

# Transboundary Protected Area Management and Community-Based Ecotourism Development in southwestern Botswana

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I spent three months in Botswana pursuing my research on stakeholder perspectives and support for Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP), a transboundary conservation area with a dual ownership between Botswana and South Africa. KTP is renowned for being the first formally declared transboundary protected area in Southern Africa. My work also covered residents' perceptions about park-based community tourism in the Kalahari region. I worked in nine villages: Ncaang, Ukhwi, Zutshwa and Tshane in Kgalagadi North, and Khawa, Struizendam, Bokspits, Tsabong and Kang in the south. Four of these villages are located within Wildlife Management Areas or the KTP buffer zone. Mixed research inquiries were used to collect data for this research. I interviewed 18 national and local public sector representatives who included local authorities (village chiefs, village groups, extension workers). About 740 household surveys were conducted within the nine villages adjacent to KTP. Other information sources used included the country's national archives, policy documents and official government reports, and tourism statistics.

I also participated in workshops as well as collected extra information from the Botswana Tourism Authority and Department of Tourism. This research is one of the first inquiries conducted in Botswana's remote Kgalagadi region, where issues that pertain to common property and multiple-use rangeland management and community tourism development are important. Lack of alternative livelihoods has put strains on the limited resources of the area. Thus, alternative livelihoods are highly needed among communities flanking the KTP. I found that community ecotourism development in the Kgalagadi region is generally low as many individuals are not engaged in tourism-related projects. Self-employment in tourism-related commerce is minimal across the region, with people involved in the accommodation sector. Craftmaking with ostrich eggshells and hides and skin was also highlighted as a common activity among the San/Bushmen communities. A



handful of villages were engaged in joint venture safari hunting activities. Park-based community ecotourism was perceived as an activity with the potential to generate socio-economic benefits to rural people, and that was highly recognized and appreciated as an essential livelihood option. However, local residents obtained only minimal benefits from the KTP.

Despite low or lack of park benefits to adjacent communities, the public sector officials demonstrated strong attitudes toward KTP as a transfrontier protected area and support for park-based ecotourism activities. Generally, the study discovered a low level of local participation in park-based conservation activities and lack of collaboration between the KTP authority and residents. Even though local residents were left out in all park programs and activities, they still held very strong general conservation

attitudes toward and support for the KTP as a transboundary area.

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