow, the Blackfeet, and the Shoshone-Bannock Indian tribes of North America. It probably represents the first protected area where groups of indigenous people were forcibly removed from their ancestral territories to make way for the park and its tourists (Kemf, 1993). In the years following the proclamation of this wilderness preserve, many others were proclaimed in a similar fashion in North America and all over the world (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994). Writings of the North American park managers reflected the thinking of the time, expressing that although they acknowledged that these areas truly belonged to the indigenous peoples ' . . . nothing was outstanding about their history' and that ' . . . an essentially militaristic defence strategy' were required to keep these peoples out (Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994).

Section 2.3.1.1 describes a similar situation in the African and southeast African European colonies of the 1800s and 1900s. Here the difference was, of course, in the sense of the purposeful exploitation of Africa's natural resources, which was apart from the tourists that visited it, almost exclusively destined for the colonial managers of these reserves, and almost entirely performed in the name of colonial empire building (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Mackenzie, 1987). Rural communities within and on the fringes of these reserves have therefore suffered immense difficulties on a large scale. Not only have they been expelled from and deprived of their traditional territories, but they have also been compensated with means that were totally inappropriate in the context of their needs (and even in today's terms), relocated to unsuitable localities and prohibited from making use of the natural resources within these reserves (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994).

Whilst the inability to live on their traditional lands in the way that their ancestors had lived for hundreds of years has certainly posed its share of difficulties, it does not even come close to what the rural communities have lost in the sense of management and control of these areas. Losing these abilities meant that they had, in fact, not only lost their present means of livelihood but that they had also lost their powers to manage their environment as well as the control of the forces that influence their future in the development of these areas. Although probably not recognized at the time, the question of local management and local control over the tourism and conservation activities that were being performed in these protected areas would eventually form the basis of the issue of equitable rural community participation in tourism-based developments in and around protected areas.

2.3.2 The Shift towards Participatory Approaches

2.3.2.1 The Rise of Environmentalism

The rise of international environmentalism and its influences on the rural landscapes and communities of the world had strong ties with the outcomes of the industrialist era in the Western world and in Europe especially. At first the roots of the pre-Industrialist interests sprang from the allure that the vast open African spaces presented to the relatively confined and man-made spaces of the European landscape (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Wells and Brandon, 1992; Cater, 1994a: Ghimire, 1994). In addition to this romanticism, Africa's seemingly inexhaustible resources and the economic value thereof also attracted the attention of the colonists (Mackenzie, 1987; Ghimire, 1994). These interests would

ultimately lead to the creation of the first protected areas as well as their management regimes (see Section 2.3.1.) and also represented the first steps towards the global environmentalist movement of the post war times.

In short, the environmentalist movement can be described as an international rise in the awareness of the impacts of the human race on the environment and the formation of various interest and pressure groups that started campaigning for more environmentally sensitive approaches towards development (Fuggle and Rabie, 1992b; Tillman Lyle, 1994; Ghai, 1994; Tapela, 2001). In the years following the Second World War, the environmentalist movement grew with remarkable speed. Reasons for this can be attributed to the poor quality of life in the heavily industrialized cities of the North as well as to a general increase in the level of scientific understanding that was set in motion by the developments in the technological, economic and social sectors of the industrial revolution (Fuggle and Rabie, 1992b; Ghai, 1994). With the 1960's popular interest in the natural environment came an increase in the number of philosophical and scientific text. Rachel Carsten's book 'The Silent Spring' (1962) and a number of other academic publications focused on the influence of human developments and raised the all important notion of there being a limit to the earth's resources (Fuggle and Rabie, 1992b; Tillman Lyle, 1994).

The late 1960s and the 1970s saw a further proliferation in the amount of publications and articles concerning environmentally sensitive developments (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Fuggle and Rabie, 1992b; Tillman Lyle, 1994). By this time, environmental concern, (which was only considered to be a civil rights movement) was also being recognized by some of the foremost governments and institutional bodies of the world (Redclift, 1992; Chatterjee and Finger, 1994). Conferences such as the 1968 Biosphere conference in Paris and the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment (the Stockholm Conference) focused specifically on the need for more and better research on ecosystems, human ecology and pollution, as well as genetic and natural resources, and also suggested the idea of 'eco-development' (Fuggle and Rabie, 1992b; Ghimire, 1994).

The effects of the recommendations and policies of the environmentalist movement were almost immediately deemed to be beneficial to all. These policies were however developed essentially in answer to the consequences of industrialization on the Developed world and were not at all appropriate for implementation in the developing South (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Redclift, 1992; Little, 1996). In fact, it was later recognized in much of the social science literature that the environmentalist development

policies pursued by the colonial and post-colonial governments and their 'experts' have not only been economically unsuccessful in many respects, but have also frequently been extremely harmful to the natural environment as well as to the prospects of human survival in Africa in the long term (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Redclift, 1992).

2.3.2.2 Environmentalism and the Influence on Rural Communities in and around Protected Areas

In sub-Saharan Africa, as in many other parts of the developing world, the common cause for environmental concern was perceived to be the destruction of natural resources as well as the notion that the rural communities in these areas were incapable of the proper management of these resources (Fuggle and Rabie, 1992b; Redclift, 1992; IIED, 1994a). Apart from the massive number of European and North American aid programmes, the logical consequence of the perceived ecological crisis in Africa was a drastic rise in the number of protected areas (1300 of which were proclaimed in the 1970s alone, in contrast to the 600 proclaimed in the years between 1900 and 1949) (Redclift, 1992; Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993).

In contrast to the protected areas of the late 1800s and early 1900s (which was protectionist in approach) the newly proclaimed reserves were based on the environmentalist development philosophy that was conservationist in its approach. In 1971 UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB) together with the World Heritage and the RAMSAR site concepts developed the biosphere reserve model (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994; Tapela, 2001). This model was a basic forerunner of the IUCN's Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA) categories system and was developed as a guideline to direct the new variety of development in and around protected areas (Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994). This was perceived to then involve the rural communities in these areas in increasing levels, thereby raising their quality of life.

Conservationist thinking had a strong utilitarian approach which distinguished it from the preservationist approaches of the colonial era by actually recommending that the rural communities neighbouring the protected areas should share in the benefits accruing from the management of these areas (Makombe, 1993; Tapela, 2001). According to the prescriptions and policies of the development agencies of the industrialized world, development and the protection of Africa's natural resources were now idealized to happen simultaneously (Anderson and Grove, 1987; IIED, 1994; Little, 1996). In addition,

the environmentalist policies suggested that the rural communities that were usually excluded from the activities of Africa's protected areas were now to be involved in such a fashion that it would affect drastic changes to the quality of life of these peoples thereby reducing the pressures on the natural resources and restoring ecological stability (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994).

Although environmentalist policies seemed worlds apart from the traditional preservationist approach to protected management, the results of its influence would ultimately not make a significant change to the plight of the rural communities. In effect, the critical element, which still eluded environmentalist practitioners, would again emerge as the level of control that the rural communities had in the protected area developments and consequently also on the degree of benefits which they would receive (Redclift, 1992; Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993). Research would reveal that although environmentalist policies like the Man and Biosphere programme and those developed at the UN conference on the Human Environment recognized that there should be much higher levels of Participation by the rural communities, these policies had clear misconceptions about the potential that the rural communities possessed to manage their own environments as well as what the real needs of these rural communities were (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; IIED, 1994a). This situation basically resulted in the predominantly European and North American developers of the environmentalist policies, regularly imposing rather inappropriate conservation practices in typical top-down colonial fashion (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Kemf, 1993; IIED, 1994a).

Rural communities were therefore still not properly involved. Protected areas were however still being proclaimed. Rural communities were however now being compensated for their lost resources and further attracted to protected area establishment by the possibility of employment. Compensation however, usually existed in terms of approved Developed world procedures (money), which were foreign to the rural community leadership institutions and consequently caused huge social problems within the traditional rural community societies themselves (Kemf, 1993; IIED, 1994a; Little, 1996). Compensation in the form of alternative land for settlement purposes was usually also insufficient in terms size and in location and frequently gave rise to the creation of informal settlements (squatter camps) right on the edge of the protected areas (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; Ghimire, 1994). Rural community employment was also habitually structured in a way that ensured that the community stayed at the lower employment levels thereby prohibiting them from rising to the management levels and ensuring that the mostly foreign reserve managers retained the

control of the management of these protected areas as well as the developments that occurred there (Cater, 1994a; Ghai, 1994; Campbell, 1998; Hall and Lew, 1998).

Although it is believed that the environmentalist policies that were developed during the 1960s and 1970s and even in the early 1980s were developed with the purpose of conserving the natural environment and its resources and to benefit the rural communities living on its boundaries, it is obvious that the influences of these policies caused more environmental and social degradation than it did conservation. The causes for this degradation seem to sprout from situations where foreign developers and policy makers neglected to fully acknowledge and explore the potential and the cultural identity of the rural communities of the developing world. The developments and protected areas that resulted, therefore usually rendered these people unable to manage their environments and have sufficient levels of control in the developments that influence their future in these areas. This situation unfortunately caused some rural communities to react negatively towards environmentally sensitive development and conservation and therefore put pressure on the international political community to find alternatives to these types of policies and programmes.

2.3.2.3 The Implications of Environmentalism on the Tourism Industry

The implications of the age of environmentalism on the tourism industry again seem to be a bittersweet affair. Section 2.3.1.1 described how the early European travellers discovered and instantly fell in love with the vast wilderness areas of the sub-Saharan African continent, and how they utilized its natural resources to subsidize their colonial interests. In addition, this section showed how these interests and the exploitation thereof eventually led the colonial governments to establish a network of protected areas and how the tourism developments in these parks were reserved for their predominantly European and North American visitors.

With the 1950s and the products of the industrial revolution came not only an increase in the interests and the availability of information about the natural environment but also the means to visit these areas because of the drastic improvements in long distance transportation (Prosser, 1994; Inskeep, 1998; Bosselman *et al*., 1999). The implication thereof was that the last untouched environments and cultural treasures of the developing world were now within reach of the regular upper middle class traveller. Initial increases in the number of visitors to the existing parks and reserves soon demonstrated

their economic potential and subsequently caused a massive increase in the proclamation of additional protected areas (see Section 2.3.1.2).

By the late 1970s the mass tourism phenomenon had struck with all its might (Western, 1993; Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1993; Prosser, 1994). The world was now well aware of the perceived global environmental crisis and reacted with an increase in the number of publications and documentaries on the subjects of environmental health and the last remaining Edens of the planet (Anderson and Grove, 1987: Fuggle and Rabie, 1992b). Further developments in global communication and transportation also promoted tourism development to these areas and quickly established a roaring nature-based tourism market (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1993; Prosser, 1994; Bosselman *et al.*, 1999).

To the developing world and its protected areas, this was good news because by implication it meant that these reserves and their surrounding rural communities would now be able to tap into the vast resources of the tourism industry (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; Hall and Lew, 1998). Although the trendy beach resorts of the world still received an increasing number of travellers, tourist numbers to developing countries were now rapidly escalating with tourism in Africa still based on the larger mammals (Western, 1993; Prosser, 1994; Kandelaars, 1997).

Before long, however, tourism to these more pristine areas was characterized by the same kind of mass tourism behaviour that existed at the hotel type of developments of the beach resorts (Cater, 1994a; Kandelaars, 1997). Local tourism operators were allowing too many tourists into the parks and reserves, which ultimately led to the harrying of animals and the ruining of their habitats, and the general spoiling of the wilderness experience (Boo, 1993, Western, 1993; Prosser, 1994). Although this is certainly not true of all the nature-based tourism developments of the time, tourism at the height of the environmentalist era definitely did not contribute significantly towards environmentally sensitive developments. Therefore, even though it undoubtedly marked the beginning of an increased environmental awareness of tourism developments in protected areas, it wasn't until the late 1980s and the arrival of the sustainable development doctrines that environmentally sensitive tourism developments developed in greater frequency.

2.3.2.4 Sustainability and the Start of Equitable Rural community participation

Proper rural community participation in tourism-based and other developments has developed in conjunction with the emergence of the sustainability doctrines of the 1980s (Prosser, 1994; Hall and Lew, 1998). By this time, the international rural development and aid fraternities had realized that although rural community involvement was a move in the right direction, the means by which it was implemented, particularly in the developing world, were still far from what they should be (Little, 1996). In contrast to some of the environmentalist approaches, sustainable development principles recognized that conservation, as well as development, is needed and that these should occur in ways that sustain not only the environment, but also its peoples, in the present and in the future (Redclift, 1992; Cater, 1994a; IUCN, 1997a).

Much of the realities concerning rural community participation in rural development and conservation-based initiatives were discovered during the Western-inspired agricultural, irrigation and forestry development programmes of the 1950s to 1970s (Redclift, 1992; Vivian, 1995, IIED, 1994a). The need for proper rural community participation in rural development and conservation initiatives took on increasing importance in the 1970s in particular as disenchantment with these large-scale, centrally managed projects matured (IIED, 1994a; Little, 1996) It was also discovered that the newly independent states merely inherited the top-down management approaches of their colonial predecessors and that these approaches had to be abandoned for rural community participation to succeed (Kiss, 1990; Kemf, 1993; IUCN, 1997b).

Upon reflection, it is clear that the principal theme of all the research done on the participatory programmes of the 1950s to 1980s basically consisted of the various aspects surrounding appropriate rural community empowerment. Research would reveal that the major problems of the large scale, top-down programmes could be attributed to a lack of understanding of the true needs and aspirations of the rural communities involved as well as the doubt on the part of the Developed world that these communities would be successful protected area managers if they retained the main control of these development initiatives (Kemf, 1993; IIED, 1994a; Little, 1996). What proved to be some of the most critical concerns however were that the benefits, which the rural communities were supposed to receive from these programmes seldomly reached the poorer segments of the community where they were really needed, coupled

with the fact that, like some of the development programmes themselves, the benefits were typically inappropriate (Kemf, 1993; IIED, 1994a).

The concept of sustainability and sustainable development can therefore almost be described as the next natural step in the progression of the environmentalist movement, with the important difference being that one of its main aims was to avoid the failures of the previous 30 years. By 1990 the subject of rural community participation conservation-based developments had accumulated a massive number of case studies and literature, which all concentrated on the role of rural communities in protected area management (IIED, 1994a; Little, 1996). Prominent community-based conservation and sustainable development literature includes documents such as the IUCN's World Conservation Strategy of 1980, the IUCN's CNPPA 1984 guidelines on suitable protected area interpretation concerning rural community participation as well as the all important Brundtland report of 1987.

In addition, publications such as 'Caring for the Earth' (1991) and the Strategies for National Sustainable Development (1994) (by the IUCN, the IIED, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) all attest to the fact that the focus had shifted to the point where it was now perceived that the world's natural resources should firstly be managed sustainably for the well-being of the people of the world (especially the previously neglected rural communities of the developing countries) and that this would in turn foster a renewed respect for the environment by these peoples (IIED, 1994a; IUCN, 1997a; Wells and Brandon, 1992).

In summary the IUCN and the IIED described sustainable development as 'improving and maintaining the well-being of people and ecosystems' (IIED, 1994a; IUCN, 1997a). Human well-being, therefore, exists when all the members of a society (Rural Communities) are able to define and meet their needs and have a large range of choices and opportunities to fulfil their potential (Vivian, 1995; IIED, 1994a; IUCN, 1997a). Furthermore, ecosystem well-being means that ecosystems maintain their quality and diversity and thus their potential to adapt to change and provide a wide range of options for the future (Ghai, 1994; IIED, 1994a; IUCN, 1997a).

2.3.2.5 Sustainable Tourism and the Dawn of Rural Community Participation in the Tourism-Based Developments in and around Protected Areas

Sustainable forms of tourism, such as ecotourism, were developed during the emergence of the sustainable development doctrines and like many other forms of development during this age, also materialized due to the dissatisfaction with the results of some of its previous products (See Sections 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.3.2.3) (Western, 1993; Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1992; Hall and Lew, 1998). Nature-based tourism during the 1960s and 1970s had in fact accomplished just the opposite of environmentally sensitive development (what it is believed to have originally intended) by introducing masses of tourists to environmentally and culturally sensitive areas, causing immense damage whilst rarely contributing to long-term consistent socio-economic development in these areas (Prosser, 1994; Inskeep, 1998; Bosselman, *et al.,* 1999).

Since the 1980s, however, alternative varieties of tourism emerged with their sights set on sociologically and ecologically sound developments (Poon, 1994; Hall and Lew, 1998; Hall, 2000; Ryan, *et al.,* 2000; Black *et al.,* 2001). International tourism authorities such as the WTO, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) have, amongst others, fervently demonstrated their commitment to environmentally and culturally sensitive tourism developments (McIntosh, *et al.,* 1995; Inskeep, 1998). This is evidenced by the WTO's 1982 statement, which specifies that a tourism development should not occur at the cost of the social and economic interests of the rural communities at the tourism destinations or to the natural resources critical to the tourism attractions (McIntosh, *et al.,* 1995). Sustainable tourism therefore strived to be increasingly aware of the cultural and natural environments where it developed by promoting small-scale developments with local ownership and control and with the tourism industry and the tourists sufficiently educated in the ethics of environmentally sensitive travel (Wheeler, 1993; Hall and Lew, 1998; Campbell, 1998).

From the 1990s onwards, rural community involvement in nature-based tourism especially, became increasingly prevalent (Brandon, 1993; Campbell, 1998: Ashley and Jones, 1999; Goodwin and Roe, 1999). Nature-based tourism such as ecotourism had by this time become one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry (which itself was declared one of the largest economic industries in the world) and was also known to be a popular incentive of paying for nature conservation and the existence of protected areas (McIntosh, *et al.,* 1995; Hall; 2000: Ryan, *et al.,* 2000). In addition,

conservationists, economists and tourists alike have awakened to the realization that nature can't be saved at the expense of the people living there - the traditional custodians of the land. Rural communities should be given an equitable share in the management of these areas and in the subsequent benefits that arise because of this management (Vivian, 1995; Kemf, 1993; Goodwin and Roe, 1999). Rural community participation has now evolved to the extent that rural communities, their governments and other non-governmental organizations are engaging in joint ventures in which these communities are given the appropriate legislative and institutional authority to participate equitably in tourism ventures in and around protected areas (Ashley and Jones, 1999; Goodwin and Roe; 1999).

Historical accounts of developments initiated by the colonial governments as well as by the donor and aid organizations of the 1950s to 1970s had accumulated a huge amount of literature, which described the inequities suffered by the rural communities in and around protected areas (IUCN, 1997a). These accounts have also illuminated the subsequent influences that these developments had had on the protected areas themselves as well as on the developments and the rural communities involved. (see Section 2.3)

Today the tourism industry stands at a point where it is clear that rural community participation in tourism-based developments in and around protected areas is almost non-negotiable. What remains now is for the industry to continue to guide and facilitate Rural community participation in sustainable Tourism Developments where communities are sufficiently empowered and endowed with the appropriate capacities to be able to contribute and share in the tourism developments in and around protected areas.

2.4 RURAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM-BASED DEVELOPMENTS

The previous sections of this chapter aimed to illustrate the specific events and the associated aspects that gave rise to the low levels of rural community participation in conservation and in the tourism-based developments of the past century. The objective of the following section is to draw from these events and to discuss a set of fundamental elements that could steer rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of the future.

2.4.1 Aims and Objectives of Rural Community Participation in Tourism-Based Developments

In principle, rural community participation in tourism-based developments aims to change the traditional top-down centralized method of development to a decentralized situation where the rural communities are empowered by the possession of the correct institutional and tenurial powers to exert a suitable level of control in the development and management of the tourism-based developments in and around the protected areas where they reside (Brandon, 1993; Vivian, 1995, Hall and Lew, 1998). This implies that the relevant authoritative structures (on an international, national and regional level) should implement the necessary measures that will allow the rural communities to act as equal stakeholders in the development and management processes of the tourism-based developments (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Brandon, 1993; Zeppel, 1998). Research has shown that these levels of community control have not only provided communities with a sense of ownership and belonging but has also awarded developments with a cultural and economical significance which present them with a much better chance of success than the traditional centrally managed developments (Ashley, and Jones, 1999; Campbell, 1999; Wilderness Safaris, 1999a).

The fact that rural communities were excluded from such developments and that most developers have not really worked in cooperation with rural communities, means that these communities and developers probably do not have the development and administrative capacities to make informed decisions on certain matters of these developments right away (Pederson, 1991). Here, one of the objectives of the equitable involvement of the rural communities should be to supply the rural communities and the developers with the appropriate professional assistance to facilitate suitable capacity development programmes in order to be able to manage the developments sustainably and in unison (Ashley and Jones, 1999: Goodwin and Roe).

If these aims and objectives can be achieved, rural communities should find themselves with the benefits produced by the developments (McIntosh, *et al.,* 1995; Ashley and Jones, 1999, Bosselman, *et al.,* 1999;) Whereas traditional top-down developments usually only provided benefits in terms of employment and compensation, proper empowerment and involvement should now provide rural communities with a greater level of control over the benefits which are generated as well as the manner of their distribution in the communities and their application in the ongoing management of their developments (Ashley and Jones, 1999; Butler, 1999; Campbell, 1999).

2.4.2 Fundamental Elements Required for Equitable Rural Community Participation in Tourism-Based Developments

The literature regarding rural community participation initiatives during the last century reveals that every community and their environment present their own set of unique opportunities and constraints regarding satisfactory community participation (Redclift, 1992; Vivian, 1995). Traditional approaches have frequently implemented model-type of approaches however and have thereby discounted much of the valuable qualities unique to a specific community. In recognition of this it is believed that a set of fundamental elements can be useful to determine the broad successes or failures of rural community participation initiatives with due understanding that further research will then be needed to determine the deeper realities of each specific community. A framework of the fundamental elements deemed significant for equitable rural community participation in Tourism-based developments according to this study will now be presented.

2.4.2.1 The Policy Framework

The literature studied in the previous sections of this chapter has shown how the traditional top-down fashion of planning and management in conservation and tourism-based developments have excluded rural communities from the developments in these places and from the benefits that arose out of their enterprises (See Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2). Policy-making, planning and management of these programmes have remained centralized and dominated by national and foreign technocrats, while the contribution of rural communities has been passive and limited to the provision of labour and information only (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Little, 1994; Timothy, 1999).

The critical areas of these developments have almost always revolved around the principal aspects of security of tenure and the level of control in the development and management of the conservation and tourism projects themselves (Kemf, 1993; IIED, 1994a; Campbell, 1998). Colonial governments and their successors as well as some of the modern day tourism developers have almost always ensured that they have the primary political monopolies over these assets and they also developed legislation which ensured that they had the principal stake in the future management of these developments and the benefits that they generated (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Ashley and Jones, 1999; Butler, 1999; Goodwin and Roe, 1999). Rural communities were swindled into relinquishing their tenurial rights for what seemed to be handsome

compensation, only to realize that these were inappropriate short-term benefits with severely limited future involvement opportunities.

The original reasons for these types of disempowerment stem from the traditional colonial advances, but also include the more recent (1900s – 1970s) beliefs of governmental authorities and foreign aid and donor agencies that the rural communities lack the capacity to implement and manage sustainable conservation and tourism developments (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Kiss, 1990; Little, 1994; Tapela, 2001). The motivation behind these beliefs probably stems from the Western and European conviction that their approaches to development were superior to those of the Developing world's societies, as well as a lack of recognition of the wealth of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and their worth in the sustainable development of indigenous rural areas (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Little, 1994; IUCN, 1997b).

Fortunately, research into the failures of the rural development programmes of the previous forty years has revealed their inaccuracies (IIED, 1994b; IUCN, 1997b; Hall and Lew, 1998). In addition research has compelled the international authorities to develop policies which pressured governments and developers alike to devolve to integrated rural development projects where the expertise of the Developed world is added to the indigenous knowledge systems of the Developing world in sustainable development projects where all the stakeholders hold equal rights and responsibilities (Vivian, 1995; Ashley and Jones, 1999).

International sustainable development policies such as the World Conservation Strategy of the IUCN, Agenda 21 of the UN and Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry of the WTO constitute some of the major international policies that guided their signatories to develop and execute the necessary constitutional changes that were needed to transform the policies and declarations into practicable environmental law and grassroots executable strategies (IUCN, 1980a; IUCN, 1980b; IUCN, 1980c; South Africa, 1997; Inskeep, 1998).

Other forms of international sustainable development policies which also had an impact on rural community participation in tourism-based developments include conventions such as the RAMSAR convention (convention on Wetlands of International Importance), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the World Heritage Convention (convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage) (Enviro, Info, 2001). These conventions also endorse practical sustainable development

strategies and present clear guiding principles on how rural communities should participate in associated developments (Enviro Info, 2001).

On a National level, the South African government has disclosed its political will to adhere to the international surge towards sustainable development by implementing policies and strategies such as the Local Agenda 21 (LA 21), the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme (GEAR) (ANC, 1994; South Africa, 2000). These act as translations of the broader international policies into applicable strategies for the local level institutional governance structures to implement on a grassroots level (ANC, 1994; South Africa, 2000).

The White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa, the White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biological Diversity and the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa also affirm the government's position concerning the role of rural communities in the conservation and management of these resources as well as the subsequent benefits which should accrue to them as a result of these responsibilities (South Africa, 1996c, 1997, 1998a, 1998b).

On a local level the local institutional actors in the Sodwana Bay area such as the Uthungulu Regional Council (URC), the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Wildlife authorities (Ezemvelo KwaZulu Natal Nature Conservation Services) and the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI) have developed their own sets of community participation policy (Ezemvelo KZN, 2002; LSDI, 2001c; URC, 2002). Being the authorities that are in most frequent contact with the rural communities of the area, these institutions made rural community participation part of their mission on how to sustainably manage and develop the region successfully (LSDI, 2001c; Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Services, 2002; URC, 2002). A good example of this notion is the KZN Wildlife Services, which went as far as to change their name to affirm their conviction. The name was changed from KZN Nature Conservation Services to Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Services where the Zulu word Ezemvelo means 'nature for the benefit of all.'

2.4.2.2 Legislative Structures

Legislative structures represent the second element of successful rural community participation in tourism-based developments. The true powers of an effective legislative

structure lie in its ability to translate the broad-based international and national policies into practical implementable laws (McIntosh, *et al.*, 1995; Hall, 2000). These laws serve as the legal vehicles required by the rural communities to substantiate the authority which they have gained as a result of the devolution of sustainable resource development and management authority (Ghai, 1994; Vivian, 1994; Ashley and Jones, 1999). Whereas there are still ways and means by which governments and developers can elude the guidelines set forth by broad policy declarations, these responsibilities are much harder to evade when specific legislation is provided which clearly stipulates what the rights and responsibilities of the relevant authorities, developers as well as the rural communities living in the area of interest, are.

Tourism-based developments in and around the protected areas of the world have been frequent offenders in this regard. Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 present detailed evidence of the tight-fisted behaviour of some of the post-colonial governments and of private developers who cunningly ensured that they own the key shares in these developments. Whether this behaviour was motivated out of the protectionist approaches of the early environmentalist movement or out of the will to exploit the tourism potential of these environments for the monetary gain thereof, it caused huge inequalities which motivated rural communities to refrain from supporting these developments and even to revolt against them in some cases (see Sections 2.3.1.2. and 2.3.2.3).

The national government's role to provide legislation that would put an end to these kinds of developments and their subsequent results became increasingly important, especially so after the development of the sustainable development doctrines and conferences such as the 1992 World Summit on Sustainable Development (Brandon, 1993; Inskeep, 1998; Hall, 2000). Conferences like the 1992 World Summit on Sustainable Development had set the stage, and the focus was now directed on decentralizing the authoritative structure, which hampered rural communities and their right to self-determination.

Governments were now pressured to develop legislation (in relation to developments in protected areas such as sustainable tourism for instance) that would provide the rural communities with tenurial rights that guaranteed them their claim-making and entitlement privileges (Kemf, 1993; Little, 1996; IUCN, 1997b). Moreover legislation would also have to formulate clear definitions concerning equitable stakeholdership of the tourism-based developments, which would ensure that the rural communities received their fair share of the benefits that flow from these developments and that the benefits were distributed equitably throughout the whole of the community (Ashley and Jones, 1999; Bosselman,

et al., 1999; IUCN, 1997b). Legislation would therefore now have to focus on presenting explicit detail on the efficient participation of the rural communities at all the relevant levels of developments, from their initiation right through to their operation and administration.

On a broad scale, the first and foremost statutory tool which empowers all South Africans and especially the previously disadvantaged communities, must be Section 24b of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa. This Bill provides that everyone has the right to: *have his or her environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that:*

i. *prevent pollution and ecological degradation;*
ii. *promote conservation; and*
iii. *secure ecological sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.* (South Africa, 1997)

According to this, the Mbila community therefore already possess the right to reasonable legislative and other measures as well as the right to sustainable developments and use of the natural resource base in order to implement justifiable economic and social development.

On a more site-specific scale, Section 25(7) of the Constitution focuses on the restoration of land rights (South Africa, 1996), and the Restitution of Land Rights Act 1994 (act 22 of 1994) as the specific legislative instrument on land restitution (South Africa, 1994). These acts are of the utmost importance as they entitle the Mbila community with the tenurial authority they need to legally participate in the developments that occur on their land and that may influence their future. It also provides them with the opportunity to initiate their own developments and to involve appropriate stakeholders as they see fit.

The Communal Property Associations Act, 1996 (Act 28 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996a) has legalized the formation of Community-based organizations such as the Mbila Tribal Authority. This legislation has provided the Mbila community with the approved legislative authority to represent themselves as a legal entity. Legislation has therefore already served the Mbila community well. A specific example is where the Mbila Tribal Authority represented itself as the approved legal entity in the land claim process in which they were involved. The Mbila Tribal Authority also represents the Mbila people in all the aspects that have an influence on them in the area and furthermore also

possesses a tribal court which strengthens the traditional role of the Mbila Tribal Authority in the present Mbila community organization (see Section 3.2.2).

2.4.2.3 Institutional Framework

Institutional frameworks constitute the third element of the primary fundamental elements which are needed to sufficiently empower rural communities to participate in sustainable tourism-based developments. Research into effective rural community participation in tourism-based developments has revealed that for national and international polices and legislation to be really effective, these measures have to be implemented by the relevant government and nongovernmental institutional actors, who can convert these policies and legislation into practical implementable procedures that facilitate their objectives on a grassroots level (IIED, 1994a; Little 1996; IUCN, 1997b; Hall, 2000).

In addition to the government institutions and the nongovernmental private developers, for example there is also a need for relevant community-based organizations to represent the rural communities (IIED, 1996b; Ashley and Jones, 1999). Community-based organizations are not a new phenomenon, however, and have existed for centuries as indigenous tribal authorities (Little, 1996; IUCN, 1997a). Although traditional authoritative structures have existed within the social structures of rural communities, it is also true that the governmental authorities that govern the countries where these indigenous peoples live have rarely acknowledged these community-based organizations and what they represent (Little, 1996; IUCN, 1997a).

It is therefore important that these traditional community-based organizations should be recognized and provided with the appropriate authority to be able to participate effectively and at the correct levels (Zeppel, 1998; Ashley and Jones, 1999). This process will typically fall under the policy and legislative formulation practices described in Sections 2.4.2.1 and 2.4.2.2. Care should also be taken so that the community-based organizations and other institutional actors are integrated to the extent that effective communication and cooperation can take place (IIED, 1994b). This would probably involve an ongoing process of training on the part of the community-based organizations and other institutions and should not be neglected, as the communication and mutual cooperation between these various institutions can have vast consequences on the development and sustained management of the tourism-based developments and the Participation of the rural communities therein (IIED, 1994b; Timothy, 1999).

Proper empowerment and integration of the community-based organizations will therefore not only facilitate genuine Rural community participation in the decision-making processes, but will also ensure that the true needs and aspirations of the rural communities are put forward and are incorporated in the developments that follow (Brandon, 1993; IUCN, 1997b; Ashley and Jones, 1999). Local traditional institutions such as community-based organizations should also be involved whenever possible since, traditionally, these institutions have exhibited the capacities to manage local resources (natural and social) and to resolve conflicts over the use of mutual resources (see Sections 3.1 and 3.2) (IIED, 1994b; IUCN, 1997b). Successfully established and functioning local institutions will be able to implement the policies and legislation, which were developed to facilitate effective rural community participation. This should then enable proper participation, which will in turn lead to appropriate involvement of the rural communities in the tourism-based developments in their areas as well as the subsequent benefits that these developments generate.

In the case of the Mbila community, the South African government granted these rights in the form of the Communal Property Associations Act 1996 (Act 28 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996a). This is very significant and also exhibits the government's political will to effectively empower rural communities in South Africa. This legislation acknowledges the Mbila Tribal Authority as a proper local institution and also empowers it to represent the Mbila community and to participate as a legal institution in all matters that have an influence on them and their traditional territory.

2.4.2.4 Levels of Community Control

The importance of the appropriate levels of community control required to enable adequate rural community participation in tourism-based developments is made quite evident through the vast amount of literature published on this matter over the last two and a half decades (see Sections 2.4.2.1 to 2.4.2.3). Traditional conservation and tourism-based developments had effectively disempowered rural communities and subsequently caused increasing levels of environmental degradation combined with amplified human suffering as well as a rise in the aversion which rural communities felt towards these developments and their managers. For this situation to change it was, and still is, necessary to empower these communities in order to restore their ability of self-determination.

According to the investigations of this study the first three fundamental elements towards effective rural community empowerment include the policy frameworks (national and international), the legislative frameworks and the institutional frameworks. These elements represent the first and foremost requirements for equitable rural community participation and are almost entirely dependent on the political will of the relevant governing authorities to implement them. When these frameworks are adequately applied, the rural communities will have gained sufficient power to make it possible for them to legally participate in the tourism-based developments in their area. This level of empowerment constitutes a kind of foundation from which the next levels of involvement can commence. The community now stand at the starting point from which they must be involved in the deeper levels of the development and management of the tourism initiatives in their area.

For further integration to happen the literature in the study reveals that consideration must be given to the next three fundamental elements required for equitable rural community participation in tourism-based developments. These elements consist of the apt involvement of all the relevant stakeholders, the harnessing and development of existing capacities (external and local) and the management of the benefits that accrue from the tourism initiatives that are developed in the area. These elements will be discussed in Sections 2.4.2.5 to 2.4.2.7.

2.4.2.5 Creating Tourism Stakeholders

The creation of equitable stakeholders in tourism-based developments represents one of the primary steps towards the true involvement of the rural communities in the participation process that accompanies sustainable tourism-based developments in and around protected areas. For the rural communities to be able to function as equal stakeholders together with all of the other interested and affected parties it is of vital importance that these communities are sufficiently empowered (see Sections 2.4.2.1 to 2.4.2.4).

Although some examples exist where rural communities were in fact adequately supplied with the appropriate rights over their resources, this doesn't necessarily guarantee that they will be equally represented in the tourism-based developments that are developed in their territories. Instances exist where rural communities were swindled into agreements with tourism developers where they were promised to be involved in turn for development rights, but proceeded to be beneficiaries only and eventually merely took

part in the implementation and maintenance of these developments (IIED, 1994a; Ashley and Jones, 1999). In most of these examples resource management decisions were taken over by those with insufficient stake in the local environment, and resources were extracted at unsustainable levels in order to benefit exotic, often richer, societies (Vivian 1992; IUCN, 1997b).

In answer to these types of developments, Vivian (1992) states that 'True popular participation goes much beyond the mere provision of labour and other inputs into projects initiated from outside the community; it involves decisions being taken and plans being formulated on the local level'. In addition, true rural community participation in sustainable tourism-based developments also involves the creation of equal stakeholders where rural communities and tourism developers are involved in contractual partnerships that grant all the stakeholders legal ownership of the development and which present these stakeholders with rights and responsibilities to equally contribute and benefit from these developments (Ashley and Jones, 1999).

Some of the immediate benefits that arise from equitable stakeholdership in developments come in the form of environmentally and culturally sensitive developments (Brandon, 1993; IIED, 1994b). The reason for the sensitivity of these developments originates from the fact that these developments were entered into with the appreciation of the needs and requirements of all the stakeholders as well as that of the environment (Brandon, 1993; IIED, 1994b). This will not only allow the development to be sensitive to the environmental determinants but will also save time and avoid some of the conflicts that may arise later in the development process due to the fact that the stakeholders were already aware of most of these aspects from the very beginning of the development process.

For the creation of stakeholders to be truly equitable, attention must not only be given to the broad-based stakeholder representation, but also to the inner-community representation, in the case of the relevant rural community (Bell, 1987; Little, 1996). Research has revealed that some of the early developments that made use of stakeholder involvement had in fact only involved the male components of the rural community which meant that the female and juvenile segments were either represented in a very limited fashion or not at all (Ghai, 1994; Little, 1996). The women and the children, owing to their inadequate representation, still experienced substantial difficulties. Specific problems experienced seemed to be those regarding employment inequalities (in the sense of single parent situations for instance) as well as inadequate benefit flows to these minorities within the community (Little, 1996; Fany-Bryceson,

1997). It is therefore clear that consideration must be given to all the relevant interested and affected stakeholders and that these groups should be sufficiently represented for successful involvement of the whole community to occur.

2.4.2.6 Rural Community Capacity and Capacity Building

Rural community capacity and capacity building can be described as the ability of the rural community in an area to use their ownership of and access to knowledge and technology as a means of sustainably managing their environmental and social resources for their own benefit and that of their future generations (IUCN, 1997b; South Africa, 1998b). Effective rural capacities and capacity building are therefore made up of a few critical elements, the first of which is the quality of the community's resource base and its access to it (IIED, 1994a; Little, 1996; IUCN, 1997b). Quality cultural and natural environments are likely to present more participation possibilities to the community and therefore also more possibilities to apply and develop the relevant capacities. The community's access to these resources is, therefore, of significant importance because of the fact that maximum participatory opportunity is needed to apply and develop the maximum capacities which are available and which are needed.

Further elements that have a bearing on the community's capacity and the further capacities that need to be extended, consist of their access to knowledge and technology and their ability to use these assets to manage their resources effectively (Laban, 1995; South Africa, 1998b). Although it is commonly perceived that it is only the rural communities who are in need of capacity building, research found that deficiencies also existed amongst the traditionally enlightened stakeholders such as the developers and some of the government departments (Little, 1996; IUCN, 1997b; Tapela, 2001). These deficiencies often include a lack of understanding of the ecological systems that are at work in these places as well as of the rural community's relationship with these systems (IIED, 1994b; Little, 1996; IUCN, 1997b).

Research found that while rural communities are often pushed toward overexploitation of their cultural and natural resources by the extreme nature of the poverty in their area, these communities usually possess a thorough understanding of the local natural systems and the cultural connotations thereof due to their years of traditional survival in these environments (IIED, 1994a; IUCN, 1997b). Findings also revealed that the traditional indigenous knowledge systems of rural communities in and around protected areas especially, play a huge part and should be harnessed to add value to the

developments in these areas and to help expand the capacities of the stakeholders that lack these insights (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Kemf, 1993; IUCN, 1997b).

Examples of externally funded conservation and tourism-based developments have shown that these development agencies often also lack a deeper understanding of the local culture and the inner dynamics of its social structures as well as of how to integrate and be integrated into developments with these communities (see Sections 2.3.2.4 and 2.3.2.5). Therefore, in order to allow developments to achieve their full potential, these external agencies will have to undergo the necessary training that will allow them to understand the area of the development, socially and physically.

Finally it was also found that the rural communities themselves are often in need of training and extension programmes regarding the modern-day management and administration techniques of developments in and around protected areas (IUCN, 1997a, Ashley and Jones, 1999). Because of the fact that these management and administration systems are universally European and Western-based and the fact that most travellers currently also originate from these locations, it is of the utmost importance that the rural communities should be dually capacitated in these departments with the help of the relevant establishments. This will significantly aid their involvement in the development and implementation processes of the tourism-based developments in their areas and will also increase their employment opportunities at all the levels of these developments.

2.4.2.7 Tourism Benefits and the Community

The equitable supply and distribution of the benefits that accrue from the tourism-based developments in and around protected areas can play a significant role in the motivation of rural community participation in tourism-based developments (IIED, 1994b; Little, 1996; Bosselman, *et al.,* 1999). The literature on the matter affirms that tourism-based developments, that display a clear generation of benefits such as political benefits, income, services and products, provide sufficient incentives for rural communities to get actively involved in them (Brandon, 1992; Little, 1996; Bosselman, *et al.,* 1999). For rural communities like the Mbila tribe to really take part in the benefits that arise from the tourism-based developments in their region, it is important that they should firstly be adequately empowered (see Sections 2.4.2.1 to 2.4.2.4).

Benefits accruing from tourism and conservation-based initiatives have traditionally been in the form of compensation for the loss of resources (Brandon, 1992; IIED, 1994b).

Whether it was due to extra land being required for biodiversity conservation or as a result of property that was needed for the development of tourism facilities and activities, rural communities of protected areas frequently found themselves removed from their ancestral territories (Anderson, and Grove, 1987; Wells and Brandon, 1993). Furthermore they have also often found themselves with little to show for the transfer of their land rights, and all this for the sake of developments that were initiated by foreign developing agencies and primarily for the benefit of foreign societies (Little; 1996, IUCN, 1997b).

By the late 1960s and 1970s the environmentalist movement had realized the importance of benefit provision for rural communities involved in conservation and tourism-based developments, but still retained the right to determine how the various stakeholders should participate and how the benefits that arose out of these developments should be distributed (Prosser, 1994; Inskeep, 1998; Bosselman, *et al.*, 1999). Benefits typically consisted of monetary remuneration (which usually did not compare to the resources seized) and employment at the maintenance levels of developments (IIED, 1994b). Furthermore, benefits rarely filtered down through the whole of the community and therefore failed to find the people (women, children and the elderly) who were in real need thereof (Brandon, 1992; IIED, 1994b).

As a result, these developments succeeded in generating a very poor image of benefit provision to rural communities in the conservation and tourism-based developments of that time whilst not actually succeeding in managing the protected areas in a sustainable fashion (Mackenzie, 1987; Western, 1992). Rural communities were often forced to make 'illegal' use of the natural resources even though this was sometimes also done out of rebellion against the managers of the protected areas and the tourism-based developments that resided within the reserves (Mackenzie, 1987; Els, 1995). It was really only with the arrival of the sustainability doctrines that conservation and rural development bodies recognized the critical role that rural communities have to play in the developments in these areas and the importance of appropriate benefit generation and distribution (Western, 1993; Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1992; Hall and Lew, 1998).

Truly sustainable tourism-based developments present many varieties of benefits and do this at different levels of the developments (Brandon, 1992). In light of the equitable system of development, benefits to the rural communities in and around the areas where tourism-based developments develop are seen to have to move away from the passive beneficiary approach and move towards a more inclusive situation (Brandon, 1992; IIED, 1994b; Little, 1996). This is demonstrated in the sense that although the supply of

employment still represents a very important part of the benefits provided to the participating rural community it also represents only one layer of the benefit provision. Employment in sustainable tourism-based developments has moved away from the traditional way of only employing the locals in the lower levels of the development, by providing opportunities for capacity building so that the rural communities can develop skills that will enable them to eventually manage these kinds of developments for themselves (Brandon, 1992; IIED, 1994b; Inskeep, 1998).

In addition, the new variety of benefit supply focuses on distributing the benefits throughout the whole of the community social structure (Brandon, 1992; Little, 1996). This will ensure that the majority of the community members can enjoy at least some of the benefits accruing from the development and that these benefits do not reach a selected group of beneficiaries only (Brandon, 1992; Little, 1996). Benefits distribution should also be flexible and should consist of a mixture of individual and community-based benefits. This would ensure that benefits can be enjoyed by the community as a whole in the form of schools and clinics, and also that individuals such as entrepreneurs can receive individual funding for local development initiatives (Brandon, 1992; IIED, 1994b; Inskeep, 1998).

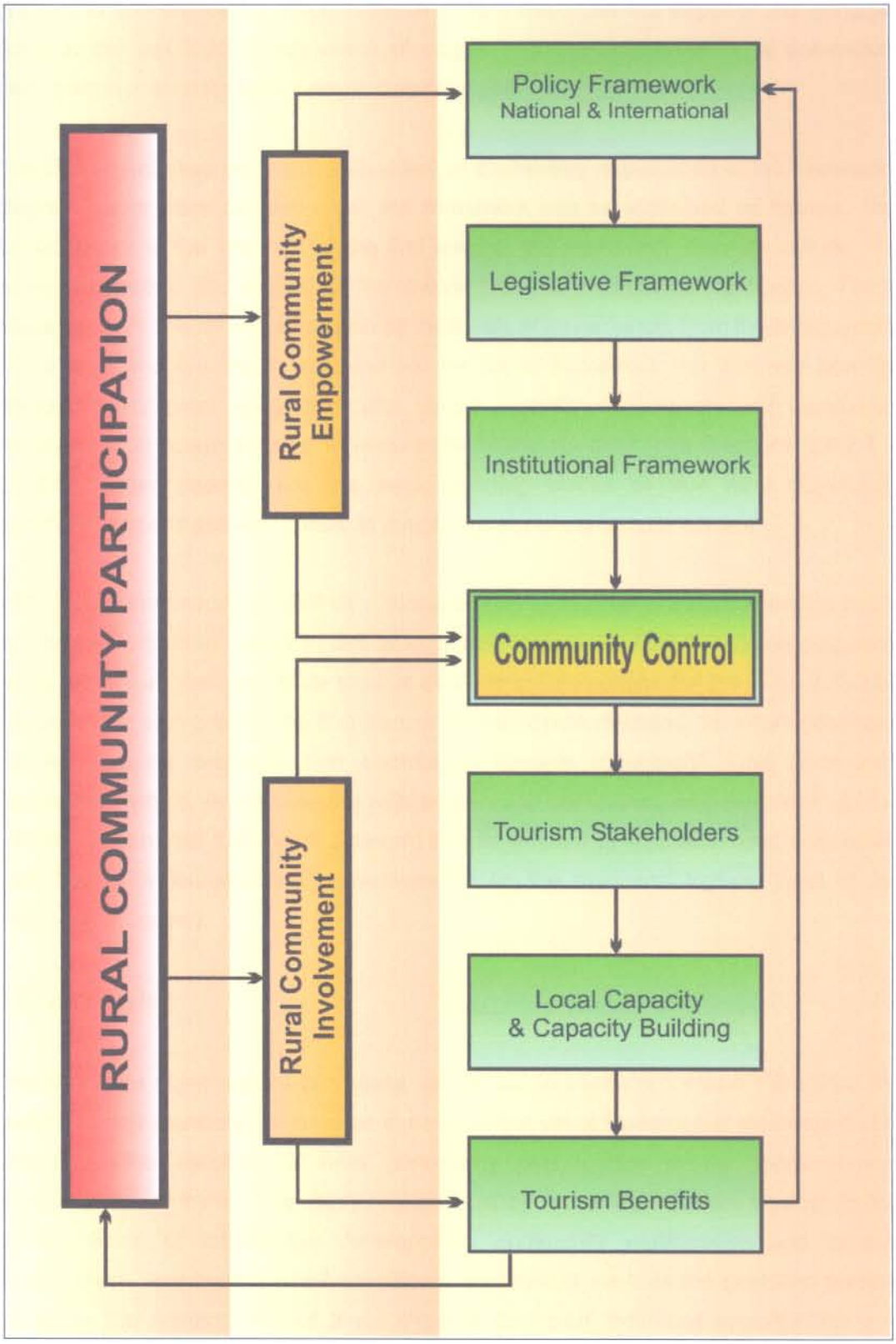
2.4.3 Fundamental Elements Required for Equitable Rural community participation in Tourism-based developments – The Framework

The previous section of this study, described each of the fundamental elements that is believed to be significant for equitable rural community participation in tourism-based developments, to occur. Although every one of these elements is believed to be significant on an individual level, it is also important that they should act as a functional system of combined elements where a certain hierarchy exists in which every element has a specific position where it will function at it's most productive state. Figure 2.1 presents these elements in the form of a framework diagram that illustrates the relationships between these elements as well as the most productive hierarchy in which they should be ordered according to this study. The following section will now provide a short description of the framework diagram.

2.4.3.1 Description of the Framework Diagram

The framework diagram is divided into three levels. (see Fig. 2.1) The first level (Green) describes all the fundamental elements, which is critical for the implementation of

Figure 2.1: Framework Diagram of the Fundamental Elements Required for Equitable Rural community participation in Tourism-based developments



meaningful rural community participation in tourism-based developments, as described in section 2.4.2. The height of the implementation of these fundamentals, depict the quality of the rural community empowerment and involvement, at the second level (Yellow) of the framework diagram which in turn describes the depth of the principal issue in the last level (Red), which of course is the quality of the rural community participation in tourism-based developments, itself.

The abovementioned description provided an elementary explanation of the framework diagram. On a more detailed level, the framework can be explained as follows. The fundamentals in the first part of the first level of the framework diagram include; the policy framework; the legislative framework and the institutional framework. These elements have critical importance on all the levels of governance, from the international to the local and regional levels, and are the broad framework that illustrate how the relevant government body, prescribe certain specific aspects of rural community participation in tourism-based developments to be handled (see Sections 2.4.2.1 – 2.4.2.3). These aspects are the basic building blocks of true rural community empowerment and are also critical in supplying proper community control.

With proper community control as a foundation, it should be possible to create even-handed tourism stakeholders as well as stakeholder specific capacity building programs, which will in turn yield equitable tourism benefits. (see Sections 2.4.2.4 – 2.4.2.7) This second set of elements (in the first level of the framework diagram), therefore describes the fundamental elements that contributes towards meaningful rural community involvement which, in combination with proper rural community empowerment, (in the second level of the framework diagram) should amount to equitable rural community participation In tourism-based developments (in the third and highest level of the framework diagram).

2.5 Conclusion

The aims and objectives of this study, as set out in sections 1.4 and 1.5 stated the purpose of the literature review to be to determine a set of fundamental elements that is critical to the success of rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of today. The study realized this by reviewing literature sources in the primary fields of sustainable development, community participation and tourism development, and concentrated specifically on aspects such as the past and present trends in the development of these aspects and their individual opportunities and

constraints. A set of fundamental elements was subsequently developed and is described in section 2.4. Chapter 3 will now continue in describing the current socio economic situation of the Mbila community of the Sodwana Bay area in Maputaland with specific reference to the participation of this rural community in the tourism-based developments in the region. The fundamental set of elements that were developed in this chapter will then be used to determine the current success of their involvement (Chapter 4) and how this success rate can be enhanced by making the changes that is necessary to get the tourism-based participation of the Mbila community at its most productive possible level. (Chapter 5)

Chapter 3: The Case of the Mbila Community and the Sodwana Bay Tourism Industry

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The case of the Mbila community and the Sodwana Bay tourism industry is a typical one of where a rural community is involved in the day-to-day realities of living in a fragile environment which offers limited opportunities towards their livelihood essentials. Chapter 2 provided examples of similar situations together with the reasons the rural community's failed to participate sufficiently in the developments and their subsequent benefits. Chapter 3 will now focus on the current tourism development situation in Sodwana Bay and on the involvement of the Mbila community therein.

3.2 THE STUDY AREA

3.2.1 Location

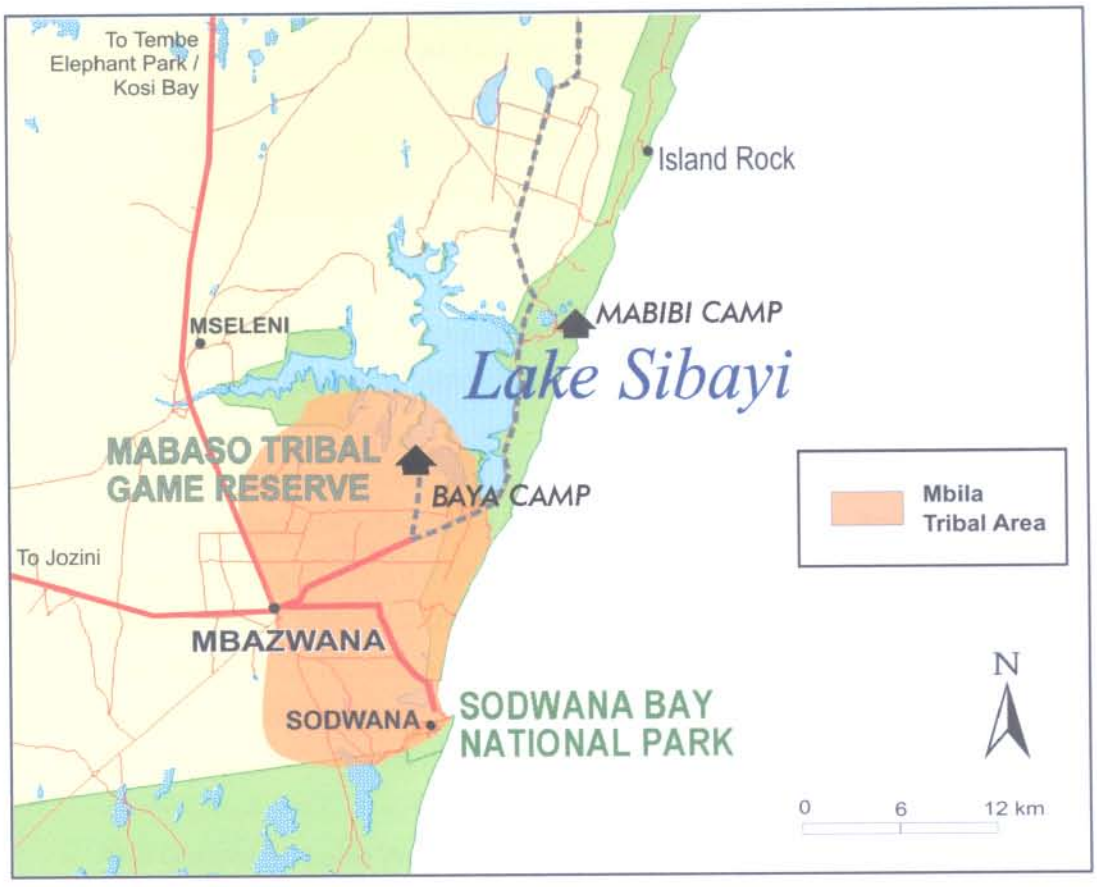
Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1 provides an idea of where the study area is situated within the broader context of South Africa. Figure 3.1 indicates the location of the study area more specifically in relation to some of the major landmarks in the area. The study area is quite unique in terms of its specific land use patterns and the way that these patterns influence the everyday livelihoods of the people that lives in the area. The basis for the specific development patterns in the area can, to a large extent, be attributed to the tourist products itself and will, in addition to other significant aspects such as the specific land ownership of the area, be discussed during the course of this chapter.

3.2.2 The Natural Resource Base

The importance of a healthy natural resource base from a global sustainable development point of view becomes evident in the literature of this study. Sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.2 of Chapter 2 point out that within the framework of the main goal, which is to arrive at satisfactory levels of sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods, the benefits of conformance to sustainable modes of development should firstly be to ensure a healthy sustainable environment. From a community-based tourism development point of view, this healthy state of the environment should then lead to increased levels of tourist interest in the area. This should then create a greater number of tourism activities

that would in turn lead to increased opportunities for the rural community in the tourism industry.

Figure 3.1: The Study Area



In the case of Sodwana Bay and the Mbila community, as in many other cases in the world, the natural resource base is still contributing significantly towards the traditional livelihood essentials of the local people. These essentials include basic essentials such as the affordable supply of potable fresh water, additional sources of sustenance, fuel for cooking fires, as well as building materials for houses and traditional medicines for the treatment of ailments. The natural resource base of the Mbila community is therefore still of vital importance to the community and the area as a whole.

From a tourism point of view, the unique variety of natural assets that the region has to offer (both the tourist and the tourism developers) is indicated by the fact that on a single trip to the area, it is possible to experience all of the following:

- Pristine beaches on the edge of a lukewarm Indian ocean, which teem with a variety of marine fish, including sharks such as the impressive Ragged toothed

Shark and some of the most sought after game fish in the world such as the Sailfish and the Black Marlin species; see Figure 3.2

- Occasional visitors to the area include the majestic Humpback whale as well large schools of various species of dolphins and highly endangered turtle species, popularly known as the Loggerhead and Leatherback turtle varieties;

- The southernmost stretches of tropical coral reefs on the African coastline, replete with many species of tropical fish, some of which are found in this location only;

- The highest vegetated coastal dunes in the whole of Southern Africa, set within a unique ecological niche which has already produced a substantial amount of scientific and other texts;

- Coastal freshwater lakes such as Lake Sibayi, Lake Mgobozeleni and Lake Bangazi that constitute the largest freshwater lakes in the southern hemisphere and which form part of a series of wetland systems that include such a diversity of bird, fish and plant species (of which many are endemic) that they have been recognized as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention,

- The Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park, which is an internationally acclaimed World Heritage Site that boasts a local tourism service, which offers a variety of game fishing, scuba diving and other experiences to a number of tourists, and which brings the tourist in close contact with these exceptional marine and terrestrial environments (Van der Elst, 1980; Tinley, 1985; Pinnock, 2001; LSDI, 2001a; LTFCA, 2001; Maputaland Tourism Alliance, 2000).

From a community point of view, however, the natural resource base has a completely different meaning. The Zulu's call Maputaland *uMhlaba'yalingala,* which literally means 'the earth which is flat' (Mountain, 1990). This name refers to the area's unique morphological characteristics and points to the large stretches of low-level planes vegetated predominantly by the Coastal Bushveld Grassland limited patches of the rare Sand Forest vegetation types (Acocks, 1988; Pooley, 1994; Rebelo and Low, 1996).

Figure 3.2: Sodwana Bay – The Beach at Jesser Point

Source: Olivier, W., and Olivier, S., 1996.

These unique ecological zones were sculpted primarily by the actions of the advancement and recession of the ocean as well as the aftermath of the drainage of many rivers through the area (Maud, 1980). One of the principal results of these geo-morphologic processes was the creation of a sand bed which covers the whole of the area and reaches up to 30 metres in depth at certain locations (Maud, 1980). The presence of this sand bed is an important ecological determinant in the area which, in relation to the socio-economic development, has played a leading role not only in the way that the area has developed physically, but also in the material day-to-day livelihoods of the Mbila people themselves. (Maud, 1980; Bruton, 1980b; Mountain, 1990). To illustrate the practical implication of how this ecological feature influenced the relations between the different developmental variables, it is useful to briefly discuss an example of some of these interactions.

The physical characteristics of the sand bed that was formed dictates that the upper horizons of the soils of Maputaland and the study area itself are of a very poor organic nature. The explanation behind this natural phenomenon is simply that the bulk of the nutrients that are produced during the natural processes of decomposition are washed away by the vast amount of rain that the area receives annually (between 950 and 1100 mm per annum). These nutrients are thus washed away to a depth in the soil horizon where they are unavailable for the roots of the plants in the upper soil layers (Maud, 1980).

Palaeontological and archaeological records of the area do however provide evidence of the evolution of a unique ecosystem that was and still is able to survive within this nutrient-deprived environment (Avery, 1980; Mountain, 1990). In the case of Lake Sibayi, for instance, the number of species present indicates that viable species richness is still possible, although the number of the individuals of a specific species is low and the individuals within that species are also significantly smaller than individuals of the same species, in other more nutrient-rich systems elsewhere (Bruton, 1980b.). This phenomenon is also visible in most of the other species that are geographically limited to this area, perpetuating this pattern throughout the entire region.

As for the rural community itself, the influence of this infertility of soils means that any form of subsistence agriculture is very difficult to produce. Fields can only be used for a very limited time and then also produce only a meagre amount of agricultural produce (Mountain, 1990; Mathenjwa, 2003). This means that crops have to be rotated regularly and this often results in the destruction of patches of threatened coastal forest and wetland (Weisser, 1980; Mountain, 1990). Cattle and goat husbandry have been introduced in the area but have also had to contend with the low level of nutrients in the grasses as well as the limited amount of suitable grasses themselves (Mountain, 1990).

Section 3.2.4 of this chapter further demonstrates the immense role that the natural resource base is playing in the lives of the rural community. Mountain (1990) reports that the Rural Communities of the area have until very recently, still collected up to 75% of their required annual food intake from the natural environment. It is therefore clear that the partial failures of these agricultural recourses, in combination with the ever increasing population demands has led to rather harsh pressures being exerted on the local natural resource base.

These factors have eventually led to the near extinction of many of the species in the area (such as the Samango monkey, the Red duiker, and the Suni duiker), and the subsequent listing of these species on the IUCN's list of Red Data Book Species (Ferrar, 1989; Mountain, 1990; IUCN, 1994). In addition, increased conservation measures have been imposed by the conservation authorities and the hardships that the Rural Community has to endure have substantially increased.

The tourism industry at Sodwana Bay has therefore come as a welcome change in development opportunities in the area, in that it offers the prospect of a decreased level of pressure on the natural resource base whilst providing the opportunity for the Mbila community to receive benefits that will assist them in the provision of their livelihood

essentials (View also shared by Mathenjwa, 2003). Although this scenario is absolutely possible (Section 2.4.2.7), tourism can also be quite detrimental to a sensitive environment such as that of the Sodwana Bay area, and therefore has to be planned and managed very well to be able to achieve this goal.

3.2.3 The Cultural Resource Base

The cultural resource base of the region can play an equally important role in the tourism industry of the area and can, if managed correctly, help to uphold and to strengthen the cultural identity of the rural community as well (Prosser, 1994; Inskeep, 1998). The area has been visited by foreign visitors from as early as the late 1400s. These visitors have played an important role in the development of the area and have also enriched the area with interesting history. The author believes that although these historical accounts are of a foreign nature, they also form a part of the cultural milieu of Sodwana Bay and can thus be fashioned into a tourist attraction in their own right.

In the case of the Mbila community, the community has already expressed their need to protect their cultural identity within the realization that the tourism industry of Sodwana Bay can provide them with the economic upliftment they require (Wilson, 1999). The interactions of the rural community with themselves, their environment and with the foreign settlers that settled in their vicinity brought about a cultural richness that adds to the uniqueness of the area and helps the visitor to obtain a better understanding of the area as a whole. The following is a description of the most celebrated of these cultural resources.

On a broad scale it is important to firstly mention the archaeological significance of the region. One of the most important archaeological sites in southern Africa – Border Cave – is situated on the western face of the Lubombo Mountains, roughly about 100 kilometres northwest from Sodwana Bay. This site has revealed over 69 000 primitive implements as well as the remains of at least five *Homo sapiens sapiens,* and a myriad of animal remains, some of which dates back to the Middle to early Late Stone Age period. (Bruton, *et al.*, 1980d). These led to important new conclusions on early hominid evolution in sub-Saharan Africa and also offered insights into the people of the region and their utilization of the natural environment over the ages (Beaumont, *et al.,* 1978).

From the 1500s onwards the literature reveals many encounters of the predecessors of the Mbila community, participating in numerous trade incentives with the early

Portuguese traders that sailed up and down the East African coast at that time (Bruton, *et al*., 1980d). Accounts from the early 1800s tell stories of the initial conflicts between the British and the Portuguese because of the lucrative trade routes on the Maputo and the Pongola rivers and of the subsequent proclamation of the South African border on the northern periphery of Maputaland.

This proclamation was instigated under quite controversial circumstances by the French president, Marshall McMahon and had far-reaching consequences for the tribes that inhabited the area (Bruton, *et al*., 1980d). What nobody knew at the time was that this border had in fact cut a straight line through the traditional homeland of the Tembe community (which today still occupies the area) and would ultimately cause much despair and the creation of a new community on the northern side of the border (Bruton, *et al*., 1980d; Mountain, 1990).

The latter part of the 1800s and the 1900s bears witness to the race between the Boers of the ZAR and the British of the Natal colony to obtain a harbour either at Sodwana Bay or at Kosi Bay (Bruton, *et al*., 1980d). This race led to frequent skirmishes between the two parties and eventually provided the grounds for the British to claim Maputaland as well (Bruton, *et al*., 1980d; Mountain, 1990). This in turn gave rise to the *divide and rule* legislation of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, which influenced the development in the area for many decades to come (Mountain, 1990; Duminy and Guest, 1995; Carton 2000).

Later on in this time period the DDT spraying of the famous Nagana campaign took place. This was accompanied by the culling of thousands of head of animals, in order to try to rid the area of the Tsetse fly that was believed to be a carrier of the dreaded sleeping sickness parasite. Many scientists that carried out studies on the area in the aftermath of this campaign revealed that the majority of the insect and animal species never fully recovered and that traces of the DDT toxin are still present in much of the species of the area (Bruton, *et al*., 1980d; Mountain, 1990).

The Tsetse fly was eradicated rather successfully, but the natural systems that support the malaria disease and the malaria parasite itself, recovered and adapted and were responsible for mortality rates that, in addition to the low soil fertility, kept the Sodwana Bay region out of the running for any major development proposals for many years to come (Bruton, *et al*., 1980d; Mountain, 1990).

The fact that the rural communities of the area have adapted to this harsh environment meant that they were relatively immune to the western influences of the early 1900s, as

these influences were, to a large degree, kept out by the region's environmental determinants (Bruton, *et al.*, 1980d). Mountain (1990) states that the first significant changes came with the development of the industries in the major cities and in the nearest towns during the latter half of the 1900s and that this was typically caused by the experiences of the migrant workers in the social surroundings of these industries.

Further developments such as the tourism industry and the forestry activities in the area must also have contributed to the westernisation of the region. The harshness of the natural environment of the Sodwana Bay area therefore contributed significantly to sustaining the traditional lifestyle of the Mbila community.

Much of the traditional lifestyle of the Mbila community (and many other rural communities across the globe) flows from their use of the natural environment (Bruton, *et al.*, 1980d; Pooley, 1980; Mountain, 1990). The production of palm wine or *uBusulu* is probably one of the most prominent traditions visible to the tourist visiting the area. This tradition involves the pruning of the iLala palm's (*Hyphaene coriacea*) leaves and the tapping of the sap via an insertion in the tree's stem. These palms can often be seen standing in the veld, striped of their leaves and with a small container hanging from their stems (see Fig. 3.3). The wine is not very intoxicating and is said to be very nutritious.

A more recent custom in the area that has already attracted much interest from the European tourists especially, is that of the locally owned taverns or *shebeens,* as they are called. The shebeens usually stock an ample supply of the locally brewed palm wine and provide an excellent opportunity for an enlightening, interactive, participatory experience (Section 2.2.2) between the local community and the visiting tourists, as well as a much needed alternative source of income for the community.

Other traditional practices consist of the harvesting of reeds, grasses and papyrus for the construction of traditional dwellings and other household utilities, such as mats for flooring and a variety of baskets for a variety of uses. This tradition has also become very popular with the tourists and has resulted in the mass production of a variety of different designs of these mats and baskets as well as an array of other household utilities, in the form of dustbins, grass mats and even trays for tables (see Section 3.5).

The collection of plant and animal parts for traditional medicine or *Muti* is another accepted traditional activity among the traditional healers or *iZinyanga* of the area and has spread to some of the other members of the community too, because the substantial trade that has developed in these goods. This has unfortunately resulted in serious

environmental damage in some sections of the coastal dune forests and has subsequently led to a number of conflicts between the community and the KZN Wildlife authorities.

The collection of the hardwood species of the area for construction purposes, cooking utensils and cooking fires (and more recently for the barbecue fires of the tourists as well) is another form of traditional activity that is still being practiced by the rural community of today and which has also spread to the tourism industry. The curio trade, which was only introduced to the Sodwana Bay over the past few years, has in addition to the collection of other species of the natural resource base, caused serious concern for the future of the already damaged forests.

Members of the local European curio traders have therefore stepped in, and held workshops to illustrate the benefit of working with the softer and exotic *Eucalyptus* and *Jacaranda* wood species (see Section 3.5). These workshops seemed to pay off well as most of the curio and firewood bundles that were observed during the fieldwork were of this *Eucalyptus sp.*, although substantial numbers of the local hardwood species were occasionally still seen.

Some of the traditional practices of the rural communities, which are not so observable, are those that have to do with the fishing and hunting methods of the rural people. Part of the reason for this is that most of the biodiversity in these lakes and forests are now formally protected and those that remain outside these reserves are unfortunately hunted to severe levels of rarity. Previously though, fishing in the shallows of the pans and some of the wetlands was a great community affair (Bruton, 1980b; Pooley, 1980; Mountain, 1990).

Traditional fishing methods ranged from the catching of small fish with homemade, seine nets (used by children) and the use of fish traps, to the massive *fonya* basket fishing drives involving hundreds of people and which was organized by the headmen or *Indunas* in consultation with the *IZinyangas* (Bruton, et al., 1980d). Today this legacy still lives on in the form of the *fonya* baskets, which are part of the local products at the curio market of Sodwana Bay. The author envisages that this form of fish harvesting can still be performed in a managed fashion and can actually contribute significantly to the local tourism product.

3.2.4 The Dependency of the Mbila Community on the Natural Resource Base

The considerable significance of the natural resource base in the traditional lives of the Mbila community is quite evident in the discussion of sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2. The availability of veld foods has repeatedly provided the people of the region with a buffer against occasional droughts and their subsequent food shortages as well as against the ever-present plague of unemployment and poverty (Bruton, 1980d; Pooley, 1980; Mountain, 1990).

A researcher, Dr. Anthony Cunningham, who has done extensive research on the use and the dietary importance of the plants in Maputaland, found that during a twelve-month period from November 1981 to October 1982, nearly a million litres of the palm wine or *uBusulu* that were extracted from the iLala palm were sold. This generated an income of R185 000 from the immediate sale, transport and resale of the wine at other centres throughout Maputaland and provided an important supplementary income to at least 500 local people (Mountain, 1990).

Research done during the 1990s has furthermore revealed that the levels of exploitation of the palms situated in the palm-belt zone could be sustained, or even increased, if certain improved methods of tapping could be introduced (Mountain, 1990). The palm-belt zone covers significant sections of the Mbila tribal territory (Moll, 1980) and various examples of the extraction of the sap were encountered during the time in which the fieldwork was completed (see Fig. 3.3).

In addition to the wine obtained from the iLala palms, there are numerous other plant species that are also used to supplement the Mbila diet. There are 76 edible species of fruits and 26 species of spinaches which provide important vitamins that are deficient in the Mbila tribe's starchy staple foods (Pooley, 1980; Mountain, 1990; Mathenjwa, 2003). Although this resource represents the third food source (after the food that is bought at the local grocer and that which is harvested from the subsistence agriculture) it still provides significantly in the food requirements of the poorest of the poor (Pooley, 1980, Mountain, 1990).

Plants in the Mbila territory are also used in a variety of ways. Plant material such as reeds, thatching grass, tree branches, bark and creepers, as well as poles and laths are all used in the construction of the traditional houses and other structures in the region (Pooley, 1980; Mountain, 1990).

Figure 3.3: Extraction of Palm Sap from the iLala Palm

Source: Department of Anthropology, UP, 2000

The reeds and sedges of the wetlands and the hardwoods of the coastal forests and the scrub thickets in the area are also used in the manufacture of everyday household utensils, such as dishes and grain stumpers (Pooley, 1980; Mountain, 1990). These items have become very popular with the tourists visiting Sodwana Bay over the years and have since evolved into a flourishing crafts industry (see Figure 3.4 and Section 3.5).

The Mbila tribe has traditionally also made extensive use of every resource that the area offered. This includes the fish, animals, birds, reptiles and even the insects of the marine and terrestrial environments. (Pooley, 1980; Mountain, 1990; Mathenjwa, 2003). Although some of the traditional methods of the use and harvesting of these resources are mentioned in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, it is quite impossible to do justice to the cultural wealth of these activities in the scope of this study and interested parties are therefore advised to refer to literature describing these in more detail. The latter described resources have been harvested much more intensively though and have sadly all but disappeared from the areas not protected in the KZN Wildlife reserves (Pooley, 1980, Mountain, 1990, Van Köller[1]).

[1] Personal communication with Mr J. van Köller, former Ranger, Sodwana Bay National Park, March 11th 2002, Sodwana Bay National Park.

Figure 3.4: The Craft Market at Sodwana Bay

The last three years saw the proclamation of additional reserves in the Mbila area (the Mabaso Game Reserve on the southern end of lake Sibayi, See Fig. 3.1) and the start of the re-stocking of these reserves with species of animals that originally occurred in the area. Although this formed part of a community conservation initiative, serious poaching problems have been experienced in the reserve (Porter, 2001) most probably due to the critical shortages of affordable sources of protein in the area.

3.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

3.3.1 History and Origins of the Mbila Community

Indigenous settlement reached its peak at the end of the sixteenth century (Davidson, 1991). During the first ten centuries indigenous peoples from Chad migrated as far as the Congo and Rhodesia (Present day Zimbabwe) (Davidson, 1991). Near the beginning of the fifteenth century, under pressure from the Nilotics of the northeast, the east-central indigenous peoples resumed their march to the south, pushing back the Khoi San and the Khoi Khoi, to their present locations (Davidson, 1991). The indigenous peoples' migrations to the south followed various routes, keeping to the far east and west of the African continent and spreading inward the further south they moved (Davidson, 1991).

The Nguni (who comprise the Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho and Swazi people of today), the Shangana-Tsonga, Chopi and others, followed the coastal plain down the eastern seaboard of Africa (Mountain, 1990). The present Mbila community is a mixture of Nguni and Thonga people, the Thonga people being an offshoot of the Shangana-Tsonga people (Bruton, Smith *et al.,* 1980d; Mountain, 1990). The Tembe community is one of the biggest Thonga communities in Maputaland and came into being when iNkosi Tembe broke away from the Karanga tribe and settled in the Delagoa Bay area in approximately 1554 (Mountain, 1990).

The present day Mbila community is one of a whole host of other community groups that form part of the Thonga people that live in Maputaland today and who originated from the original Tembe community. (Bruton, Smith *et al.,* 1980d). Apart from the Mbila community, there are several other community groups in Maputaland - 271 in total (Felgate in Mountain, 1990). Of these, the Tembe, Ngubane, Mdletshe, Mabaso, Manukuza, Mashabane, Mngobokazi, Myeni, Ndibele and the Sigakati are probably the most numerous (Bruton, Smith *et al.,* 1980d). Thonga people were, described somewhat derogatively, by the Zulus as the non-Zulu people living to the northeast of them (Mountain, 1990). This is due to the fact that they were frequently overrun and raided by the Zulu war parties from the south, who then typically took the Thonga as slaves to their own kraals in the south (Mountain, 1990).

The Swazi also invaded the communities living in Maputaland, but like the Zulu, these invaders, failed to successfully establish their cattle (due to the tsetse fly) and maize (due to the infertile soils) and therefore never settled there in significant numbers themselves. Today the social and political structures of the communities of Maputaland are largely intact despite the heavy influence from the Swazi and the Zulu intrusions (Bruton, Smith *et al.,* 1980d; Mountain, 1990).

The reason for this according to Junod, a missionary who worked amongst the Thonga around the early 1920s, and Felgate who did extensive research in the area around the 1960s, can again be attributed to Maputaland's harsh ecological determinants and the failure of the foreign communities to adapt to the environment to the level that the Thonga did (Mountain, 1990). Presently, the rural community living in Maputaland refer to themselves as Zulus and have also almost totally refrained from speaking the Thonga dialect. The motivation behind this seems to stem from the notion that the members of the community (especially the youth) prefer to be linked to the much celebrated Zulu heritage rather than to that of their own. A fair amount of disagreement exists around this notion, however, and some believe it to merely be the natural result of acculturation, which was, in any account, inevitable.

3.3.2 Socio-Political Organization

Despite the influences of the invaders of the Maputaland communities, much of the social and political organization, such as their land tenure system, the arrangement of their homesteads, their marital traditions and their funeral rites are still more related to the Thonga customs than to those of the Zulu (Mountain, 1990). This is quite observable in the Mbila tribal area where the homesteads are set very carefully within the natural environment so as to seclude them as far as possible from the neighbouring homesteads. Felgate found that the most common reason given for this behaviour was fear of witchcraft (Felgate in Mountain, 1990). He observed that 'the straying of fowls, the barking of dogs and the escapades of children are regarded as being capable of creating such tense relationships within the community that they can ultimately result in witchcraft accusations' (Felgate in Mountain, 1990:26)

This arrangement of the homesteads deviates considerably from that of the Zulu arrangement, which is characterized by tightly structured units which are centred around a focal social area. The Mbila homesteads are further distinctive in that they are not built out in the open, but within the bush or the forested area where this is permitted. The sharp rise in the population over the past two decades as well as the proclamation of the protected areas in the region makes this settlement pattern rather impossible around the Sodwana Bay area at present, although the homesteads situated deeper within the tribal area are still positioned in this manner.

The traditional Thonga homestead is relatively small, often consisting of only one hut in which the husband, the wife and the children live. There is, of course, a fair amount of variation on this theme especially in situations where the husband is reasonably affluent and has more than one wife. In Maputaland, each man's house is said to be his castle and not even the community Chief or *iNkosi* has the power to command a man to do anything in his own house. Furthermore, in the case of a casual visit to a traditional Mbila homestead it was found that it was best to always stay with the individual that has invited the visitor or with the head of the homestead, as far a practically possible. These individuals would then inform the visitors of the areas of the homestead that they may and may not enter.

The traditional Mbila dwellings are very well constructed. The dwellings are constructed from reeds and grasses as well as saplings and the branches of trees. The saplings and thicker branches usually comprise the frame of the structure, whilst the reeds are used to

close up the walls and grass is used as thatch for the roofs. Some of the older more traditional huts are decorated with intricately woven patterns of grass and the leaves of the iLala palm (Mountain, 1990).

Many of these huts can be seen from the main road whilst driving between Mbaswana and Sodwana Bay. From here it is also easily observable that the traditional houses are giving way to more modern structures built either from mud and stone, with thatch roofs, or from mortar and bricks, with tiled roofs. In some of the cases where more than one dwelling exists on one property, one of these dwellings would typically be of the modern variety whilst the other would typically be a mixture of a bark and thatch hut. (see Figure 3.5)

The bark of the bark dwellings originates from the government and private sawmills in Mbaswana and is sold to the community as off-cuts at minimal prices. Sadly, this type of building material seems to be more readily available than traditional building materials and also requires much less skill and time to build with. It is, however, not nearly as attractive to the eye as the traditional dwellings and these structures are also much more stuffy than the cool reed structures.

The homestead serves as the centre point of the Mbila society. The husband and the father of the homestead is the head of the homestead and is responsible for the economic survival of that homestead. He usually also owns everything including the land on which the homestead is built, on behalf of his family. Where the husband is not present, this role falls to the first wife, although it has also been experienced that the lead income earners of that homestead would stand as its head in the absence of the father. Research revealed that these income earners were sometimes as young as thirteen years of age, and supported their parents as well as their grandparents and their brothers and sisters.

Traditionally, the wives and the daughters of a homestead were responsible for the cultivation of the subsistence crops, the collection of firewood and the drawing of the water supply, whilst the boys were responsible for herding the livestock. Presently though, any member of the homestead is permitted to acquire an outside income to support the homestead because of the limited amount of income-generating opportunities available in the area.

Figure 3.5: Traditional and Modern Buildings

The political organization of the Mbila community begins at the homestead level, where the father is responsible and answerable to the outside world for the behaviour of his family. The boys and the girls of the homestead are only seen as men and women when they get married and this is also the time when they are relieved of the duties of their father's homestead to tend to those of their own. Traditionally, the boys may not take part in the discussions at the iNkosi's or headman's court, they may not acquire any land and they may not sit down with the other married males during the major community meetings.

The next level in the political hierarchy of the Mbila tribe is that of the Elders or *indunas* (also called counsellors) (Torres, 1980; Mountain, 1990). Mountain (1990) describes two kinds of *inDuna,* namely the sub-headmen and the headmen. The sub-headmen are responsible for the upholding of the law of between 20 to 50 homesteads. Their task is to try and settle disputes that occur among the community members before they are taken to the headman's court (Torres, 1980). The headman is usually a brother or a cousin of the iNkosi and is also appointed by the iNkosi himself.

The headman has jurisdiction over a number of the sub-headmen's districts. He is the presiding judge over the headman's court, which is a very important judicial institution in the Mbila community (Torres, 1980; Mountain, 1990). If a dispute cannot be adequately

settled at this level, the relevant party has the option to appeal to the iNkosi's court, but has to do so through the headman. The majority of the cases in the Mbila community are, however, resolved with the headmen.

At the top of the hierarchy is the Chief or the iNkosi. The current Mbila iNkosi is iNkosi James Sonto Zikhali. The chieftainship is hereditary and passes from father to son. The iNkosi is advised by his headmen. They are the ones that have to inform him of all that he has to know in the community as a whole and the iNkosi would typically rarely act independently of these headmen. Although the various headmen handle the majority of the community cases, iNkosi Zikhali rarely seems to have a weekend without any scheduled court hearings.

The roles of the iNkosi and the headmen in Maputaland have been reinforced by the introduction of the Tembe Tribal Authority in terms of the Black Authorities Act, 1951 (Act 68 of 1951) (Mountain, 1990). This act was a cornerstone in the previous government's policy of separate development, which aimed at the creation of alternative self-governing institutions for each of the major black ethnic groups in South Africa in separate National States (Mountain, 1990). Where practicable, these National States were to become independent 'countries' within the geographical boundaries of South Africa (Mountain, 1990). Maputaland was therefore incorporated into KwaZulu through this act and consequently stood as a non-independent National State (Mountain, 1990).

More recently, however, the post-1994 government has promulgated the Transitional Local Government Act (TLGA) 1995 (Act 98 of 1995). This legislation, in addition to the Communal Property Associations Act, 1996 (Act 28 of 1996), was aimed at strengthening the specific authority of the local tribal authorities, and legalized the Mbila Tribal Authority (MTA) as a legal local government entity that can act as the appropriate authority in cases such as the restitution of land (South Africa, 1995 and 1996a). The difference, of course, is that the latter acts served to empower the community where the 1951 act had a somewhat ulterior motive.

The essential purpose of these tribal authorities and the regional authorities above them was to entrench traditional tribal political structures and through this to enable each tribal and regional authority to act as a hierarchy of local authorities in their respective areas of jurisdiction (Mountain, 1990). Maputaland was divided into six of these tribal authorities of which four are situated in the Ingwavuma area to the north and two at Ubombo near Jozini. The Mbila community therefore falls under the Mbila Tribal Authority in Ubombo,

which in turn falls under the jurisdiction of the Uthungulu Regional Council (URC) that represents the whole of Maputaland.

The Mila Tribal Authority has legislative powers over the land in the Mbila Tribal area although the land itself is the property of the community (See also Section 3.2.4.2). Therefore, any person that wants to acquire land in the Mbila tribal area has to have the blessing of the Mbila community before the request can be sent to the offices of the Mbila Tribal Authority in Ubombo. Here the request for land will be evaluated once more before a final decision is made. The Uthungulu Regional Council is responsible for the socio-economic planning and development of the Maputaland region. Their duties incorporate a broad spectrum of features and include aspects ranging from the infrastructural maintenance of the region to the land use planning of the various areas.

The Uthungulu Regional Council works in close partnership with all the relevant government and provincial departments on these aspects. The physical work that results from the requirements of the different areas is, as a rule, also performed by these departments but is referred to the applicable private service providers (the tele-communications company Telkom, for instance) where these government or provincial departments do not exist. A recent project in Sodwana Bay arose out of the need of the Mbila community to take a look at the various land use patterns in their area.

This was communicated to the Mbila Tribal Authority who in turn contacted the Uthungulu Regional Council. The Uthungulu Regional Council went ahead and held a meeting in Sodwana Bay where all the relevant parties were invited. The aim of this meeting was to provide the background to the current land use patterns as well as the specific need for the land-use exercise and to decide on a representative committee that could represent the different stakeholders in this regard. The committee was formed and currently consists of representatives of the Mbila community (iNkosi Zikhali), the Uthungulu Regional Council , KZN Wildlife authority, the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative and members of the private tourism operators in the Sodwana Bay area.

The outcome of the first meeting was said to be very positive and iNkosi Zikhali mentioned that although much disagreement existed as to the different land use values and it's related development, that the parties attending the meeting exhibited the will to work towards acceptable solutions[2]. The second meeting was scheduled to be held on

[2] Personal communication with iNkosi J. M. Zikhali, March 24th, 2002, Mbila Tribal Court, Mbaswana.

the 7th of April 2002 and was planned to discuss the first actual proposals from all the different representatives. The meeting was also said to be successful.

Some of the other social structures that are present in the area include representations of the national political parties and local political groupings, self-interest groups as well as mixed community-based associations. On a national political level the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) are the only political groupings that enjoy local support. Presently the IFP are the ruling party with a majority vote of 2947 votes won, against the 863 votes of the ANC in the last local elections (ENPAT, 1998).

Local political groupings consist chiefly of the different Tribal Authorities and the different Tribal Councils within these Authorities. Self-interest groups and community-based associations in the area are those of the Mbila Plant Resource Harvesting Committee, the Mbaswana iZinyanga Association (Traditional Healers Association), the Ubumbano Craft Group, the Velasibone Communal Garden Group, the Mbila Land Claim Committee, the Mbaswana SANP Youth Desk and Several Eco Clubs in the local schools of the Mbila Tribal area. It seems as if the formation of these associations is swiftly becoming a trend in the region. Many of these associations are formed when a collective difficulty is identified and when the community has a desire to deal with this. When the difficulty incorporates other interest groups such as the KZN Wildlife authorities, these groups are also represented in the applicable committees.

3.3.3 Socio-Economic Conditions

Section 3.2.2 have already shed some light on the environmental challenges that the Maputaland region presents to its inhabitants and to the people that have tried to settle there. These are also the same determinants that, for the most part, kept development out of the region and subsequently caused the rural communities to live in severe poverty-stricken conditions (Bruton, 1980e; Mountain, 1990). The government of the 1980s and 1990s predicted progressively worsening conditions in the Maputaland area if some form of significant development could not be introduced to the area and therefore initiated a wide range of studies through the whole of Maputaland to seek out some kind of development that could provide viable economic upliftment in the area (Bruton, 1980e; Mountain, 1990).

The results of these studies revealed the following options for the Mbila tribal area. Firstly the studies provided evidence for the possible cultivation of sugar cane and a few

varieties of sub-tropical fruits (Bruton, 1980e; Mountain, 1990). This was, however, deemed to be impractical because of the fact that although the area is rich in water, its soil infertility and the physical characteristics of the soil itself would involve a sustained inflow of fertilizers and machinery to properly cultivate the fruits (Mountain, 1990). This option was therefore deemed uneconomical and the only productive cultivation of fruits and sugar cane in the area exists on the edges of the swamp forests of the region, which is so destructive to the area's sensitive natural environment that it has now been declared illegal (Mountain, 1990; Porter, 2001).

Afforestation as the second option was developed in the Mbaswana area and to the south of Lake Sibayi (Bruton, 1980e; Mountain, 1990). In this case the rate of the timber growth per hectare did not compare well with other areas in the northern Natal region (Mountain, 1990). In addition the nature of the subsoil effectively caused large tracts of forest to drown during the high rainfall seasons and presented difficulties that could not be dealt with in an economical fashion (Mountain, 1990). Afforestation was therefore also discarded as a viable form of economic development in the area and much of the original forests are now community woodlots used in a non-commercial manner (Mountain, 1990).

Tourism therefore came as a welcome alternative. The KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources (A predecessor of the KZN Wildlife Authority) proved this with a small camping facility, which they ran at Kosi Bay in the extreme north of Maputaland (Mountain, 1990). The Bureau had a policy of returning part of its earnings from its resorts to the local communities, which in the case of Kosi Bay paid out R11 000 in 1986, R17 000 in 1987 and R36 000 in 1988 (Mountain, 1990).

This proved that tourism, as a form of development that could be managed in a less consumptive way, could actually aid in the economic upliftment of many areas in Maputaland (Mountain, 1990). The idea grew even further when, in July of 1998 the governments of Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa launched the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI) aimed at creating a manageable protected area that would become one of the greatest tourists attractions in the world and subsequently bring the desired economic upliftment which the area so desperately needs (LSDI, 2001a).

Currently, the existing plane of socio-economic development in the Mbila tribal area is of a relatively low level. The Mbila portion of the Maputaland region has a population of approximately 11 704 (ENPAT, 1998). The area has a major employment problem with 48% of the economically active population classified as unemployed (ENPAT, 1998;

Wilson, 1999; LSDI, 2001b). In addition the limited development options in the region doesn't allow for satisfactory salaries, resulting in 90% of rural households earning incomes of less than R800 per month (LSDI, 2001b).

Although a great number of schools exist in the Mbila tribal area, many of these suffer severe infrastructural deficiencies. The area also suffers from a severely handicapped education system (inadequate education and training programmes and ineffective governing bodies and training staff) resulting in some of the lowest literacy levels in the region[3] (LSDI, 2001b). Hospital beds and doctors are of a reasonable supply with the Mission Hospital at Mseleni and the newly built consulting rooms at Mbaswana, but there is a definite need for more clinics in the more remote areas further away from the major roadways (LSDI, 2001b).

The field research revealed that it was decided by the Mbila Tribal Authority that water and electricity should first be supplied to the schools in the area. The fact that the major schools in the region are distributed rather evenly over the area will cause the infrastructure to be in relative close proximity to most of the homesteads throughout the area and these services could then be supplied if the owner of the homestead could afford its monthly dues. Currently, however, only the homesteads nearest to the major water and electricity consumers such as Mbaswana, the private tourism operator's premises and Sodwana Bay National Park itself are supplied with these luxuries, and homesteads deeper in the Mbila Tribal area still get their water from the main water distribution points and use candles as the main source of light in the evenings.

The freshwater supply to the area is very abundant, firstly because of the presence of four large freshwater lakes in the area as well as the high percentage of precipitation that the area receives annually (see Section 3.2.2). Public water reservoirs are also provided at other designated locations along the main road and individuals can buy their water there at 50 cents for 5 litres. The money is used by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) to cover the maintenance of the reservoir. Most of the people interviewed explained, however, that although these services could be supplied that many of the homesteads could not afford their tariffs. This notion is also applicable in the case of the supply of telephones in the area.

In the case of the Mbila tribal area, it is necessary to go beyond the quantitative form of approach to clarify the way in which the physical environment influences the socio-economic development in the area. Figure 3.1 illustrates how the main road from

[3] Personal communication with Sam Masinga, owner of the local newspaper, The Maputaland Mirror, March 22nd, 2002, Mbaswana.

Hluhluwe and Jozini meets up at Mbaswana and how it proceeds from there to Sodwana Bay. The stretch of road between Sodwana Bay and Mbaswana is about 15 kilometres in length and covers an interesting area.

Mbaswana itself is seen by many as the northern gateway to the Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park (LSDI, 2001a). This is a park of international recognition (see Section 3.1.2) which makes Mbaswana important, not only as a type of an advertisement of what the region holds, but also as an important development point in the area. Consequently, the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative in cooperation with the Uthungulu Regional Council has over the last two years completed major infrastructural enhancements in and around this town These enhancements came in the form of the replacement of the rather treacherous dirt roads from Hluhluwe, Jozini (still under construction) and Phelindaba (also still under construction), with new tar roads, as well as the building of a shopping centre in the heart of the town.

The shopping centre includes a filling station, a general dealer, a hair salon, a furniture store as well as a few medical consulting rooms and an array of other smaller shops. On the opposite side of the shopping centre, the town has also received a number of carefully arranged market stalls. Here the local people can hire a stall at a minimal rate and sell anything from curios to the fresh produce from their vegetable gardens. (see Fig. 3.6) The Crafts Development Centre contains lecture halls, administrative offices and workshops and was built as a facility where the craft groups from the greater Mbaswana area could further develop their skills, and the crafters from the Mbaswana area could sell some of their work. These complexes were also provided with a new taxi rank, which shuttles people to and from Sodwana Bay, as well as the other major centres in the area.

Sodwana Bay is the second point of activity and is situated at the extreme eastern end of the study area. The beachfront at Jesser Point serves as the only launching site for the boats that ferry the divers and the deep-sea anglers to the various dive and angling sites along the Sodwana Bay coastline. Apart from these activities (which constitute the two main tourism-generating activities in the whole region) most of the other activities also involve the main beaches around Jesser Point.

The principal tourist accommodation facilities are also situated within the boundaries of the Sodwana Bay National Park and accommodate the majority of the tourists that visit the tourist attractions there. It is therefore clear that any party that wishes to profit from the benefits of the tourism generated at Sodwana Bay would achieve this by firstly, being located as close as possible to the beach and secondly, by being in close contact with tourists that use it.

Figure 3.6: Mbaswana Market Stalls

When the decision was passed that a curio market would be built to aid in the selling of the crafts of the Mbila community, it was of the utmost importance to place the market in a location where it would enjoy the highest level of tourist exposure. The Ubumbano Craft Market was therefore located next to the main road leading to the primary tourism camp and within walking distance from the beach. This market has since become the biggest and most frequented curio market in the Mbila tribal area.

Other curio stalls exist along the main road between Mbaswana and Sodwana Bay as well as in Mbaswana itself. These markets are of a much smaller scale, however, and are situated far from the main tourism activities at the Sodwana Bay beach. The owners of these stalls experience much less tourist visits and implied, in more than one instance, that they were also thinking of moving to the Ubumbano market.

The service facilities and the premises of the private tourism operators represent the third point of activity in the area. These include a shebeen owned by a member of the Mbila community, as well as three additional taverns and two restaurants. Here the developments are also located alongside the main road, about 4,5 kilometres from the beach at Jesser Point, and on the edge of the Sodwana Bay National Park. The reason for this location is that the boundary of the Sodwana Bay National Park is situated here and these positions provide the closest opportunities for private settlement near the beachfront at Jesser Point.

From a geographic point of view, the study area presents a fair amount of difficulties to its local inhabitants. The long distances from the beach mean that the private tourism operators to haul their diving and fishing equipment over this distance and that the nature of the road they have to travel causes unnecessary wear and tear on their equipment and on their vehicles. Furthermore the private operators are in a way forced to rent camping sites for their clients at the main tourist camp in the Sodwana Bay National Park. This happens especially during the busy holiday periods, and occasionally limits the ability of these private operators to provide the kind of packages they would like to.

The real difficulties, however, are faced by the members of the rural community who do not own their own vehicles and therefore have to travel these lengthy distances on foot. The first difficulty is the road network itself. The main road between Mbaswana and Sodwana Bay constitutes the only tarred road in the vicinity of the Mbila tribal area. The dirt roads that make up the rest of the road network consist of deep sand that makes travelling extremely difficult and very time consuming as well. Travelling to and from work therefore takes a lot of effort and many of the tourism operators admitted to the fact that their employees are regularly late for work. Some even provided their employees with bicycles. This helped in getting some of the workers to work earlier although some came even later because they now had to haul additional weight over the long stretches of deep sand road.

Those members of the community that are blessed to own homesteads closer to the main road are only favoured by this if they live in close proximity to their employer as well. If this is not the case they still have to walk long distances to work, or hitch a ride if they are fortunate. When all of these alternatives are exhausted, they have to make use of the local taxi service. Some of the problems experienced with this service are that they do not run at scheduled times like a bus service, for instance, and more critically, that they are very expensive and are therefore simply unaffordable for most.

3.3.4 Previous and Existing Forms of Land Tenure

3.3.4.1 Tenurial History of the Area

Land tenure in the Mbila tribal area has an interesting past. The first claimants on the Mbila's traditional territory were the Zulus and Swazis who frequently overran the Thonga people living in the area where the Mbila community is situated today (Bruton, *et al.*, 1980d, Mountain, 1990). The British would be next to claim Mbila territory with their

annexation of British Maputaland and the instatement of their typical *'divide and rule'* tactics of the late 1880s (Mountain, 1990; Duminy and Guest, 1995; Carton, 2000). These tactics in turn gave rise to the division of the Zulu kingdom into smaller chieftainships (which is the origin of all the present tribes in Maputaland) and the establishment of the 'Native Locations' Acts (Mountain, 1990; Duminy and Guest, 1995; Carton, 2000).

The Native Locations Acts entitled the British to settle the Thonga people in *'Native Locations'* as they saw fit and typically involved measures such as settling these peoples in areas regarded to be of little or no use to the crown (Mountain, 1990; Duminy and Guest, 1995; Carton, 2000). These laws were the first to discriminate against the rural communities of Maputaland and impeded the free development of the rural communities at that time already (Mountain, 1990). These laws gave way in 1913 when the new Union of South Africa passed the 'Black Land Act' which basically involved the continuation of the previous set of laws and therefore the extension of the limitation of the rural communities' ability to manage their own environment as well.

The Black Land Act was changed in 1936 and in 1971 again (Mountain, 1990). The National States Constitution Act of 1971 resulted in the creation of KwaZulu and granted internal self-government to those areas set aside for Zulu occupation (Mountain, 1990). The latter changes devolved the authoritative powers concerning land ownership specifically back to the rural communities of Maputaland and formed part of the 1960s and 1970s government's strategy to create separate independent self-governing states within the Republic of South Africa.

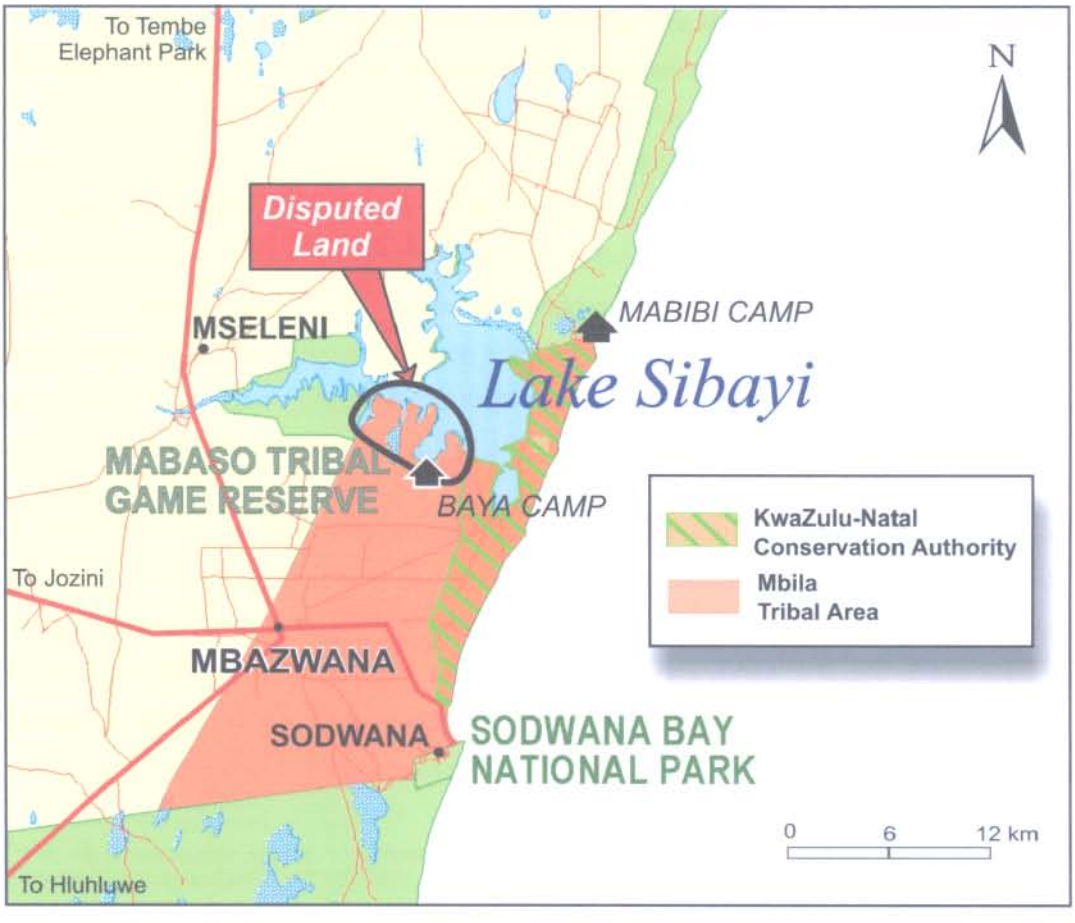
Although the latter changes effectively empowered the local communities in the area by giving them authority over their own land, it also impaired them quite drastically as this legislation was passed as compensation for the fact that they would not have equal rights in the rest of the country. However, by the time of the first true democratic elections in 1994, the devolution of powers by the pre-1994 governments meant that, in stark contrast with many of the other rural communities in South Africa, the Mbila community already had a fully functioning Traditional Authoritative structure (the Mbila Tribal Authority) that had legitimate powers over the majority of land in their tribal area.

3.3.4.2. Present Forms of Land Ownership

Presently the Mbila Tribal Authority has control over large tracts of the traditional Mbila territory (See Fig. 3.7). The physical land ownership structure of the area works as follows: in principle, the land firstly belongs to the Ingonyama Trust. This Trust is effectively the trustee of all the land belonging to the Tribal Authorities in the area and falls under the powers of the Zulu king, King Goodwill Zweletini. On the local level, the land of each homestead belongs to its owner. This land sequentially again belongs to the Tribal Authority that falls under the Ingonyama Trust and in this way completes the circle of land ownership of the Mbila community and Maputaland in general.

Although the Mbila community have access to a reasonable portion of their land, they also have to share large portions of it with the other authorities in the area. The areas that still fall under other authoritative structures are divided into two categories. Firstly, those under the KZN Wildlife authorities and secondly, a piece of disputed land that falls under the authority of either the Mbila Tribal Authority or that of the neighbouring Mabaso Tribal Authority. These areas are indicated in Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: Existing Land Tenure



3.3.4.3 The Mbila Land Claim

Following the settlement of the Mbila community according to the European laws of the late 1800s and the first part of the 1900s, fractions of the community would yet again have to re-settle because of the influences of external forces. The land to the east of the Mbila territory was initially estranged from the Mbilas during the early years of the Second World War. This land contained sections of the Coastal Forest reserve and the Sodwana Bay National Park and links up with other large sections of land to the north and to the south of the Mbila tribal area (e.g. Kosi Bay and St. Lucia Lake areas) which were used by the military to guard against enemy attacks from the Indian Ocean[4].

By the mid 1970s, the land that the military had seized for its activities (which should have been given back to the community) was handed over to the Department of Forestry[4]. The final handover of this land happened in 1987 when the land was put under the guardianship of the Natal Parks Board[4] (predecessor of the KZN Wildlife Services) The Natal Parks Board in turn added this land onto the land occupied by the Coastal Forest Reserve, which was proclaimed in 1952 as part of the Seashore Act 1935 (Act 21 of 1935) and that of the Sodwana Bay National Park, which was established in 1959 (Bruton, 1980e).

In total, the land occupied by authorities other than the Mbila Tribal Authority, but within the Mbila tribal territory thus include the eastern shores of Lake Sibayi, Lake Sibayi itself, the disputed area south of Lake Sibayi as well as the coastal dune forests that run all along the eastern boundary of the original Mbila tribal territory (Proclaimed in Government Gazette No. 1160 of 1952 and presently zoned under the St. Lucia and Maputaland Marine Reserves) and Sodwana Bay National Park itself (KZN Wildlife, 2000). Exclusions like these caused the Mbila community to be alienated not only from large sections of the natural resource base on which they were still very dependent, but also from significant tracts of tourism generating natural attractions which could contribute extensively towards their quality of life.

Restrictions on the natural resource base were imposed on these communities in typical top-down protectionist fashion (see Section 2.3.1.1) and subsequently caused a lot of strife between the affected communities and the KZN Wildlife authorities (Bruton, 1980e; Mountain, 1990). Fortunately the 1980s and 1990s saw a rise in focus of the livelihood issues of communities around protected areas and caused conservation authorities

[4] Personal communication with Mr. S. Ngobese, Mbila Community member and Community Conservation Officer, Sodwana Bay National Park, March 18th, 2002, Sodwana Bay National Park.

worldwide to re-examine their conservation policies in light of increased community involvement (see Section 2.3.2.2).

The Natal Parks Board is said to be one of the first among such authorities in South Africa to initiate the participation of neighbouring communities in the issues involving these communities and the protected area concerned, on a policy level (Financial Mail, 1991; Cowling and Oliver, 1992). Of these initiatives, the provision of jobs and the partial use of the natural resource base in certain specified areas of the Sodwana Bay National Park comprised some of the more common initiatives to be practiced at Sodwana Bay (Bruton, 1980e; Mountain, 1990; Ngobese, 2002[4]).

Although these initiatives represented some definite steps in the right direction, the control of the resources and the land on which they exist still remained with the KZN Wildlife authorities and thus still meant that the Mbila community were significantly deprived of the benefits that were generated from tourism in the area as well as of their ability to influence the area's development.

Post-1994 legislation had a dramatic effect on the rights of communities like these however, and effectively granted them the legal power to reclaim the land which they had lost. In the case of the Mbila community, the following legislation is applicable:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996; (South Africa, 1996).
- Section 25(7) of the Constitution's Bill of Rights, which provides for the restitution of land lost as a result of racial discrimination by previous governments with the
- Restitution of Land Rights, Act 22 of 1994 as the legal vehicle to enforce this law (South Africa, 2002).

In addition to this legislative support, the Mbila land claim was further assisted by additional shifts in the KZN Wildlife authority's policies regarding its involvement with the communities adjacent to the protected areas that it administers (Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, 2002). These policies have provided for increased levels of participation with the neighbouring communities, as well as the establishment of partnerships to facilitate the interaction, which is needed for cooperation in matters such as the development and conservation of the area (Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, 2002).

The process involved in the Mbila Land Claim can briefly be described as follows. The Land Claims Committee convened a meeting for all the interested and affected parties

[4] Personal communication with Mr. S. Ngobese, Mbila Community member & Community Conservation Officer, Sodwana Bay National Park, March 18th, 2002, Sodwana Bay National Park.

on the 20th of July 2000 (Porter, 2001). This meeting was convened to determine all the relevant role players in the claim as well as to provide these parties with all the pertinent information regarding the claim (Porter, 2001). Further meetings were also held in August of that year to properly introduce all the stakeholders and to discuss each of these parties' negotiation positions (Porter, 2001).

In addition, representatives of the Mbila and Mabaso Land Claim Committees as well as of the KZN Wildlife Authorities held various other meetings during February and March of 2001 to settle the claims in the Coastal Forest Reserve and the National Park sections and to try to resolve the dispute between the two Tribal authorities (Porter, 2001). Discussions were also held at the homesteads of the affected families to ensure that the process was transparent (Porter, 2001). The handover ceremony was scheduled to occur on the 21st of March 2001, but it was discovered at that stage that certain key stakeholders had not been involved in the process. This resulted in the process having to be restarted, this time with the attendance of all the relevant stakeholders (Porter, 2001).

The final result of the land claim was that the land (except the Mbila – Mabaso disputed land) now again falls under the authority of the Mbila Tribal Authority, but that the KZN Wildlife Authority would still be the principal administrator of this land (Roesch, 2002). Settlements were also reached with regard to the issuing of licenses to harvest some marine and terrestrial species in the Park and that the Mbila community members would in every circumstance enjoy the privilege of being given the first opportunity to fill vacant jobs at Sodwana Bay as far as possible. This is discussed in more detail in section 3.5. According to Mr. Ngobese of the Sodwana Bay KZN Wildlife authorities and iNkosi Zikhali, no final agreement could be reached regarding the matter of the Mbila - Mabaso disputed land (see Fig 3.7) and much negotiation would still have to occur to settle the matter.

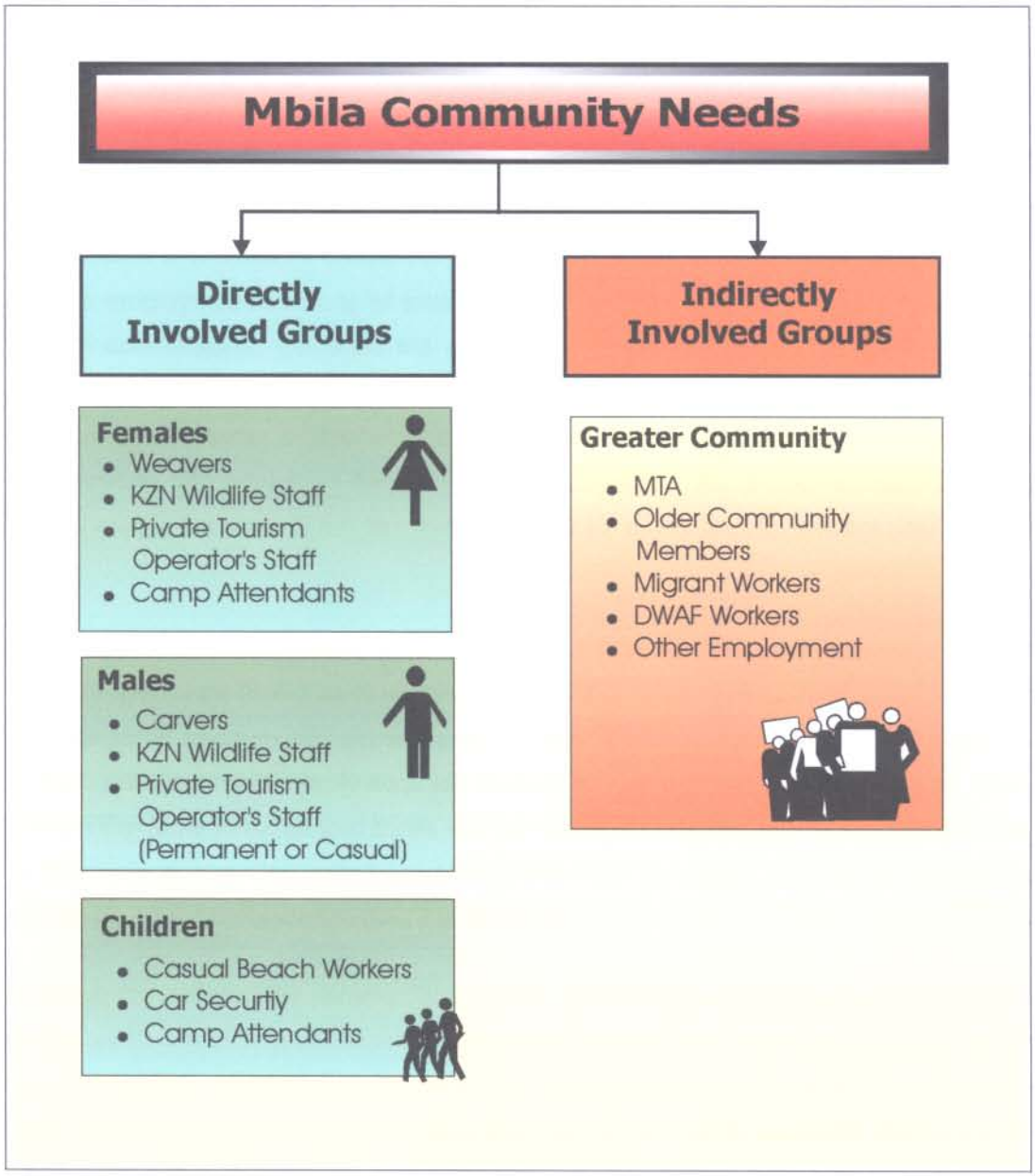
3.3.5 General Perceptions of Community Needs

Concerning the general community needs in the Mbila Tribal area, in relation to their involvement in the local tourism industry, the research revealed two major groups within the Mbila community. Those that are directly involved in the tourism industry and who are almost entirely dependent on the benefits of this involvement, and those that are not directly involved and who derive their earnings from other sources (See Fig. 3.8).

It is interesting to note how the influence of the existence of the tourism industry in the region is so prominent that some of the members of the community have developed needs that can be directly linked to this industry. A good example of this is, for instance, where women at employable occupational ages have developed a need for jobs and

cheaper transport where these women would traditionally be busy with household responsibilities such as the collection of firewood and the fetching of water. In the same way the young boys of the area, who traditionally would have tended their fathers' live stock have also developed a need for transport since this transportation takes them to where the tourists are, where they can also find a number of casual employment opportunities.

Figure 3.8: Major Tourism Interest Groups in Relation with General Community Needs



The interviews held with various individuals of the Mbila community during the fieldwork of the study revealed that the community need that was perceived to be most important by the males, the females and the boys of the community was that of jobs (employment opportunities) and this clearly because of the limited range and number of employment opportunities in the job market of the area (Table 3.1).

For the men and the boys, the second most significant need was that of transport and this seemed to stem from the fact that, in addition to those who are privileged enough to have a permanent job and have to be at work on time, the rest of the opportunities would fall unto those that were present when these jobs become available. Seeing that the main tourist attractions at Sodwana Bay presently consist of scuba diving and deep sea angling, it means that the workers that help to ready and launch the boats have to be there at 05:30 if they want to secure a job for the day. Literally a situation of the early bird catching the worm.

For the females, transport ranks third in order of importance and this can most probably be attributed to the sexual division of labour in the Sodwana Bay workplace (Table 3.1). Female employment consists of jobs such as waitressing and cooking at the private tourism concessions, domestic aid around the campsites as well as curio and fruit vendors. Although the females of the community have to compete with the males of the community, for some of these jobs the majority of the latter kind of employment opportunities still seems to favour them. Opportunities like these are also in much greater supply because of the fact that they cater for all the tourists and not only a select group.

The need for water and electricity supply to the women's homesteads appeared to be of greater importance than that of transport (Table 3.1). This is most likely due to the fact that the Mbila tradition still demands that these women perform all of their traditional tasks in addition to their newly acquired tourism-related day jobs at Sodwana Bay. Mbila custom therefore requires that these women supply the homestead with water and fuel for the cooking fires. Currently these commodities can be bought, but they still have to be carried over long distances to their homesteads.

Although the males of the community assist the females in getting these resources to the homesteads, the lack of affordable transport still makes this a very arduous task, which could be greatly simplified by the supply of water and electricity to the homesteads. Other needs that seemed to be of less importance, but which were still mentioned by many of the female respondents, consisted of aspects such as education for their

children, the enhancement of the quality of the roads as well as the supply of telephones in some of the areas.

The third most important need of the male respondents was that of land (Table 3.1). This feature is also closely related to the employment opportunities of the area as Mbila tradition only permits males to obtain land of their own if they marry. To get married is a very costly affair, especially due to the bride wealth tradition (*Labola* at it is popularly known), which still remains firmly intact in the Mbila community. Afterwards, it is also of great importance to the males of the Mbila community to provide sufficiently for their families not only because of the benefits for the family but also as a matter of personal honour. Other needs that also appeared to be of importance to the males were that of the supply of water, electricity and telephones to their homesteads as well as the improvement of the roads (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Mbila Community: Paired Ranking by Interest Groups of the Most Important Community Needs, 2002

Females	Males	Children	Community
1. Jobs	1. Jobs	1. Jobs	1. Roads
2. Water and Electricity	2. Transport	2. Transport	2. Water and Electricity to Schools
3. Transport	3. Land	3. Education	3. Land for Settlement
4. Others	4. Water, Electricity and Telephones	4. Others	4. Land for Grazing
	5. Others		5. Transport
			6. Others

The children involved in the tourism industry at Sodwana Bay were mostly boys. Young girls were much less dependent and for the most part move around with their mothers. Boys function much more independently though, and compete with the male group for employment. Tulani Nxumalo is a thirteen-year-old Mbila boy and an excellent representative of this group of the community. He has already worked for two years as a campsite attendant and as a casual worker at the diving and fishing charters of Sodwana Bay. He prefers the diving industry, however, and was busy washing scuba equipment while he was being interviewed.

At thirteen years of age he is already looking after his mother, one of his grand parents as well as his two sisters and was well informed about the benefits of tourism. He saw education as his key to this industry and already has plans to start a business ferrying tourists between the beach and the Sodwana Bay National Park campsite, in order to solve the present parking problem at Sodwana Bay's beach. The distance from the beach to the parking area is the cause of many problems at Sodwana Bay at present, which serves to demonstrate this boy's insight into the needs of the tourists as well as his eye for an opportunity. His belief in the importance of education was shared by many of the other boys of his age and older, although he was certainly the most enthusiastic. Many of these boys recognized school fees, textbooks and stationery as some of the other most pressing needs.

The Indirectly Involved Groups (Fig. 3.8) expressed a rather different set of needs. This is most probably due to the fact that they are not as dependent on the benefits of tourism in Sodwana Bay although they do understand the development significance of the tourism industry in their area. Some of the elders (counsellors) of the Mbila Tribal Authority, for instance, expressed the need to first of all supply the schools of the area with water and electricity, but also expressed their need for extra land to settle on as well as for additional grazing for the cattle of the community.

A handful of the older members of the community that live somewhat further from Sodwana Bay uttered their need for better roads in the more rural areas, whilst one or two of the individuals articulated their concern about the amount and the depth of the discussions held between them and the KZN Wildlife authorities.

The needs mentioned here, as well as those of the more involved groups, are however only the primary ones that were identified in the limited time that this study allowed for fieldwork, and are sure to be more numerous and more complex if the social structures of the area are studied in more detail.

3.4 The Tourism Industry at Sodwana Bay

3.4.1 Introduction

Visitor opportunities and activities at the Sodwana Bay National Park are strongly associated with the marine environment (see Section 3.2.2). The reefs off Jesser Point present the southern most occurrences of tropical corals along the east African coast and safe launching conditions are unique along the North Zululand coast (Haynes and

Hornby, 1994). Deep sea angling as well as rock and surf angling and scuba diving especially, have grown enormously over the last twenty years and has subsequently contributed significantly to Sodwana's status as the premier diving and fishing destination in South Africa (Hicks, 1991; Haynes and Hornby, 1994; Pinnock, 2001).

3.4.2 Current Tourism Ventures at Sodwana Bay and the Involvement of the Mbila Community

3.4.2.1 Government Ventures: Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife

The KZN Wildlife authorities stationed at Sodwana Bay serve as the chief conservation authority in the area and have jurisdiction over all of the nationally proclaimed protected areas in the region (see Section 3.2.4). The main beachfront with the launching areas as well as the main tourist accommodation facilities lies within the boundaries of the Sodwana Bay National Park and is also administered by the KZN Wildlife authorities. The number of visitors to Sodwana Bay is presently determined by the carrying capacity of the beach and amounts to 3 600 resident (including management and staff), and a total of 2 000 day visitors per day (Haynes and Hornby, 1994).

At present, the KZN Wildlife authorities at Sodwana Bay do not control any of the principal tourism activities (e.g. diving, fishing etc.) in the area (see Section 3.4), these are controlled by the private tourism operators. The provision and the maintenance of the accommodation facilities at Sodwana Bay National Park, Baya Camp and Mabibi, and the conservation of the proclaimed protected areas therefore represent the primary tourism ventures and are thus also the principal providers of tourism-related opportunities for the Mbila community from the part of the KZN Wildlife authorities. The delineation of permanent staff in the Sodwana Bay National Park is as follows:

Table 3.2: Description of Employment Opportunities Provided by the KZN Wildlife Authority

Activity	Employment	Description
Campsites	25 staff members	This includes tasks such as the cleaning of the ablution facilities and other facilities such as the fish cleaning tables, as well as

Table 3.2: Description of Employment Opportunities Provided by the KZN Wildlife Authority (Continued)

Activity	Employment	Description
		the clearing of the campsites and the roads that lead to them
Log Cabins	17 staff members	This includes the cleaning and general maintenance of the log cabin camps such as the Gwala Gwala Deluxe camp
Maintenance	8 staff members	This includes the general maintenance tasks on all the facilities and management offices in the park
Workshop	4 staff members	For the mechanical repair and maintenance of all the KZN Wildlife vehicles
Security	13 staff members	The security staff that guards all the gates and also handles the security-related complaints from the tourists
Trading	7 staff members	These people handle the fuel sales as well as the payments for the caravan and boat storage facilities and the freezer room
Field Rangers	13 staff members	The field rangers are generally occupied with patrols along the coast and in the interior to monitor the harvesting of the natural resources, but also to fulfil any other tasks that are summoned by management.
Management	11 staff members	These employees consist of the clerks at the service counter of the Sodwana Bay National Park, that issue the tourists with their accommodation permits as well as all the relevant administration regarding special permits (e.g. boat licences, beach driving

Table 3.2: Description of Employment Opportunities Provided by the KZN Wildlife Authority (Continued)

Activity	Employment	Description
		permits, fishing permits, etc.). The other management staff members consist of senior management staff that manages all the various departments needed to operate the park successfully.
Other Workers		These workers are those that the park utilizes in addition to the permanent staff. They are either contract workers, contracted for whatever speciality the park needs (e.g. building, tiling, plumbing, etc.) or casual workers that are used to aid the permanent staff during the peak holiday periods as well as during the big Deep Sea Angling competitions and Scuba qualification dive weekends. The latter are also employed in whatever capacity the Park needs them and are also employed by the tourists themselves as campsite attendants.

The KZN Wildlife authority procures 95% of the Sodwana Bay National Park staff from the Mbila and Mabaso communities (Porter, 2001). The reason for the involvement of the Mabaso community arises from the fact that the KZN Wildlife Authorities also manage some of the territory adjacent to their tribal territory and therefore has to provide them with a number of employment opportunities (see Section 3.3.4.1). Preference is given to the Mbila community, however, because of the fact that they represent the most prevailing community in the area and 100% of the contract and casual workers are also recruited from them (Porter, 2001). Further opportunities that exist out of the Mbila - KZN Wildlife partnership will be discussed later in Sections 3.4.2.

3.4.2.2 Private Ventures

The majority of the tourism -related employment opportunities in the area are created by the activities of the diving and the sport fishing operations. Apart from these activities the area also offers activities such as guided horse riding and hiking trails, site-seeing drives, game drives to the nearby Mabaso Game Reserve, turtle tours, microlighting and other more recently introduced activities such as 4x4 and quad bike adventures.

Sodwana Bay is currently served by approximately 10 scuba diving operators permanently stationed in and around the National Park. A further 5 to 10 additional dive operators also use Sodwana Bay on a weekend and holiday basis, bringing the total number of employment opportunities that accrue from this tourism activity to about 80 permanent positions and an additional 50 casual opportunities during peak holiday periods.

Typical duties that arise out of these operations involve the equipping and the launching of the boats that ferry the divers, the ferrying of the divers to the diving locations, the attendance of the dive itself in order to aid the divers underwater and to certify that they have followed all the necessary procedures to qualify them at a specific level, the filling of the cylinders, the carrying of the diving gear to and from the launching boats, the washing of the gear after a dive and the management and maintenance of all of these practices and equipment (see Fig. 3.9).

Figure 3.9: Typical Involvement in Dive Operations

The running of a dive operation is said to be very technical and cost intensive[5]. This stems from the fact that dive equipment and the boats used to ferry the divers are very expensive and also very costly to maintain. Currently the duties that accrue to the Mbilas that work at these dive operations include all of those mentioned above except the management of the operation, the launching of the boats, the ferrying of the divers to the dive locations and the dive instruction itself. The fact that the Mbila community members until recently never went out to sea was probably because of the respect that they have for the ocean due to the many ships that ran aground in the Sodwana Bay area as well as the diving accidents that occurred there over the past few years.

The research revealed that some of the younger male members of the community are well aware of the benefits of qualifying themselves in these professions and are currently busy with their training in spite of the reservations that they have regarding the safety of these activities. Sodwana Bay currently boasts 2 of the only 4 black divers in the whole of South Africa (2 others at Aliwal Shoal) and is currently in the process of training 3 more. The area also contains 3 qualified Mbila compressor operators and 2 qualified commercial skippers. Other members are also receiving training in these capacities.

With regard to the deep sea angling operations, Sodwana currently has 5 permanent angling ventures with a general number of two ski-boats each. This number rises drastically over weekends, but especially during the sport fishing competitions held annually at Sodwana Bay where there could be anything between 100 to 180 vessels present. Typical duties that arise from this activity include the preparation of the boat before a launch (this is a very important part of the whole operation and takes great skill to perfect), the transportation of the boat to the launch site, the launching of the boat, the search of the correct fishing area for the specific game fish that the client hopes to catch, the retrieval of the boat and the washing of the boat as well as the fish that were caught on the day.

At present there are around 30 permanent Mbila workers involved in the Sodwana Bay game fishing ventures. One boat will typically involve 3 to 4 workers and therefore supplies quite a few extra casual work opportunities over the weekends and during the sport fishing competitions. The nature of the fishing also involves a vast amount of skill and can only be acquired through long term hands-on experience[6]. In this case, a few of the Mbila interviewees again mentioned their reservations concerning the ocean-faring

[5] Personal communication with Mr. S Roberts, Manager, Coral Divers, Sodwana Bay, March 18th, 2002
[6] Personal communication with Mrs. M. Lee, Partner Captain Lee Fishing Charters, Sodwana Bay, March 19th, 2002 and Mr. M. Visagie, owner, Vis Agie Fishing Charters, Sodwana Bay, March 21st, 2002.

part of the job and stated that they are more interested in the land-based activities regarding the running of such operations.

A further example exists in the case of an Mbila employee working at a local fishing charter by the name of Captain Lee Fishing Charters. This individual has been trained as a deck hand (the person that has to prepare the boat for a launch on the following day) and has since become skilled to the degree that he now is in charge of this aspect of the operation. The owner approached the individual to start training on the high seas as well, but the individual declined after one day out on the ocean.

The remainder of the adventure tourism ventures in the area is still under development and currently supplies only between 10 to 20 additional employment opportunities. Some of the ventures, such as the microlighting, also involve expensive equipment and training procedures and are therefore not expected to contribute significantly towards employment opportunities for the Mbila community in the near future. No official utility service provider exists in the area and these are usually contracted from outside Sodwana Bay or on an individual basis, where possible. One construction-oriented company exists in the area employing 12 Mbila community members at present. The private accommodation and restaurant ventures contribute approximately 140 job opportunities at present and are sure to increase in the future due to the rapid development of these activities in the area.

Males and females of the Mbila community are employed in the accommodation and restaurant ventures (males - maintenance and barmen, females – receptionists, waitresses and domestic workers) and also receive in-house training. Most of the employers interviewed require that the staff that is in direct contact with the tourists be able to speak English fluently and some also require the staff to be able to read and write in English as well. Although no trained staff were available out of the resident Mbila community, the in-house training process revealed huge successes in most of the instances with some of the staff even being accepted into some of the more upper class lodges in the area, even as far as Johannesburg[7].

3.5 TOURISM-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Tourism-based community development projects are one of a whole host of outcomes of the sustainability and sustainable development doctrines of the late 1980s and 1990s

[7] Personal communication with Mrs. C. Herman, Partner Mseni Lodge, Sodwana Bay, March 18th, 2002.

(see Section 2.3). The actual projects that exist on the grassroots level of many of the Rural Communities around the world are the product of the translation of these doctrines into policies and legislation which effectively empowered the communities to participate in Tourism-based Developments in their areas (see Section 2.4). The Mbila community of Sodwana Bay is one of the examples of a situation where this empowerment is slowly but surely beginning to effect positive change in the area through the initiatives that started as a result of the greater level of involvement of the Mbila community in the tourism opportunities of their area.

However, aspects such as the past poor relations between the KZN Wildlife authority and the Mbila community as well as practical constraints (i.e. the limited development opportunities and the low level of literacy in the area) are still slowing down the development of these community-based initiatives[8]. Efforts by the KZN Wildlife authorities to erase the aspects that were responsible for the poor relations between them and the Mbila community as well as the response of the Mbila community on these efforts have contributed greatly towards the increased involvement between these two parties and the subsequent increase in the number of community-based initiatives. Some of these initiatives are as follows.

3.5.1 Community-based Initiatives

Initially some of the community-based initiatives were proposed through meetings held between members of the community and the KZN Wildlife authorities. These meetings were held to discuss the further development of community activities that were already taking place at Sodwana Bay and that could be managed in a way to attract more tourists (Ngobese[9]). The Sanlam/Ubumbano Craft Market Initiative is a good example of such discussions where interested ladies were approached by the KZN Wildlife authorities to attend a few workshops in order to teach them how to diversify their products to make them more attractive to tourists (Ngobese[9]). Government representatives and the business sector (Sanlam, Empangeni) were invited to become involved in the initiative and subsequently sponsored the building of a Market at the Sodwana Bay National Park. A number of field trips to other craft initiatives were also held to swap ideas and to give the ladies ideas on how to improve their own products (Porter, 2001).

[8] Personal communication with Mrs. J. Porter, Former Community Conservation Coordinator, KZN Wildlife Authority Sodwana Bay National Park, March 11th, 2002.

[9] Personal communication with Mr. S. Ngobese, Mbila Community member and Community Conservation Officer, Sodwana Bay National Park, March 11th, 2002, Sodwana Bay National Park.

The KZN Wildlife authorities are involved in this initiative on an ongoing basis and continue to help the ladies to attract further opportunities (Porter, 2001; Ngobese[9]). The craft group has, for instance, been assisted with the publication of a craft catalogue and with the completion of a wholesale order from one outlet in Cape Town (Porter, 2001). This order was unfortunately cancelled due to difficulties on the part of the receiver, but it has shown that such possibilities exist (Porter, 2001). Agreements also exist between the KZN Wildlife authorities regarding the supply of affordable harvesting licenses to aid the ladies in obtaining the materials they need (Porter, 2001). Furthermore the ladies have elected a steering committee and they are encouraged to keep in constant contact with the KZN Wildlife authorities on matters regarding the initiative (Ngobese[9]).

The Sodwana Bay area also contains a few male carver groups. Although these groups are still in the process of formally organizing themselves, they illustrate many of the same features of the ladies' crafters group and also receive the same type of support from the KZN Wildlife authorities. Interviews held with Mr. S. Ngobese revealed that in addition to being the current Community Conservation Officer of the KZN Wildlife authorities at Sodwana Bay, he is also a member of the Mbila community and is personally involved with one of these carver groups. He feels privileged by this in the sense that it gives him the opportunity to understand the difficulties from both sides and enables him to then find quick solutions to these difficulties because of his insight into the background of both parties.

According to Mr. Ngobese, other projects that also arose out of these activities are the popular Camel Trophy Adventure Series, which had its finals at Sodwana Bay and the recently launched Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) Coelacanth Research project. Both of these projects required memorabilia that were connected to the project and to Sodwana Bay and the opportunity was therefore proposed to the local carver groups to sculpt the required objects. The carver group that won the tender managed to earn significant monetary returns from the Camel Trophy project which funded trips to Durban and Cape Town Based markets to obtain new ideas for their own carvings.

The Velasibone Communal Garden Group is one of the first projects initiated solely by the efforts of a local Mbila group. The local Induna of the area initiated the project and

[9] Personal communication with Mr. S. Ngobese, Mbila Community member and Community Conservation Officer, Sodwana Bay National Park, March 11th, 2002, Sodwana Bay National Park.

approached the KZN Wildlife authorities for aid. The KZN Wildlife authority responded and attracted sponsors in addition to the money collected by the community itself. A $100m^2$ area was cleared and fenced and the KZN Wildlife authority invited experts to run workshops on aspects such as rotation of land, fertilizers, etc. The group was also taken to Pongola and Eshowe to observe similar projects there. The ultimate aim of the project is to firstly provide for the requirements of the homesteads involved and then to spread out into the rest of the area if the project is successful.

Projects such as the local shebeens and the provision of wood for the barbecue fires of the visiting tourists are further projects that are driven by members of the Mbila community. These are not formalized, however, and currently exist on a level which the author believes to be far from its true potential. According to a local tour guide, Mr. John Roux[10], a number of his clients (especially those of European origin) exhibited keen interest in these local style taverns, indicating an opportunity which should perhaps be looked into.

Yet another opportunity that has considerable potential to become a thriving community-based tourism development project is that of the Baya Camp tourist camp on the northern border of the Mbila territory. This camp was originally planned by the KZN Wildlife authority and developed by local contractors. The camp is situated on the banks of Lake Sibayi and provides unsurpassed experiences of the beauty and the splendour of the area within the comfort of suitably designed facilities (see Fig. 3.10).

The camp has been the scene of a number of highly charged meetings about which tribal property it is actually built on (Mbila or Mabaso), as well as a few armed thefts and has therefore received only a trickle of tourists in the last few years. Negotiations to settle these difficulties are however underway and it seems as if the camp could be developed into a community-based venture (Mbila or Mabaso) in the future (Porter, 2001).

3.5.2 Government Initiatives

3.5.2.1 The Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI)

One of the most significant tourism development initiatives in the area is that of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative. The Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative was launched in July of 1998 by the then president of the RSA, President Nelson

[10] Personal communication with Mr. J Roux, Shop owner and Tour guide, Sodwana Bay, March 20th, 2002.

Mandela, Mozambique's president, Joachim Chissano and King Maswati of Swaziland to promote the rapid development of the area and to remove the obstacles to realizing the region's economic potential (LSDI, 2001c).

Figure 3.10: Baya Camp, Lake Sibayi

The initiative aimed to achieve this by creating a trans-frontier park that would become one of the greatest tourist attractions in Africa, thereby creating employment and prosperity through community participation in tourism ventures (LSDI, 2001c). The Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative is also encouraging connections between tourism and other sectors, particularly in the areas of services, cultural tourism, agri-business, building and construction, light manufacturing, and crafts production (LSDI, 2001c). Special emphasis is also being placed on the creation of a stable climate for investment, for example, the efficient movement through borders, maximum government support in all sectors, security of tenure, as well as enabling an environment for public-private partnerships to further enhance the development opportunities of the region (LSDI, 2001c).

Concerning the Maputaland region, the inadequacy of the road infrastructure was seen to be one of the major reasons for the minimal tourism development in the region (LSDI, 2001c). The governments therefore regarded the building of a new road as the first step to opening up the area for tourism development, thereby unlocking the investment potential and getting the development wheel rolling. Other Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative projects in the study area involve assistance in all the current and

planned infrastructure supply schemes, the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative craft initiative and support in the fencing of the Mabaso Game Reserve.

Other than the planned infrastructural aid (water supply, electricity) and the Maputo-Hluhluwe road, the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative craft initiative represents the only other Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative Tourism-based community development initiative encountered during the course of the fieldwork. This initiative involved training in product management and business skills as well as the passing of knowledge to other members of the group and occurred, to a limited extent, throughout the year (Porter, 2001). Workshops were also held with the representatives of the groups to discuss the difficulties encountered by the craft groups and to consider possible solutions (Porter, 2001).

Communication with the administrators of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative in the region seems to be a major difficulty, however, and many respondents from the KZN Wildlife authority as well as the Private tourism developers and even the Mbila community themselves expressed their utter frustration in their efforts to communicate productively with the administrators of this initiative. Many feel that this situation is severely hampering their abilities to function to the best of their abilities so that their benefits can respond accordingly.

3.5.2.2 Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Services

A major driving force behind the funding and the initiation of community-based tourism development projects at Sodwana Bay is that of the community levy system, which is implemented by the KZN Wildlife authorities at the Sodwana Bay National Park. This levy is generated through payments made by the tourists that visit Sodwana Bay and is used to fund community-based development projects. (see Section 3.5). At the time of the completion of the fieldwork a levy of R20 was charged per person per day for day visitors, a further R2 per day for overnight campsite visitors and R5 per day for chalet visitors from the first night of stay onwards. The money collected in this way is divided into a 90% - 10% ratio for the Mbila and Mabaso communities, respectively. In the case of Sodwana Bay it is divided according to the percentage of land occupied by a specific community adjacent to the Park.

The money is administered by a Community Levy Committee and is currently managed in the following manner. One of the main activities of the Community Levy Committee is

to encourage the rural community to initiate their own projects[11]. In order for a project to be considered, the community must approach the Community Levy Committee with a fully prepared business plan explaining what they propose to do. The KZN Wildlife authorities at Sodwana Bay National Park aid these community members in the writing of the business proposal and then send it to the KZN Wildlife authorities head office in Pietermaritzburg.

The KZN Wildlife authority headquarters is also the assessment seat of the Community Levy Committee where the proposal will be adjudicated and from where further steps will be taken to support the community in whatever means they need depending on the outcome of the ruling on the proposal. Presently the Community Levy Fund has already assisted in the renovation and the electrification of a few schools in the Mbila tribal area, but the progress with the submission of proposals by the community is said to by very slow and plagued by an array of difficulties[11].

3.5.2.3 Private Sector Initiatives

The private sector tourism development projects in the area seem to be originating predominantly from the activities of the private tourism operators themselves. These projects are extremely limited, however, which can again be attributed firstly to the limited variety and number of general opportunities in the area, and the existing limited variety of tourism ventures and the opportunities within these ventures. Private tourism ventures in the region currently amount to 20 operations. Of these, the diving, fishing and accommodation/restaurant operations comprise 14 operations of the total amount and are also the only operations that are substantial enough to allow a work force greater than 5 individuals per operation.

The community-based tourism development initiatives that are derived from these ventures consist mainly of training programmes that equip the community members with the appropriate qualifications for the area. These qualifications consequently furnish these individuals with skills that are in frequent demand at Sodwana Bay as well as in similar tourism ventures elsewhere, thereby increasing their employment prospects considerably.

Private sector initiatives, other than those originating from the diving, fishing and restaurant/accommodation ventures in Sodwana Bay, originated predominantly out of

[11] Personal communication with Mr. S. Ngobese, Mbila Community member and Community Conservation Officer, Sodwana Bay National Park, March 18th, 2002, Sodwana Bay National Park.

the crafting capabilities of the members of the Mbila community. Three of these initiatives were instigated by the only European-based curio shop in the area and are as follows; Firstly that of a t-shirt and hat painting initiative. In this initiative the owner supplies the t-shirts, the hats, the paints and the paintbrushes and provides the necessary training to paint colourful motives on the shirts and the hats to be sold in the shop. The ladies involved were also supplied with a workplace, their own t-shirts, hats and materials, as well as a day off from work to paint shirts and hats that they could then sell for themselves.

Although the ladies exhibited great skill in this craft, the initiative did not expand because the ladies involved felt that their weekly wages from the shop were sufficient and that they needed the day off to attend to other chores[12]. The owner also initiated a craft initiative, providing examples of alternative and more workable exotic timber species as well as examples of popular sculptings from other parts of the country. This initiative also provided a workplace for the crafters, to help cut down on the travelling time and cost for the ladies and men involved in this initiative (the curio shop is located halfway between Mbaswana and Sodwana Bay) as well as tools and materials.

This venture unfortunately also failed to grow into a significant initiative, this time probably because of the fear of losing clients at the main curio market at Sodwana Bay itself. The author believes that some of the ideas did catch on, however, and although the crafters are very enterprising themselves, they are sure to have benefited considerably from this initiative. The owner also supports another venture which involves a member of the community supplying the shop with cards (post cards, etc.). The owner and this individual frequently exchange ideas thereby streamlining the product and increasing the probability of sales.

Another private sector initiative that exists in the area is that of the local manufacturing of items such as corporate gift packages as well as various kinds of gift-wrappings and other associated items. This initiative is focused on the female members of the community and is administered from the Mbaswana crafts workshop. The products are manufactured on a consignment basis and are sold as far as Johannesburg. Although small, the initiative does provide a source of alternative income for the ladies involved and is said to produce good quality products, thereby increasing the likelihood of its continuing to do so in the future and even expanding if more assignments can be procured[13].

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[12] Personal communication with Ms. M Brockbank, partner, Ocean Inks curio shop, Sodwana Bay, 20th of March 2002.
[13] Personal communication with Mr. M. Van Der Velde, owner, Sandton Scuba, Sodwana Bay, 21st of March, 2002.

3.6 TOURISM BENEFITS ACCRUING TO THE MBILA COMMUNITY

3.6.1 Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

In monetary terms, the first and foremost tourism-based benefits that the Mbila community receive from the part of the KZN Wildlife authorities are those of the temporary and permanent employment opportunities that are produced by the activities and facilities of this institution. The training that the employees receive almost certainly serves as the chief benefit in the region, however. This is done in the following manner. Many of the employees that are currently employed at Sodwana Bay National Park completed only their Grade 12 secondary qualification with no other tertiary qualifications. The in-service training that the Mbila employees receive at Sodwana Bay qualifies them in the conservation and tourism-based fields, which are fields that have experienced enormous growth in Southern Africa and in other similar destinations over the world in the past few years and are set to grow even more in the future (see Sections 2.2.4 and 2.3.2.2).

In the case of Mr. S. Ngobese, for instance, he also typically started his career in the KZN Wildlife services as a mere utility worker but through merit progressed through all the relevant levels of work and training to where he now fulfils the role of the KZN Wildlife authorities' regional manager of community affairs[14]. The training that the Mbila people receive at Sodwana Bay therefore not only guarantees them a well-compensated job, but also provides them with continuous instruction in fields that have a secure future. Other training and educational initiatives that also developed from the part of the KZN Wildlife authorities' include a variety of field trips that are organized for the local schools and representatives of the Mbila Tribal Authority.

These field trips are aimed at informing the local people about the critical importance of the biodiversity of their area and of biodiversity in general, as well as the role that they can play in the conservation and sustainable management thereof. A series of Eco clubs have also been established in the schools, and the private sector has been involved in these in order to fund some of the excursions. Project PADI AWARE is an example of one such an initiative and has already sponsored several of these projects. Additional focus has been placed on sharing information with the representatives of the Mbila Tribal

[14] Personal communication with Mr. S. Ngobese, Mbila Community member and Community Conservation Officer, Sodwana Bay National Park, March 18th, 2002, Sodwana Bay National Park.

Authority about the influence that tourism can have in the area and the role that the community can play in the enhancement of this industry.

This has also been communicated to the community as a whole and has since yielded much reward. The area has, for instance, previously been plagued by a serious theft problem. This had quite a detrimental effect on the tourism activities in the area and even caused the closure of two of the privately owned tourism operations[15]. When this was discussed with the Mbila Tribal Authority their response was unanimous and with the help of the Mbila community the theft problem was eradicated within 6 months time[15]. The interviews that were conducted during the fieldwork of the research revealed a sound knowledge on the part of the community of the value of tourism and also exhibited their commitment to the safety and security of the tourists and their belongings. This is a sure example of the mutual interdependence of the tourism industry and the Mbila community to ensure a healthy tourism industry and a constant supply of benefits to the community.

The community levy fund is another significant benefit that was born out of the tourism operations of the KZN Wildlife authorities. This fund is still in its early stages of management, however, and does not yet perform at its full potential. The main reasons for this seem to be the lack of knowledge on the part of the community as to how to present possible development project as well as the lack of proper communication between the relevant representatives from the community and the KZN Wildlife authorities.

Currently the community levy fund has helped considerably in the renovation and electrification of a few schools in the area. Education in the relevant fields holds the key to better employment opportunities in this area and therefore makes the provision of facilities and equipment that enhance the learner's ability to achieve this, of the utmost importance. The scope does however exist to expand on the current community-based tourism development initiatives, and the levy fund can aid significantly in the establishment of these. It is therefore imperative to overcome the obstacles that suppress the founding of new initiatives.

The improvement of the roads leading towards Sodwana Bay and the Mbila tribal area can, without a doubt, be seen as the most noteworthy contribution of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiatives to the area. The main road that has been upgraded from

[15] Personal communication with Mr. S Roberts, Manager, Coral Divers, Sodwana Bay, March 18th, 2002.

a gravel road to a tar road effectively opened the area up for any person that owns a vehicle and is thus accessible not only to those individuals that own a four wheel drive vehicle. This and the popularity of the area as a diving and fishing destination are already attracting an increased flow of visitors[16] and can therefore play an important role in the future development of additional development opportunities for the Mbila community.

Although the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative craft initiative is also experiencing difficulties with communication between the involved parties, steps have been taken to resolve these and further workshops were set to take place when the fieldwork for the study was done. If these difficulties can be overcome, the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative can provide extensive support in the further expansion of tourism initiatives in the area, which would in turn supply the Mbila community with an increase in employment and other development opportunities.

3.6.2 Private Ventures

As in the case of the KZN Wildlife authority, the main benefits produced by the operations of the private tourism operators have to be those of employment and training. Quite a few members of the Mbila community have already received expensive in-service training from these operations and others were in the process of receiving their training during the time of the fieldwork of this study. In some of the cases (see Section 3.4.2.2) the training has already resulted in some of the Mbila's obtaining high-quality employment in similar tourism activities in Sodwana Bay and elsewhere in the country.

In addition to the training given to the adults in the region, it was also found that many of the private tourism operators were involved in aiding some of the children of the area in their educational needs. Because of the critical importance in the area of being well-spoken in the English language some of the private operators offered incentives such as supplying weekend jobs on the condition that the children supply them with satisfactory school achievements in this language. This incentive was found to be quite common and working well, as much of the interviews held with the children revealed the importance they associated with their education and especially with speaking English.

On a social level, the private tourism operators were also found to be actively involved with the sponsorship of many other Mbila activities. Soccer is a favourite sport in the

[16] Personal communication with Mr. N. Patmore, Manager, Sodwana Bay Lodge, Sodwana Bay, March 20th, 2002 and Mr. M. Visagie, Owner, Vis Agie Fishing Charters, Sodwana Bay, March 21st, 2002.

area and every other team was found to be sponsored either by one individual private tourism operator or by several. One of the private tourism operators was also instrumental in the establishment of the local community Youth Police Desk. This group is actively involved in curbing tourism-related criminal activities (theft from cars and from camp sites) in the area, but also plays a role on an informant basis, in helping the local branch of the South African National Police (SANP) force in cases relating to the safety and security of the community itself.

Besides these, many instances were found where close personal relations existed between some of the Mbila community members and the private tourism operators. In one instance, a private tourism operator was found to be one of the founding members of a private school in the Mbaswana area. The school was founded with the permission of the Mbila iNkosi and principally out of the need for a more appropriate curriculum with a standard that meets the necessary educational requirements. Although the Mbila community can, in most cases, not afford to send their children to the school, the school is still very popular with them. The school governing body therefore evaluates candidates that demonstrate good potential and a willingness to progress and then sponsors these students' education.

Another example of these relationships is where a local private tourism operator aided a former employee to establish his own shebeen. The shebeen has since turned into a very popular social spot in the area and has subsequently yielded substantial benefits to its owner. The owner of the shebeen and the tourism operator pay frequent visits to each other and the operator has aided his former employee with various aspects of the management of the shebeen. In addition, the private operator has provided the shebeen owner with advice regarding the purchase of vehicles and property, as well as many other similar choices he has had to make.

In addition to the above-mentioned examples, others also exist where the local community work in close collaboration with the private tourism operators in the Sodwana Bay area.

3.7 Conclusion

The Problem Statement in Chapter 1 of the study (Section 1.2) identified certain of the most significant constraints that the Sodwana Bay area is presenting the local community with. Aspects such as the limited range and depth of the participatory

opportunities in the tourism industry as well as the low level of applicable education and training and the limited access that the community hold to the available resources, proved to be the most pressing of these constraints. Other limitations included insufficient access to funds for development initiatives as well as the lack of knowledge on how to develop Sodwana Bays' tourism potential sensitively towards the cultural identity of the Mbila community and towards the areas' natural environment. The Objectives of the study (Section 1.5) followed on, on the Problem Statement by recognizing the need to carry out a range of investigations that would provide the necessary insights into the reasons for the abovementioned constraints.

Chapter 3 (this Chapter) was dedicated to the investigation of the Sodwana Bay environment and focussed specifically on the factors that influenced the past and present state of Mbila participation in the tourism-based developments of the area. This proved to be a very valuable exercise as it provided answers to all of the issues that were raised in the Problem Statement and in the Aims (Section 1.4) and Objectives of the study. Chapter 4 will now continue in analysing the findings of Chapter 3 against the set of Fundamental elements required for equitable rural community participation, developed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 4: Analysis

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature of this study revealed that the chief preconditions for successful rural community participation in tourism-based developments include the political **empowerment** of the rural community to legally own land and to act as an equal stakeholder in the management of this land, as well as to use this empowerment as a foundation for the further **involvement** of the community (see Fig 2.1). Chapter 3 presents the Mbila Tribe of the Sodwana Bay region as an example of a previously marginalized rural community that have gradually been given the opportunity to participate on an increasing level in the tourism-based developments of their area.

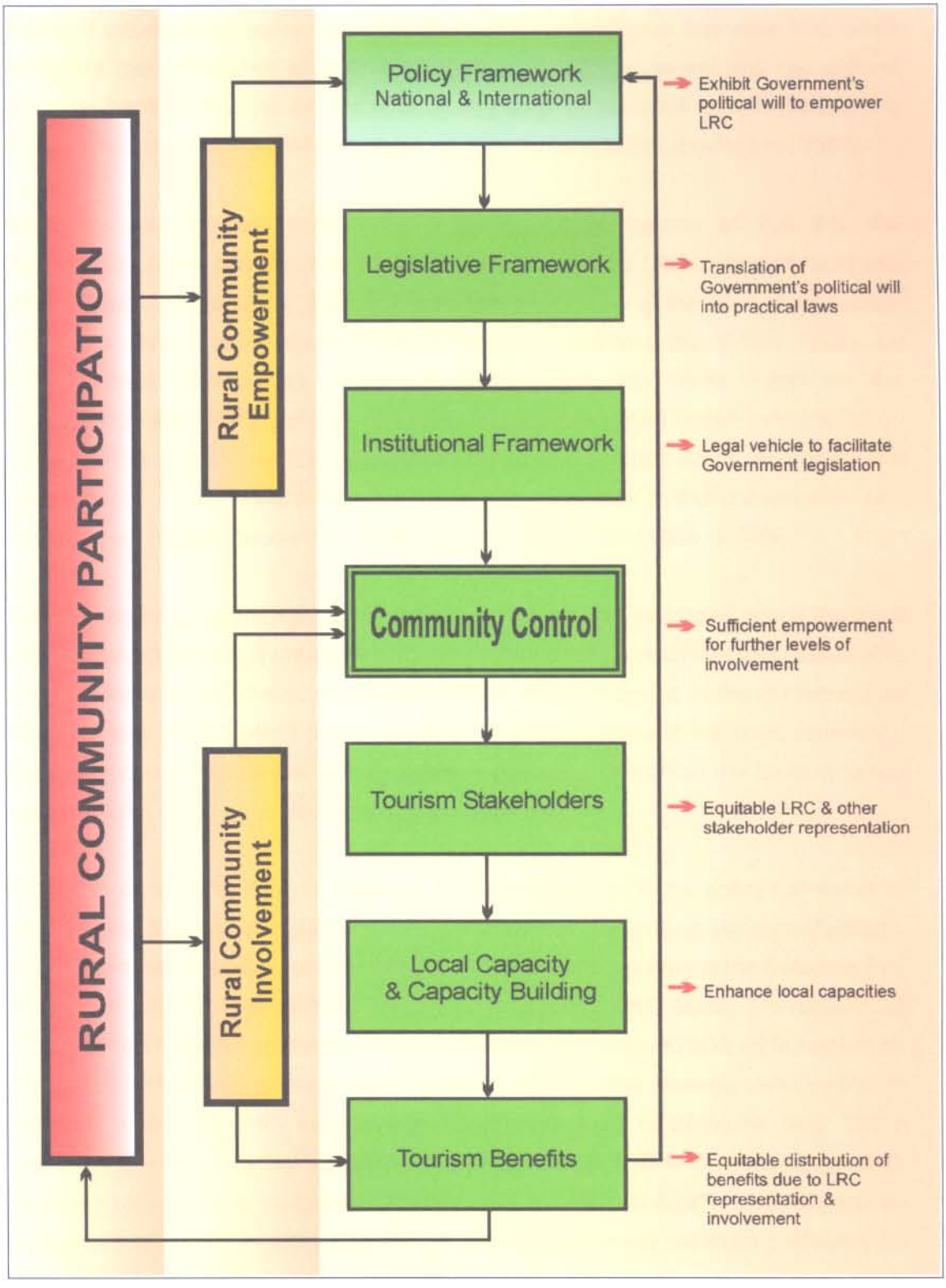
This opportunity arose due to the improvement of the level of control (through political empowerment) which the authorities have provided the community with. The following discussion will now aim to measure the success of the present state of empowerment and involvement of the Mbila community (Chapter 3) against the fundamental elements needed for true rural community participation in tourism-based developments that were developed in Chapter 2. Figure 4.1 provides a summary of these elements and will serve to guide the discussion.

4.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK

At the policy framework level, it is evident that the relevant institutional actors from the international to the local government level have, over the last few years, strived to produce policies, strategies and conventions that actively promote equitable community participation in conservation and tourism-based activities (see Section 2.4.2.1). While there is sure to be a whole host of applicable new policies, strategies and legislation relevant to the current study, the research aimed only to provide examples which present a clear indication that the authorities that have jurisdiction over the level of rural community participation that occurs today do in fact reveal a definite commitment towards this feat. Hence a summary of the policies discussed in Section 2.4.2.

International sustainable development policies such as the World Conservation Strategy of the IUCN (1980), Agenda 21 of the UN and Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism

Figure 4.1: Summary of the Framework Diagram of the Fundamental Elements Required For Equitable Rural Community Participation in Tourism-Based Developments



Industry guided the initial steps towards the active rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of today (IUCN, 1980a; IUCN, 1980b; IUCN, 1980c; South Africa, 1997; Inskeep, 1998). Conventions such as the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the World Heritage Convention are additional forms of international policy that are relevant to the Sodwana Bay area and which recognize the importance of both the conservation of the natural and the cultural resource base as well as the dynamic participation of the rural communities in the development and management of these activities in these areas (Enviro Info, 2001).

Nationally policies and strategies such as the Local Agenda 21 (LA 21), the Reconstruction and Development programme (RDP), and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme (GEAR) serve as the enactments of the international policy objectives (ANC, 1994; South Africa, 2000). In addition, the White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa, the White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biological Diversity and the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of tourism in South Africa also affirm the governments' stance towards the role of rural communities in the conservation and management of these resources (South Africa, 1996c, 1997, 1998a, 1998b).

Together these programmes provide practical step-by-step strategies which the local institutional actors can use to implement sustainable development initiatives. Sustainable tourism development (the most productive form of development in the Sodwana Bay area) could therefore utilize these strategies to help implement the rural community participation procedures that these strategies prescribe and which the tourism-based developments require in order to be truly participatory.

Finally, in order to sufficiently empower the Mbila community, the policy framework is supported by the local institutional actors, who have developed their own sets of policies to be able to adequately accommodate the unique local conditions in the Sodwana Bay area (LSDI, 2001c; Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Services, 2002; URC, 2002). The research of this study has furthermore revealed that institutions such as the KZN Wildlife Authorities have in addition to the abovementioned policies, implemented strategies which serve to enhance rural community participation initiatives unique to Sodwana Bay. These strategies are often only implemented by the relative KZN Wildlife Staff members (such as the community Liaison Officers) within the various local KZN Wildlife stations (such as Sodwana Bay) and should be documented as they can provide excellent guidelines for other institutions faced with the same task.

The Mbila community possess a variety of policies and strategies that notably exhibit the political will of the authorities under which they reside to effectively empower their community to participate significantly in these activities. Sections of other legislation, which has specific reference and relevance at other locations, such as the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998), Notice No. 22690 of 2001 (beach driving), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 and Section 52A of the Child Care Act (Child Labour Legislation) have however already had immense impacts on the potential of the Mbila community to be involved in the tourism-based developments at Sodwana Bay (South Africa, 1997; Bosch *et al.*, 2002). In the case of Sodwana Bay specifically, the frailty of their development options has already been described in detail in Chapter 3. The relevant governmental authorities should therefore be careful when applying this kind of restrictive legislation so as not to harm the already critically limited development options which rural communities have at localities such as Sodwana Bay.

On the part of the Mbila community, it is understandable that aspects such as the current level of literacy in the community (especially of the older members), and the distribution of the relevant information on what the policies and strategies provide them with on all the relevant Mbila Tribal Authority levels and with the rest of the greater community, can severely hamper the community in exploiting their rights to the full extent. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the Mbila Tribal Authority and the rest of the Mbila community address these issues as far as possible. This will ensure that they can reap the maximum benefit from the participation in the opportunities that arise as a result of the empowerment brought about by these policies and strategies.

4.3 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The real effectiveness of the policies and strategies that are described in Sections 2.4.2.1 and 4.2 lies in their ability to change the quality of life for the Mbila community at a grassroots level. For this to happen, it is of vital importance that the community be able to effectively represent themselves at the correct institutional level and with effective legislative powers to be able to participate in the development and management of their area (Wells and Brandon, 1992; Hall and Lew, 1998; Ashley and Jones, 1999).

First of all, Section 24b of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa endows the Mbila community with the same environmental rights as all other South Africans. Although this is broad level legislation, the constitution specifically states that all the

citizens of South Africa have a right to have their environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures (South Africa, 1997). This Section of the constitution has further bearing on the Mbila community and their present situation by specifically stating that the community also have a right to secure ecological sustainable development and use of the natural resources within the boundaries of justifiable economic and social development (South Africa, 1997).

Furthermore, Section 25(7) of the Constitution focuses on the restoration of land rights (South Africa, 1996), with the Restitution of Land Rights Act, 1994 (Act 22 of 1994) as the specific legislative instrument on land restitution (South Africa, 1994). This legislation, in addition to the Communal Property Associations Act, 1996 (Act 28 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996a) provides the Mbila community with the appropriate legislative power to represent themselves as a legal authority and also endowed them with the entitlement rights they needed to legally reclaim their land, which they had lost as a result of injustices committed by previous governments (see Section 2.4.2.2).

The legislation described in this Section therefore appears to have adequately provided the Mbila community with the legislative authority that they need to legally participate in the development and management activities that have an influence on the present and future existence of their community in the area. Sections 3.4 and 3.5 describe the variety of tourism-based developments and the level of Mbila involvement that currently exists in Sodwana Bay. Through this it is evident that the tourism industry and the Mbila involvement therein is still in its very early stages and that much development and capacity building still needs to be done before the Mbila community can really fully participate in the opportunities which the Sodwana Bay area provides. Security of tenure is, however, regarded as one of the critical elements (if not *the* critical element) in the process of equitable rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of the area. The fact that the Mbila community have gained the relevant legal rights over their land therefore provides them with a huge advantage in light of future tourism developments and their involvement therein.

Although the South African government seems to have adequately provided the Mbila community with the legal equipment they need for effective participation from a legislative point of view, certain practical aspects of the landownership between the KZN Wildlife authorities and the Mbila community still need to be clarified (see Sections 3.2.4.2 and 3.2.4.3). Whilst the Mbila community enjoy the principal rights over the form of development that occurs on their land, all is not resolved with regard to their land

within the KZN Wildlife Service's boundaries. With regard to this land, the Mbila community are only involved in deciding what kind of developments will be allowed, they are currently not involved in the development of these activities and facilities. In addition, the Mbila Tribal Authority (MTA) also expressed their need to further the discussions on settlement possibilities on this land as well as for additional grazing for their animals.

The research has revealed that the Mbila Tribal Authority specifically feels that much more communication is needed on these matters and that the progress concerning the settlement and the grazing specifically is much too slow. Although it is understandable that caution must be taken when deciding what kind of developments are allowed within the boundaries of the relatively sensitive protected area of the Sodwana Bay National Park, Mbila Tribal Authority concerns are also realistic in relation to the legislative rights which they have over the land. It is now the responsibility of both the Mbila community and the relevant institutional actors to work towards productive communication to allow the legislation to come into its full potential to be able to produce meaningful Mbila participation and meaningful partnerships.

4.4 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The institutional framework presents the final component (from an authoritative point of view) that is needed to effectively empower a rural community to achieve satisfactory control over their resources (see Sections 2.4.3.3 and 3.3.4). In this regard the South African government, through the Communal Property Associations Act, 1996 (Act 28 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996a), has provided the community with the correct institutional capacity to firstly represent themselves and their concerns and secondly to establish a central social organization which can effectively interact with the pertinent institutional actors.

Concerning the other institutional actors in the area, the region possesses a more than adequate institutional infrastructure to be able to handle matters from the homestead to the regional and provincial level. The Mbila Tribal Authority structure seems to be handling the internal community affairs quite adequately with only a small amount of cases progressing to the headman's and the iNkosi's courts (see Section 3.3.2). In addition, the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative, the KZN Wildlife authorities, the Uthungulu Regional Council and the other provincial and national departments seem to be suitably represented in the area and relatively easy to contact, if the need arises. iNkosi Zikhali also fosters good relations with most of the representatives of these

institutions and this seems to have assisted him greatly in the implementation of some of the facilities and other projects in the area (see Section 3.3.2).

What seems to be a major difficulty, however, is that of communication between the Mbila community and some of these institutions, as well as within some of these institutions themselves. The research revealed that it is perceived by some of the prominent Mbila Tribal Authority members that they as the Mbila community, are occasionally considered be significant enough to consult in matters relating to the development of the area and that they are only visited for matters that require their consent so that outside developers are able to proceed with their own developments.

Some of the interviews held with respondents in the Mbila community indicated that the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative and the KZN Wildlife Authority were the main offenders in this regard. It must also be said, however, that these organizations represent the two institutions that stand at the forefront of the management of the area and that these kinds of positions are usually accompanied by many management-based indifferences.

As for the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative, the community pointed out that they are definitely very grateful for all the developments and initiatives that the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative has initiated in the area. However the Mbila Tribal Authority specifically reiterated their stance of not knowing enough about the development and management objectives which the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative have for the region. This concern has in fact also been lodged by the KZN Wildlife Services as well as by the Private developers in the area. The community would therefore like to be involved to a much greater extent in the planning and management of the region as a whole and especially in all the different phases and activities of these developments.

An additional obstacle in the relations with both the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative and the KZN Wildlife authorities comes in the form of a lack of information on the organization of these authorities and the subsequent misunderstandings that follow. Some of the Mbila Tribal Authority and regular members of the community had huge misgivings concerning the community Levy System and do not understand how the funds are administered. The fact that there was (at the time of the gathering of the field data) no Mbila Tribal Authority or other Mbila community member to represent the community on the community Levy Committee further serves to exacerbate the situation and can lead to considerable damage in this fragile relationship.

It is conceivable that a series of meetings between these parties could contribute vastly towards the understanding of the Lubombo Spatial development Initiative and the KZN Wildlife authorities, of the need of the Mbila community to understand the organization of these authorities and the inner workings of some of the major projects that have an influence on their community. At present, quite a few Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative - KZN Wildlife community-based committees exist, which administer the management of some of the current projects (see Sections 3.5.2.1 and 3.5.2.2) This example should be carried further to also involve Mbila community members in committees such as the Community Levy Committee. Such involvement would ensure the transparency of initiatives like these and should eradicate any form of mistrust that can weaken the relationships between the Mbila community, the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative and the KZN Wildlife authorities.

4.5 LEVEL OF COMMUNITY CONTROL

Sections 2.4.2.1 to 2.4.2.3 and 4.2 to 4.4 have illustrated the ways in which the international, the national and the local authorities have endeavoured to effectively re-empower the Mbila community with the basic rights that were taken away from them by the top-down centrally driven mode of development as well as the policies and legislation of these discriminatory governments (see Sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 3.3.4). New policies, strategies and legislation were needed to endow the Mbila community with the appropriate legislative and institutional powers to be able to participate effectively in the development and the management of the tourism-based opportunities that the Sodwana Bay area has to offer.

In the case of Sodwana Bay specifically, there are quite a few factors that contributed significantly to the way that the area developed as well as to the slow pace of these developments. One of the paramount reasons that caused many of the policy and legislative instruments that empower the Mbila community only to be developed in the past decade can be attributed to the fact that these policies and laws were themselves only developed in the past few years. The 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development, Brundtland Report, the first World Summit on Sustainable Development in 1992, and the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 were instrumental in these policy changes.

Apart from the fact that these new policies and legislation all had to undergo lengthy introductory procedures within the South African governmental system, other aspects

also contributed to the often-slothful progress in the implementation of these empowerment tools. South Africa, in particular had to deal with the integration of a totally new government, which involved vast changes in the governmental structures, and is sure to have delayed the empowerment process, This new government system, however, would later present rural communities with legislation granting increased participation.

Aspects such as the necessary capacities which all the relevant stakeholders need to introduce and to implement participatory approaches, represent a crucial facet which requires a lot of time and effort to achieve. The field research revealed that this aspect is in fact still preventing the Mbila community from participating to their full potential. One of the main reasons for this situation is the general deficiency in the quality education in the region, as well as the lack of proper training in the appropriate tourism fields. Although some of the more popular tourism activities involve feats that stand in stark contrast with the cultural background of the Mbilas (see Section 3.4), some of the community members have already demonstrated that they are adaptable to these activities and have also communicated their will to manage these activities. The necessary training could therefore supply the Mbila community with much better employment opportunities than is currently observable.

Further difficulties are also experienced in the cooperation between the various stakeholders in the Sodwana Bay area. These difficulties can be attributed to an insufficient level of understanding and integration between these groups. These deficiencies are currently not only resulting in many missed opportunities in the tourism development arena, but they are also preventing the Mbila community from being able to be fully integrated in the already limited opportunities that exist.

Additional aspects which are currently hampering the Mbila community from obtaining a greater degree of participation in the tourism-based activities and in the benefits that flows from these activities, include the sometimes contradictory nature of national legislation. Although it is believed that the South African government is striving to empower the community, it is evident that some of the laws passed serve to severely limit the development and participation opportunities which the area offers (see Section 2.4.2.1). Finally, the lack in depth of the tourism activities that the area boasts translates into a shortage of available tourism-based employment opportunities themselves and further obstructs the ability of the Mbila community to really have a significant influence in the control of the tourism-based activities in the region.

It is therefore clear that, although the Mbila community have been endowed with sufficient political authority to be able to participate significantly in the tourism-based developments in the region, some of the inherent difficulties of the area (such as the lack of proper communication between some of the stakeholders and the lack of sufficient education and training) are still causing them not to be able to enjoy the level of control that they should.

4.6 STAKEHOLDERS

One of the paramount objectives in the whole process of successful rural community participation in tourism-based developments is to legally affirm the rural communities as being legal stakeholders in the tourism developments of their region (see Section 2.4.3.6). From a policy, legislative and institutional point of view, it is obvious how all the relevant institutions have laboured to provide the Mbila community with the legal powers that they need to be officially recognized as stakeholders in the tourism industry at Sodwana Bay. These measures have also resulted in specific actions taking place such as the lodging of a successful land claim and the initiation of a few tourism-based development initiatives in the area (see Section 3.5).

On paper it would, therefore, seem that the Mbila community are well represented as equal stakeholders in the tourism industry at Sodwana Bay. However, as is the case with the level of community control that the Mbila community currently exert, their rights as proper stakeholders are significantly hampered by several circumstances at a grassroots level. Aspects such as the fairly youthful stage of implementation of all the policy and the legislative measures the limited amount of current tourism opportunities and the deprived state of local education and training all contribute to the community not being able to act at full capacity in relation to the tourism activities in the area. These aspects also have a specific bearing on the involvement of the different segments of the community (e.g. women, children and elderly people). Although they suffer the same difficulties as the rest of the community, these groups seem to be sufficiently represented at present.

In addition, elements such as the partial breakdown in communication between the community, the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative and the KZN Wildlife Authorities (in certain cases), further disadvantage the community by discouraging opportunities for the initiation of possible new community-based tourism development projects (see Sections 3.5 and 3.6). Various individuals from the Mbila community, who were interviewed during the course of the study, exhibited the insight and the skills which the

author believes can turn them into highly successful future tourism operators in the area. It must therefore again be stressed how important it is to eradicate the obstacles that are currently causing the Mbila community not to be able to function as equal stakeholders in the tourism industry of the area.

4.7 EXISTING CAPACITIES AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Local capacity and capacity building are described in Section 2.4.3.6 as the ability of the rural community in an area to use their ownership of and access to knowledge and technology as a means of effectively managing their environmental and social resources. Furthermore, it is also acknowledged that the relevant government departments and developers are also frequently in need of training and extension programmes to provide them with the capacity they need to be able to fully participate in the tourism-based developments of these rural areas.

In the Sodwana Bay example Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 have described the quantity and the quality of the environmental and cultural resources that the area fosters and has thereby illustrated the potential wealth that this area and its inhabitants possess. Although the region is presently in the process of slowly developing these resources, the area unfortunately still reflects the numerous aspects which have contributed to the severely underdeveloped capacities, of the Mbila community. Of these, the harshness of the natural environment, the alienation of the Mbilas from their land, the critical shortage in development and employment opportunities, and the unsatisfactory level of education and training prove to be the factors that have caused, and in some instances still cause, causing the most difficulties in this regard.

As in many similar examples in other parts of the world, the research revealed that a serious lack in appropriate literacy levels is the main contributor towards the presently deprived state of capacities in the Mbila community (see Section 3.3.3). Significant levels of illiteracy were found to exist in important community-based committees, such as the school governing bodies and in most of the locally conceived development initiatives. The study also revealed a series of shortcomings in the quality of schooling that the local schools are able to provide, as well as in the specific education programmes which are offered by these institutions. These conditions are characteristic of areas that offer restricted economic development opportunities and are causing considerable difficulties in the development of the appropriate local capacities.

The research has revealed that almost all of the private and other tourism operators that were interviewed in the Sodwana Bay area required their staff (especially those that are in direct contact with the tourists) to be able to at least communicate in English. The need to be adequately trained in order to be successfully employed also surfaced in most of the interviews held with members of the Mbila community and especially with those in the 13 to 20 year age group (see Table 3.1). This proves that the Mbila community are aware that education and training are important in order to participate in the tourism-based development that the area offers. Although most of the Mbila members that were interviewed were able to communicate relatively understandably in English, only a very small group exhibited the ability to write their own names.

In light of these circumstances some of the private tourism developers have taken it upon themselves to aid the community in their attempts to acquire these skills and have, in addition to the in-service training that they provide, created various initiatives to assist the community in their educational needs (see Section 3.6). Consequently, some of the employees employed by private tourism operators have not only excelled in the positions they held, but have since also been employed at similar tourism ventures at other destinations (See Section 3.6).

With regard to the capacities exhibited by the tourism developers and the government and non-government stakeholders in Sodwana Bay, weaknesses were also evident. The most prevalent difficulties hampering the extension of local capacities seem to be in the communication between these parties, specifically in the conflict resolution department. From the interviews held with some of the Mbila Tribal Authority members it appears that they believe that the KZN Wildlife authorities (as representatives of the government) are not always in touch with the Mbila needs and are sometimes also insensitive towards these.

From the part of the KZN Wildlife authorities, the major complaint was that the community sometimes behave reluctantly concerning conservation matters and development in conservation areas. The KZN Wildlife authorities feel that the Mbila community are not always familiar with the intricacies of these matters and still need much exposure to fully contemplate their magnitude. Much communication is still required to establish an adequate level of transmission of information which will allow more understanding and interaction between these parties. Currently the relationship between the private tourism developers and the community exists on an employer employee basis and doesn't really allow for broader participation activities.

Almost all of the members of the Mbila community that were interviewed have demonstrated an understanding of how tourism can change their circumstances. They have also exhibited their potential to initiate and manage their own tourism ventures (see Section 3.5). In addition, they have also shown their determination by conquering age-old traditional beliefs such as going into the ocean to learn how to scuba dive and how to angle, and have subsequently proved that they are willing and able to develop the necessary capacities to participate effectively in the tourism-based developments at Sodwana Bay. It is therefore of the utmost importance that all the relevant educational authorities on the local, regional and provincial level should tend to their responsibilities to develop the appropriate educational and training programmes. These programmes should then allow the Mbila community to take full advantage of their capacities and should enable them to be in the best possible position to build additional capacities where these are required.

4.8 TOURISM BENEFITS

One of the more conventional justifications for many tourism-based developments in and around protected areas is that nature-based tourism can promote conservation by demonstrating the importance of protected areas by generating tourism-oriented employment and income (see Section 2.3.2.3). This justification has also been used in the Sodwana Bay situation where significant tracts of the terrestrial and marine environments have been set aside as protected areas and where the Mbila community (who are the closest neighbouring community) are presumed to benefit from the tourism activities that are being generated in the areas.

Unfortunately, although the type of tourism activities (scuba diving and deep sea fishing/angling – predominantly the tag-and-release fishing variant) that have developed in the Sodwana Bay National Park support the notion of ecologically sensitive development, the nature of these activities does not at present benefit the community in extraordinary ways. Section 3.4, for instance, describes how some of the tourism activities of the private tourism operators, in particular (which constitute the majority of employment in the area) clash with the cultural background of the Mbila community, and how they require skills that are not commonly represented in the rural communities of the region.

The Mbila community are not conforming very well to these activities at present, and the development of the necessary skills to be able to participate at greater levels in these

activities are progressing at an extremely slow pace. This results in the possibilities of employment at the management levels of these activities being very low and also forms the basis for the fact that there are currently no community-based tourism development initiatives in these more popular tourism varieties. Some of the members of the Mbila community have however shown that it is possible to bridge these difficulties (see Section 3.4.2.2) They have become the very first members of the Mbila community to qualify themselves in aspects of the diving and fishing activities and have thereby ensured themselves of increased employment opportunities (with excellent promotion prospects) in the Sodwana Bay area as well as in similar ventures elsewhere in the region.

The bulk of the tourism-based benefits which are currently accruing to the Mbila community, presents itself in the form of employment in the service sectors of these activities (e.g. aiding the divers on the beach, assistance in launching of boats, washing of gear, cleaning fish (see Section 3.4). Significant employment is also generated by the restaurant and the accommodation ventures in the area, and both these and the diving and fishing operations supply considerable casual job opportunities during the peak holiday periods (see Sections 3.4 and 3.6).

These ventures provide much needed job opportunities in an area where employment is extremely hard to find if an individual doesn't possess the necessary education and training. One of the most significant benefits which the Mbila community is currently receiving from the tourism industry in the area, is most certainly that of in-service training. This instructs the people in the trades which are most likely to provide them with future employment in the area, and it also provides the community with occupations which are in demand in other parts of the country as well (see Sections 3.4 and 3.6).

The Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative is another form of tourism-based benefit and has already contributed significantly to the creation of tourism-based opportunities in the area. The chief contribution of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative is undoubtedly that of the improvement of the infrastructure in the region. The remoteness of the Sodwana Bay area, as well as earlier problems with access and the containment of tropical diseases, has caused it to be rather unknown and the region is therefore still in a very early state of development (see Section 3.2.2).

The upgrading of the roads has, however, opened the area up to a much greater variety of tourists, a fact confirmed by the accounts of the private tourism operators that the area is experiencing a steady rise in the number of tourists (including international visitors).

Plans to expand the tourism products and the tourism facilities in the area are also under discussion and are sure to further increase the number of tourists visiting the area as well as the opportunities that arise from the activities of these tourists (Hicks, 1991; Heynes and Hornby, 1994).

Another major contribution from the part of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative consists of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative - Craft Initiative (see Section 3.5.2.1). This initiative consisted of the assistance in the building of a craft market, various training sessions (such as product diversification and the financial management of the initiative) as well as the continued aid that is provided with aspects such as the printing of the product catalogue and visits to other craft markets. Although the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative has assisted greatly in the establishment and partial upkeep of the initiative, difficulties have cropped and many of the Mbila members involved currently feel that the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative is not assisting them efficiently.

Concerns that were mentioned in the interviews with members of the craft initiative included notions that some the training sessions were of little or no use. It seems as if many of these training sessions are perceived as a type of hit-and-run experience, where the ladies are presented with an enormous amount of information which is, for the most part, totally foreign to them. The lectures that they were given regarding the financial management of the initiative, for instance, were totally inadequate as many of the ladies are illiterate and the lectures also contained financial concepts that were unfamiliar in relation to their cultural background.

Many of the respondents in the interviews also indicated that they were experiencing extreme difficulty in sustained communication with the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative administrators of some of these projects. They pointed out that many of the administrators come from places outside of their area and are foreign to them. The ladies believe that these administrators do not fully understand their needs and that this is most probably the reason why these Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative representatives often present them with irrelevant information. It is therefore clear that although this contributes significantly to the tourism development on an indirect fashion, serious restructuring is necessary with regard to their direct community involvement procedures.

Funding for development projects was identified as one of the major constraints at the onset of the study (see Section 1.2). In this regard, the KZN Wildlife authorities have initiated an ingenious system whereby the Mbila community can benefit directly from the

tourists that visit the area. The community levy system entails the collection of an additional levy from the tourists entering the Sodwana Bay National Park. The money collected in this way is then deposited into an account that is utilized by the KZN Wildlife authorities for the funding of development projects for the Mbila and Mabaso communities (see Section 3.5.2.2).

The levy funds have already been used for quite a few Mbila community development projects, but have also run into a series of difficulties. These difficulties can be grouped into two main categories: misunderstanding regarding the administration of the funds and the inability of the community to present acceptable initiatives, which would qualify for assistance from this fund. Concerning the suspicions regarding the administration of the community levy fund, the problem seems to spring from a lack of understanding of the inner functioning of the KZN Wildlife authorities.

Some of the respondents interviewed expressed their doubts concerning the KZN Wildlife authority's statements of not keeping the money that they collect from the tourists. All they see are the vast amounts of tourists that enter the area, which contradict the status of the local KZN Wildlife authority's lack of funding for aid to the community. The money collected for the community levy fund is administered by a community levy committee that is located at the KZN Wildlife authority's headquarters in Pietermaritzburg. The Mbila community is currently not represented on this committee, which accounts for their lack of understanding and their mistrust. It would seem that proper representation, accompanied by a clear understanding of how the fund is administered, would serve to answer the community's questions as well as remove the sense of mistrust that the community currently fosters.

With regard to the complexities experienced by the community in the preparation of proper development proposals, the challenges again seem to be connected to the levels of education and training in the area, as well as the unfamiliarity with the procedures required by the institution that administers the levy funds. Officials at the Sodwana Bay branch of the KZN Wildlife authority state that the authority is already involved in the assistance of the community in the preparation of proper business plans. It would seem therefore that the challenge most probably again lies in the maximization of the communication between the Mbila community and the KZN Wildlife authorities.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The Problem Statement in Chapter 1 of the study identified three issues that stood at the centre of the question regarding equitable participation of the Mbila community in the tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay. These issues consisted of the relevant level of control that the Mbilas hold over their resources and the developments that happens there, as well as the issues of opportunity and responsibility.

Chapter 4 served as the analysis of the findings that were made in the previous chapters regarding these issues and came to the following estimation. Regarding the issue of control it was found that the Mbila community was sufficiently empowered by law and also had legal ownership of their resources but is still unable to implement this control due to certain forms of supplementary restrictive legislation as well as arrangements with local institutional actors.

Regarding the issue of opportunity it was found that although general socio economic developmental Opportunities are scarce in the Sodwana Bay region. Opportunity in the form of tourism-based developments does exist but that these opportunities are under-developed and that the Mbila community does not participate in these at a satisfactory level.

Lastly it was found that all of the key stakeholders have considerable responsibility towards the tourism-based development in the Sodwana Bay area and that equitable participation in these developments are only possible if these responsibilities are met. Chapter 5 will now continue in discussing these findings in more detail.

Chapter 5: Participation of the Mbila Community in the Tourism-Based Developments of Sodwana Bay: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 the problem statement established that the research of this study would concentrate on three principal aspects. These include the relevant levels of **Control**, which the Mbila community have with respect to aspects of their participation in the tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay, the **Opportunities** that the tourism industry in the region offers and the **Responsibilities** of the applicable stakeholders to contribute to the overall participation in the tourism related-activities of the area.

Chapter 2 continued by discussing the world trends in protected area management and the tourism-based developments in and around these areas. It also revealed the influences that these developments had on the rural communities living there. This chapter concluded with the development of a set of fundamental elements that are believed to be critical to the success of proper rural community participation in tourism-based developments. These elements were then used in Chapter 4 to measure the present state of Mbila participation in the tourism-based developments of the Sodwana Bay area (Chapter 3).

The focus of Chapter 5 will now be on assimilating the finds of the previous chapters as well as to provide a discussion on these findings. Recommendations will also be presented. These recommendations are those that are believed to be required to enhance the present state of rural community participation in the tourism-based developments at Sodwana Bay and will be presented in terms of the outputs that were recognized in the analysis of the findings (Chapter 4).

5.2 FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS REQUIRED FOR EFFECTIVE RURAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM-BASED DEVELOPMENTS

According to the research done in this study, it is obvious that rural community participation in tourism-based developments is a multi-faceted concept with numerous

aspects that influence its application in an area. Despite this, however, it was found that certain of these **elements** are **fundamental** to the success of any **participatory** approach and that the omission of these elements has led to frequent failures in rural community participation programmes (see Fig. 4.1). The research also revealed that although certain fundamental elements are critical to the success of community participation in development projects, these elements are only useful when they are adapted to complement the situations unique to a specific place.

In recognition of the above statements this study has determined that the level of control which a rural community have over their land and over their own governance on that land stands at the forefront of the success of the participation in any development that occurs there. However, in order to arrive at these satisfactory levels of community control it is necessary to first put a few elements in place. Figure 4.1 illustrates that the first important element towards true rural community participation in tourism-based developments is that of empowerment. Satisfactory empowerment consists of the development of suitable policy and legislative measures and their implementation by effective institutional organizations. This will then present the community with the level of control which they need to be involved in the further levels of these developments.

Further levels of involvement typically consist of aspects such as the official granting of legal stakeholdership to the community, the development of their capacities and their partaking in the benefits that accrue from the developments that were initiated. If these levels of involvement could be achieved in addition to the proper empowerment of the rural community, the process would have completed the full circle according to the research in this study, and it would imply that the communities would have participated sufficiently. The following discussion will now evaluate if this is the case with the Mbila community of the Sodwana Bay area.

To begin with it is important to firstly look at an overview of the principal opportunities and constraints that influence the ability of the Mbila community to participate in the tourism-based developments of the Sodwana Bay area. A summary of these is presented in Table 5.1.

5.3 EVALUATION OF THE PRESENT STATE OF MBILA PARTICIPATION IN THE TOURISM-BASED DEVELOPMENTS OF SODWANA BAY

5.3.1 Levels of Mbila Community Control

The previous chapters of this study (Chapters 2, 4 and 5) have demonstrated the way in which the level of Mbila community Control lies at the very centre of the whole question

Table 5.1: Summary of the Opportunities and Constraints of the Present State of rural community participation in the tourism-based developments at Sodwana Bay.

Opportunities	Constraints
➢ Sufficient authoritative political will ➢ Sufficient translation of policies into appropriate empowering legislation and strategies ➢ Strong governmental institutional structure ➢ Adequate local institutional framework ➢ Strong rural community Based Organizations ➢ Presence of governmental development initiatives ➢ Significant private sector contribution towards rural community empowerment ➢ Positive rural community stance towards tourism development ➢ A natural resource base which presents opportunities for the broadening of the local tourism product ➢ Presence of rural community entrepreneurs ➢ Presence of rural community development initiatives ➢ Available funds for rural community development initiatives	➢ Certain restrictive legislation ➢ Unresolved land ownership and land development issues ➢ Inadequate communication between community and certain institutions ➢ Insufficient insights of rural community into current and future Sodwana development plans ➢ Occasional insufficient community representation on relevant committees ➢ Occasional mistrust among local institutions ➢ Insufficient integration between local institutions (Community and others) ➢ General lack of insight into rural community, Developer's and Government institution's needs ➢ Infrastructural constraints ➢ Underdeveloped rural community and other institutional capacities ➢ Insufficient rural community education and training ➢ Inadequate literacy levels ➢ Lack of variety in tourism-based opportunities ➢ Tourism activities that are foreign to Mbila cultural background ➢ Insufficient tourism-based benefit creation and distribution of these benefits in the community ➢ Insufficient and problematic access to available funding

of effective rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay. The study also revealed that elements such as the national and international Policy frameworks as well as the Legislative and Institutional capacities of the relevant governing authorities play critical roles in the adequate empowerment of rural communities and that proper rural community participation is impossible without the effective implementation of these elements.

At the global level, the emergence of the sustainable development doctrines and the associated shifts in standpoint towards rural community participation in development projects have led to the development of a whole range of international policies that strongly endorse rural community participation (such as Agenda 21 and Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry). The Mbila community is therefore more than adequately provided for with international policy agreements that stress the importance of rural community participation in tourism-based developments (see Section 4.2). These policies are however only supportive if the local national governments adhere to these policy agreements and perform the relevant local policy reforms necessary to empower the community. In this regard, the Mbila community is fortunate that the South African government has done this, with the development of policies such as the Local Agenda 21, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the Growth Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR).

The next level of empowerment in the process towards Mbila control consists of in the effectiveness of the legislative framework to empower the Community to legally own their resources and to Participate as a legal entity in the developments (especially tourism developments in the case of Sodwana Bay) that occur on their traditional territory. In this case the government has again risen to the occasion and developed the required legislation which has resulted in the Mbila community successfully reclaiming and owning sections of their ancestral land and also being able to legally represent themselves (in the form of the Mbila tribal Authority) in the matters that influence their future participation in the tourism developments in the area.

Although this has produced significant improvements in the Mbila's authoritative stature, they have not yet been able to enjoy the full benefit of this empowerment due to internal and external factors. With regard to their representation the community is always involved when aspects concerning their land are under discussion. In most cases, however, this involvement is unfortunately merely to attain their consent for the development to proceed and at present does not include broader participation in the process of these developments. Certain key committees also exist (Community Levy Committee) where the community are not represented at all and where these committees play a significant role in relation to the participation of the Mbila community in the developments in the area.

In terms of their settlement agreement, the community are still only enjoying limited access to some of the reclaimed sections of their territory. However, most of this land falls within the sensitive and rare coastal protected areas, which identifies its significant

conservation status. The Mbila community are however not fully aware of this need for conservation need though. It is believed that deeper involvement through information sessions and actual visits to these areas (to reveal its conservation significance), would surely give the community a new outlook.

Another constraint imposed on the Mbilas consists of a number of restrictive legislation prerogatives (see Section 4.3). These measures are definitely required in areas of the country where damage has occurred as a result of the lack of this type of legislation. The uniqueness of the socio-economic (employment in particular) and environmental (conservation) situation at Sodwana Bay and past experiences of the consequences of certain of its land uses and activities (Beach driving and juvenile casual labour) demand that legislation should protect and build on the locally available opportunities.

The concluding aspect that has a specific bearing on the level of Mbila community control consists of the existence and effectiveness of the relevant institutional bodies in the region. Here the national government has provided the Mbila community with an effective institutional framework from the national to the local level. With regard to the all-important empowerment of the community to be acknowledged as a legal institution themselves, the presence of the institutional framework at Sodwana Bay contributed by translating the relevant legislation into practical measures at a grassroots level. This legislation (which was designed to empower communities) has therefore not been only an ideal or mere words on paper, it has come to life and facilitated actual aspects of the true empowerment of the Mbila community.

The full potential of this institutional framework must however still be acknowledge. Specific difficulties with this framework include a significant lack of communication between the various institutions and the consequent misunderstandings that result. The research has shown that these problems most probably occur because of the presence of a degree of mistrust reminiscent of previous governments, and because of the lack of insight into the intentions of the KZN Wildlife authorities and the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative. It is felt that an asserted the KZN Wildlife authorities to clarify issues such as the community levy fund and an increase in the resolve of the Mbila community to learn more about the necessity and inner workings of conservation matters, will greatly assist the integration of these institutions as well as their future participation in joint projects.

In connection with the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative, it is evident that both the community and the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative need to come together to

discuss the real needs and aspirations of both institutions. This will hopefully then lead to information and training which are sensitive to the Mbilas' needs, and in turn result in a community that understands how to approach and to work with the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative in order to arrive at the maximum level of mutual cooperation.

5.3.2 Existing Participatory Opportunities

In Chapter 2., the literature revealed that subsequent to the initial empowerment of the community, they now possess a level of control which affords them the powers they need to be involved into a much greater degree than before (see Sections 2.4.3.4 and 4.5). If greater levels of empowerment could be achieved, the community would be able to participate as equal stakeholders in the tourism-based developments in their area and would also have a greater say in the type and quantity of benefits which they receive.

In the case of Sodwana Bay, the importance of equal Stakeholdership in the Tourism-Based opportunities is almost self-explanatory. chapter 3 has described the harshness of the physical environment and has also revealed the fact that the tourism industry provides the only significant development opportunities in the area. The extent of the tourism potential in the area and how this potential can contribute to the livelihoods of the Mbilas in the region, also became evident.

From a legislative and institutional point of view the Mbila community have been given the authority over their resources and have been recognized as a legal and existent institution. Although this stakeholdership has contributed significantly towards their participation in the present tourism-based developments of the Sodwana Bay area, the actual level of involvement (on paper) of the Mbila community does not seem to have changed notably from previous years. Difficulties regarding the involvement of the Mbila community are varied, but the main causes of concern can be pinned on the limited variety and number of tourism opportunities, the nature of the present tourism activities themselves and on the relationships between the tourism stakeholders.

In addition to the accommodation and food components (that serve predominantly as a by product of the other tourism activities in the area), the region mainly supports two tourism activities which supply significant involvement opportunities. These activities consist of the scuba diving and sports angling varieties and are of a very technical nature. The activities also involve a lot of ocean-going activity, which unfortunately contrasts sharply with the traditional background of the Mbila people. Although some of

the Mbila people involved in these activities have proved their abilities to excel in the technical components of these activities, the majority have not yet been able to overcome their traditional reservations concerning the ocean and therefore miss out on the greater part of the main tourism-based involvement and development opportunities that Sodwana Bay has to offer.

When looking at the physical environment in relation to the range of presently available tourism activities it is evident that the area is severely underdeveloped. While the area holds extensive natural features apart from its noteworthy marine environment, no significant nature-based activities were encountered and only a few adventure-based activities were present. These activities were however still in their initiation stages and therefore also did not create satisfactory local involvement. Diversification however, is, a definite step in the right direction and can contribute significantly towards the overall tourism product of the area as well as to the subsequent increase in the involvement opportunities of the Mbila community.

Tourism opportunities in the form of new initiatives are slowly but surely also making their appearance. From the part of the government, the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative and the KZN Wildlife authorities are stimulating a number of tourism-based initiatives with the aim of amplifying the community involvement. Although smaller projects are also being initiated (Velasibone, Garden Group, male carver group), the most prominent community-based tourism initiative presents itself in the form of the Ubumbano Craft Initiative. This initiative has already attracted healthy numbers of the Mbila women and has culminated in a few corporate contracts. Difficulties such as the internal organization of this initiative as well as the liaison with the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative and the KZN Wildlife authorities are however hindering its potential and should be eradicated. Other initiatives such as the locally run shebeens are very popular with oversees visitors especially, and should also be expanded upon to attract more of these visitors.

As for the relationships between the various tourism stakeholders, it became apparent that the difficulties that are experienced centre around aspects of control and understanding. Control in the sense that the main tourism stakeholders, apart from the Mbila community, still seem to exert the bulk of the control over the tourism activities and facilities as well as the areas where these features occur; and understanding in the sense that the Mbila community and the tourism developers in the area are not always aware of what their mutual needs and how these institutions can assist each them in ways that complement their present situation. The Mbila community also require a

deeper understanding of the way in which Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative and the KZN Wildlife authorities are managing resources (both natural and economical) and how this is benefiting them. On the part of the KZN Wildlife authorities and the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative especially, there seems to be a lack of understanding of the true needs of the Mbila community. A better understanding here would definitely assist the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative in the creation of training sessions tailored to fit the Mbila community's needs and at a level that would enable the Mbila people to start applying what they learn right away.

The benefits that accrue from the tourism-based developments of a region signify another important characteristic of an adequately involved rural community. Section 2.3 of this study has highlighted the fact that tourism-based developments have, in the past, provided compensation and employment as the only means of benefit that a rural community would receive from a tourism-based development, and has thereby clearly revealed these managers' position towards meaningful rural community participation in tourism-based developments. In tourism-based developments where rural communities were effectively involved, the benefits of those developments presented themselves by the community firstly, being able to participate in a benefit-generating opportunity; secondly, by being part of the stakeholders that decide what the tourism venture would include; and thirdly, by being an equal receiver when the benefits eventually start arriving.

Here the Sodwana Bay tourism situation and the Mbilas' involvement again seem not to be performing at their highest levels. Although the Mbila community seem to be sufficiently empowered and own most of the land where the tourism activities are being operated from, they certainly do not appear to receive the benefits that accompany this involvement. Presently the main benefits that are being generated by the tourism activities in the area consist of employment opportunities, the government, private and community-based initiatives and the community levy scheme. Whilst these benefits form a vital part of the daily income of many of the Mbila community members, they fall far short of what the literature describes sufficient tourism-based benefits to be.

Principal reasons for this situation can be attributed to the lack of sufficient Mbila integration, the unsatisfactory state of appropriate education and training as well as the nature of the tourism activities themselves. With regard to the lack of integration it was found that a number of aspects are particularly important. As for Mbila land claim, this process has only recently undergone its first stage and although the Mbila people technically regained their traditional territory, both them and the KZN Wildlife authorities

concurred that much negotiation still needs to be done to decide on the appropriate joint management of this land. Negotiations are progressing very slowly however and this, in conjunction with the community's lack of knowledge, with regard to the importance of the conservation of the said areas and the lack in variety of the tourism developments available severely hampers the Mbilas in harnessing more of the potential benefits that the area contains.

The lack of appropriate education and training has a devastating impact on various levels. At the grassroots level, these deficiencies are depriving the community of life-sustaining job opportunities, and at the control and management levels, they are causing ineffective communication between the various stakeholders, which in turn again leads to unproductive integration. This is especially disadvantageous to the community because the repercussions of rural community involvement at these levels produce exponential non-participation at the lower (poorer) levels of the community where the benefits accruing from tourism-based developments are extremely important.

The inaccessibility of the majority of the tourism opportunities at Sodwana Bay has been discussed at length throughout the study. The simple truth here is that this is causing the Mbila people to miss out on the tourism developments that are being operated on much of their own territory and that these opportunities are often going to beneficiaries which are not of the area. The literature specifies that, for an area to be managed sustainably, its resources and the benefits that accrue from the use of these resources should be reserved for its local populations. Measures that would allow the Mbila people to harness the maximum benefit within sustainable levels of consumption of Sodwana Bay's resources should therefore be put in place to justify its conservation and to enhance the quality of life for the Mbila community.

5.3.3 Stakeholder Responsibilities

Throughout the study it became evident that in order for sustainable development to succeed it is necessary that people take **responsibility** for the management of their resources. When people do take up this responsibility and refrain from conventional, over-consumptive behaviour in favour of more sustainable actions, this usually means that changes will have to be made to these earlier unsustainable lifestyles. In terms of the rural community participation in the tourism-based development of Sodwana Bay, one of the most important responsibilities contributing towards sustainable development includes the appropriate development of **local capacities** in order to make it possible for

all the relevant stakeholders to participate productively in the management of the tourism developments of their region.

In Section 2.4.3.6, the literature describes Local rural community capacity and capacity building as the ability of the rural community in an area to use their ownership and access to knowledge and technology as a means of sustainably managing their environmental and social resources for the benefit of themselves and their future generations. While this is very true, the literature has also revealed that access to knowledge and technology is a very rare commodity in the rural world and, as in the case of Sodwana Bay, illiteracy especially is one of the principal contributors to the lack of rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of that region.

Illiteracy is unfortunately not the only constraint which the Mbila people have to endure since this restriction is exacerbated by the permanence of low levels of applicable education and training in the schools of the area. Additional limitations present themselves in the illiteracy levels in the governing bodies of these institutions as well as the unavailability of sufficiently trained teachers in the region.

An area where the Mbila people can however contribute significantly in their capacity as the inhabitants of the local natural environment is through their knowledge of the ecology of the region. Indigenous Knowledge Systems, or IKS as it is known, have contributed significantly to the conservation of biodiversity and to developments in ecologically sensitive areas worldwide, and can (and have in cases) also be adapted to serve in a guiding capacity for tourists interested in the local ecology of the area. Western conservationists and developers have unfortunately been slow to recognize the value of the IKS resource base and rural communities have therefore basically lost their opportunity to participate in developments in this sense.

In conclusion, an additional factor that has influenced in the ability of the Mbila people to participate in the tourism-based developments of their area involves the incapacities of the local governance structures and developers to appreciate the true needs of the Mbila community and to create developments in the area that promote the participation of the Mbila community. Although the current tourism opportunities are attracting tourists to the area and are supplying much needed employment opportunities, it is believed that the area boasts much more opportunity for the development of additional tourism ventures and that these can be developed to promote Mbila participation, in particular.

The principal responsibilities that the various stakeholders have in connection with the aim of involving the Mbila community as far as possible in the tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay, are therefore quite apparent. In the first place, it is of the utmost importance that all the relevant authorities that are involved with the schools and the education and training programmes that are currently being offered, should meet to discuss the present situation of the schools in the region. Serious attention should be given to the level of literacy in the area. Specific focus should also be placed on the current curricula and on the possibilities of adapting it to involve subjects that are more tourism-oriented and which would allow successful candidates a better change of attaining employment in the tourism industry of Sodwana Bay.

With regard to the government and private tourism developers and operators in the region, more should be done to incorporate the Mbila people in the tourism activities of the area. This should be done focusing on specifically their cultural background and on a creative means of incorporating this in the local tourism product. Many examples exist of where the cultural uniqueness of a rural community was incorporated into the local tourism industry of the area and where this produced good results. The study does, however, recognize the current initiatives of the government and private tourism developers and operators in Sodwana Bay as well as the positive results which these initiatives have already achieved.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Mbila Control in the tourism-based developments at Sodwana Bay

The research of this study has established that the principal determinant with respect to the level of control which the Mbila community has in the tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay, consists of their legal empowerment to participate. With regard to the policy environment it was found that the policies and strategies that have a bearing on rural community participation in tourism-based developments rules clearly on its relevance and importance. The relevant authorities should continue to develop these policies and strategies and should focus on expanding them in such a way that they can facilitate practical changes that would enhance rural community participation practices on a grassroots level.

Legislative measures such as the Restitution of Land Rights Act, 1994 (Act 22 of 1994) and the Communal Property Associations Act, 1996 (Act 28 of 1996) have prove the

South African governments political will to empower the Mbila community and has resulted in the Mbila community being a recognized and legal stakeholder in the developments of the region. Although this has already facilitated much more involvement by the Mbila community, it is believed that additional measures should be developed to illustrate the full capacity of this legislation to the community, as well as the practical implications that this has on their level of control over the tourism-based developments in their area. Awareness campaigns, for instance, can assist the Mbila community in the realization of their rights and responsibilities concerning the relevant legislation and should explain how the legislation brings about the change that it does. This would then hopefully give the community a better idea of how to implement this legislation to allow maximum rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of their area.

Restrictive legislation identified by this study presents itself in the form of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998), Notice No. 22690 of 2001 (beach driving), and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997, Section 52A of the Child Care Act (Child Labour Legislation). With regard to this legislation, it must be emphasized that the difficulties experienced have a bearing only on the research of this study and that their applicability at other sites is unconfirmed. With regard to the Sodwana Bay area, legislation that does not unnecessarily obstruct the specific socio-economic and environmental characteristics of the region should be presented. The local authorities and the tourism developers should be assisted on a practical and implementable level by the national government and should not be left to deal with the outcomes of the restrictions that the new legislation brought about, on their own. This should be done in ways that sustain and enhance the current economic situation whilst still achieving the desired conservation of the aspects described in the legislation.

With regard to all the relevant institutions in the area, the research has revealed that the Mbila community were adequately empowered as a legitimate institution and that the area was well represented by other institutions that embody the various interests in the area. These institutions were found to be in reasonable communication with each other, but some of the relationships were also experiencing serious difficulties. A recommendation in this regard would be that a series of introductory open days should be organized where every institution would be allowed to represent themselves. This representation should include aspects such as their role and function in the development of the area as well as their most significant needs in relation to the other institutions as well as comprehensive lists of contact details of all the relevant departments.

The communication between the Mbila community, the KZN Wildlife authorities and the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative is especially important. The Mbila community in particular, need to know how they can involve themselves in a greater degree in these institutions and in the developments that they plan for the future. On the topic of the initiation of new developments and the relevant training and aid programmes, institutions like the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative will also benefit immensely from an effective understanding of what the true needs of the Mbila people are, seen from their perspective.

5.4.2 Tourism-Based Opportunities

Adequate stakeholdership in the tourism-based developments of an area constitutes one of the first and foremost tourism-based opportunities that a tourism destination can provide a rural community with. The South African government empowered the Mbila community in this regard by providing them with the legislative means they need to achieve equal stakeholdership. Although the community does have a significant level of control over the developments that are being proposed in the area, this control has not yet culminated in enough participatory opportunities at a grassroots level.

In addition to this it is believed that the cultural and natural resources of the Sodwana Bay area have the potential for a significant amount of additional tourism-based activities. These resources should however be developed in a holistic fashion so as to ensure that the proposed developments involve the maximum number of Mbila people at all the different stages and levels of these developments. Care must therefore be taken not to develop supplementary activities that burdens the cultural and natural resources whilst not contributing significantly to the Mbila community's livelihood in the region

In relation to the type of benefits which the current tourism opportunities are yielding, it became apparent that the nature of these opportunities is not yielding the benefit flows that substantiate the level of control which the Mbila community was given through the legislation. Attention must therefore be given to developing tourism activities that are culturally sensitive and which allow a greater number of Mbila people to participate. The Mbila community also have a role to play here in terms of their education and training thereby ensuring that they stand a better change of procuring better involvement in the present and future tourism-based activities of the Sodwana Bay area.

It is again recommended here that the Mbila community, the KZN Wildlife authorities and the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative work toward a greater level of integration. This would ensure that the benefits which are being generated (such as the community levy and the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative training programmes) reach the community and that they are distributed to the areas where they can be utilized in a sustainable fashion e.g. schools, clinics, compensation for lost resources, training programmes, future community-based tourism initiatives, etc.

5.4.3 Stakeholder Responsibilities

Stakeholder responsibility represents one of the most significant components in the successful involvement of all the interested and affected parties in the tourism-based developments of an area. In the case of Sodwana Bay, it was identified that the level of education and training in the region as well as the level of insight of the local authorities and developers into the true needs of the Mbila community presented the main incapacities. These capacities would have to be built and expanded upon to ensure that both the Mbila community and the other tourism stakeholders in the area are sufficiently involved and that they share in the benefits that accrue from these developments.

With regard to the education and training, the study revealed that the local educational institutions in the area were failing to provide the level and type of training which is necessary for the Mbila people and required by the local tourism industry. Illiteracy was found to be common throughout the Mbila community and training in tourism-related fields such as tourist reception, waiting personnel, tourism-related house-keeping and maintenance, and especially management and administration staff were found to be non-existent. Recommendations would be to organize meetings with all the relevant stakeholders to discuss and determine what the educational and training needs of the area are. The curricula of the area should then be adapted to these needs and supplementary training should be provided where this is not possible. The relevant authorities (national, provincial and local government and institutions) should also ensure that adequate governing bodies that would be able to monitor the educational needs of the area and manage it accordingly are elected. Attention should also be given to the educational infrastructure of the schools in the region. Here the authorities should ensure that government resources and those created by the local tourism industry are used in a manner that complements the results which are expected of these institutions.

On the subject of government and other institutional incapacities, the study revealed that the principal constraints presented themselves in the lack of understanding of the true needs and aspirations of the Mbila community and in deficiencies regarding the integration of the various institutions with each other. Concerning the misconceptions in relation to the Mbila community's needs and aspirations, it is recommended that the governing authorities and other stakeholders develop a proper understanding of these. This should enable the authorities to develop initiatives that are responsive to the Mbilas' socio-economic requirements whilst still being sensitive to their cultural background and the integrity of the natural environment.

As to the integration of the various institutions, the study once more reiterates the importance of this aspect. The responsibility here again falls to all the pertinent institutions to implement the necessary procedures that would allow maximum cooperation (see Section 5.4.1). This should facilitate developments and initiatives that are sensitive to the requirements of all the interested and affected parties and which are appropriate to the region.

5.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In short the main aims of this study focused on attempting to determine the level of control which the Mbila community possess over their traditional resources and how this control enhances their livelihood by securing greater levels of participation for them in the tourism-based developments of the area. The primary objectives of the study were therefore to describe the Sodwana Bay area in terms of its resources and its tourism-related opportunities as well as the levels of control which the various stakeholders in the region have in relation to these resources and the tourism-based developments.

The findings of the study are portrayed in Chapters 4 and 5. These findings were determined by measuring the present levels of the Mbilas' participation in the tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay against a framework of fundamental elements that were derived from the literature research, performed in Chapter 2. The set of fundamental elements and the analytical framework in which it was placed are by no means seen as the only measure to establish the accomplishments of rural community participation initiatives, but were valuable to this study in the determination of the broad successes and failures of rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay.

Looking at the earlier developmental opportunities in the Sodwana Bay region, the research revealed that the natural environment had until recently (last 100 – 150 years) only allowed a very narrow level of existence. The inhabitants of the area (man, beast and plant) also had to be very well adapted to survive here and early visitors were usually driven off very quickly. This was not due to the nature of the Tonga people that inhabited the area, but due to the ferocity of the environmental determinants themselves (see Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3). Whereas this might seem harsh, the significance of this unreceptiveness would eventually produce an exceptionally unique natural and cultural environment, which in today's day and age still embraces much of its original character.

From a socio-economic developmental perspective, the area undoubtedly produced many difficulties. Government efforts to determine possible economic development projects did not produce any viable enterprises and although transportation significantly enhanced the traveller's reach, malaria and Maputaland's shear ruggedness would not permit tourism to produce an alternative means of development until well into the 1980s. This was about to change radically however and by no other means than the progress of the environmentalist movement and the birth of the sustainable development doctrines.

With the introduction of the sustainable development philosophy and the huge rise in the popularity of adventure tourism (as well as the medical advances in the prevention and treatment of tropical diseases) came the promise of a whole new way of development for Sodwana Bay and the Mbila community. The area's natural and cultural environment revealed it as a haven for the naturalist and adventure traveller and the commitment of the South African government to develop the region was made visible through initiatives such as the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative.

One of the primary objectives of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative was therefore to develop the necessary infrastructure that would allow tourists into the area as quickly as possible. This was done with the specific intention of stimulating enough tourism-based economic activity in the area, which would allow the Mbila community to be involved to the degree where significant poverty reductions would be achieved. It was also envisaged that the rural community participation in the tourism-based developments of the region would grow to eventually involve them at levels in these developments where they would be able to procure sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their children, in the present and in the future.

According to the set of fundamental elements that were developed to determine the success of this participation, it was discovered that the relevant authorities have indeed

demonstrated considerable commitment towards this empowerment by implementing the policy, legislative and institutional measures that endow the Mbila community with sufficient control to be intimately involved in the tourism-based developments of their area. On the other hand the analysis of the findings has also described (in detail) that significant tourism-based opportunities exist and that the possibility of others are also very real. The findings have also shown that the Mbila community reacted well to these tourism-based developments and that they are even showing progress in the activities that contrast sharply with their cultural background. In recognition of all of this, the principal finding of this research is, however, that the Mbila community are not sufficiently involved in the tourism-based developments of Sodwana Bay, despite all of the above mentioned facts.

In view of this the next logical question would probably be to ask why the community is not sufficiently involved? The reasons for this are described in Table 5.1 under the constraints towards the proper involvement of the community and although quite a few exist, the main themes of these restrictions can probably be summarized under the main headings of restrictive legislation, insufficient capacities which exist within some of the key institutions, insufficient levels of education and training among the community and an insufficient supply of appropriate tourism-based participation opportunities.

The findings thus reveal that although there are definite steps towards the empowerment of the Mbila community, certain key elements are still preventing their satisfactory participation. In relation to institutions such as national governments, it is believed that these kinds of authoritative structures will always play a critical role in the true empowerment of rural communities to participate in all kinds of developments and especially in tourism-based developments, as in the case of Sodwana Bay. These institutions have the absolute obligation to implement strategies and legislation that empowers rural communities in the simplest and strongest possible way.

The private tourism developers in Sodwana Bay have by their contributions shown that they also play a very important role in the involvement of the Mbila community. These commitments should be dually appreciated and asserted efforts should be made to create the necessary partnerships that would sustain their involvement in the joint development of quality tourism products in the Sodwana Bay area. With regard to the Mbila community, the study has found that the community is well aware of the possibilities that sustainable tourism offers. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that they as a community identify the constraints which are preventing their proper

participation in the tourism opportunities and that they systematically work towards eradicating these constraints as far as possible.

The literature and the field research has provided enough testimony to prove that true rural community participation is possible in tourism-based developments such as those in Sodwana Bay. Whether or not the relevant authorities and institutions will carry out the actions that need to be performed to make this possible, remains to be seen.

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