Facilitating stakeholder engagement in protected area Integrated Environmental Management Planning: A Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park case study

BY

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ABSTRACT

Meaningful stakeholder engagement in an Integrated Environmental Management Plan (IEMP) process is a major challenge facing most protected areas (PAs) today. IEMPs are viewed globally as effective tools practiced in PAs to build and maintain relationships between stakeholders and the management of PAs. In the African context, IEMPs are viewed as the means of engaging neighbouring communities in the governance and management of PAs, particularly those communities who were dispossessed of their land in favour of conservation. The IEMP process is, therefore, an attempt at legitimising PAs in the post-colonial, post-apartheid context. However, although the perspectives of neighbouring communities on PA management and engagement with stakeholders are well documented, the attitude of conservation authorities has not received adequate scholarly attention. It is therefore not well documented how PA managers view the IEMP process and to what extent are they genuinely supportive of it. The attitude of PA managers to IEMP is crucial since they are the ones who are ultimately charged with the responsibility of overseeing and implementing it. The main aim of this study was therefore, to bridge this gap by examining the perspectives of protected area managers on the facilitation of IEMP process.

Using a qualitative case study approach, the study looked at a particular case, the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HiP), which is one of the oldest big-five game reserves in Africa. The Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park is in the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal, a province of South Africa. The park is surrounded by ten (10) traditional communities. Most of these communities are victims of colonial-apartheid era land dispossession policies. Together with other stakeholders, these communities are thus represented or must be represented in the IEMP processes of the Park.

The data for this study were collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews. Participants included the park management team as well as the environmental planning team of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNW) which is the managing authority for the park. Interviews were also held with various other stakeholders of the park that had a history of involvement with the IEMP process in the park such as local community leaders, tourism organisations and local governance structures.

The study found that stakeholder engagement and meaningful participation has not been achieved in the park. The IEMP process at HiP provides a limited opportunity for an open, transparent, and inclusive engagement. Right from the start, the facilitation of the process

ensures that "undesirable" persons and issues are excluded and therefore never addressed. The findings of the study also confirmed the now long-held view that there is often a resource and information asymmetry between local communities and PA management to the disadvantage of the communities. However, at HiP this was not only limited to communities, but it was also discovered that there was asymmetry between senior management and lower-level officers who deal directly with local communities and issues. These officers have limited understanding of the IEMP process and were also excluded from certain stages of the IEMP process. The study also found that the IEMP process is not adequately resourced to the detriment of a proper facilitation which should involve appropriate training of staff members, community representatives and other stakeholders. It seems that management's approach to IEMP is a "box ticking" and "tool-kit" approach aimed at satisfying legislative and policy requirements instead of viewing and implementing it as a genuine tool for cultivating an engaged public. Moreover, the constant complaint by park management of lack of genuine conservation interest by the communities is perhaps a clear demonstration that mainstream conservation practices remain alienating to local communities. Conservation began by excluding local populations and now blames them for their lack of interest.

DECLARATION

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Exact wording of the title of the dissertation as appearing on the copies submitted for examination:

FACILITATING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN PROTECTED AREA ENVIRONMENTAL

MANAGEMENT PLANNING: A HLUHLUWE-IMFOLOZI PARK CASE STUDY

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or

quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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I dedicate this thesis to my family who have supported me all the way.

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DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
EKZNW	Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
HiP	Hluhluwe-IMfolozi Park
IEMP	Intergrated Environmental Management Planning
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act
NEMPA	National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act
NGO	Non-Governemental Organisations
NPB	Natal Parks Board
PA	Protected Areas
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WESSA	Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

This study is concerned with the facilitation of stakeholder engagement in protected area management from the angle of protected area managers. It examines how the Integrated Environmental Management Planning (IEMP) process is facilitated and how protected area managers perceive their role and the roles of the other stakeholders. This was done in order to understand how the protected area managers' perceptions and attitudes impact on the IEMP process and shape the nature of participation of the other stakeholders.

Stakeholder engagement has become one of the core processes through which organisations, from governments to private firms, strive for accountability in their decision-making. This engagement involves a structured dialogue between organisations and their publics with a view to improve decision-making. Stakeholder engagement is thus a crucial component of governance (Reed 2008).

The governing of the commons (Ostrom 2015) is one such area of governance where stakeholder engagement has been identified as being paramount. The biophysical environment is arguably the most crucial constituent of the commons. Thus, international, national and sub-national environmental agencies are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that there is adequate participation by the public in their decision-making processes.

In South Africa, the *National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act 57 of 2003* (NEMPA), charges protected area managers with the responsibility of ensuring adequate stakeholder engagement in protected area management planning (DEAT 2004). According to the Act, protected area management plans must include inputs from various stakeholders such as neighbouring communities, local governance structures, interest groups, to mention just a few. Stakeholder engagement is also viewed as one of the key incentives that aid in building continuous symbiotic relationships between communities and protected areas (Reed 2008: Nsukwini & Bob 2016).

Previous studies have shown that meaningful stakeholder involvement has not yet been achieved in the wildlife conservation arena (De Beer 2009). This is a huge challenge faced by protected areas because inadequate stakeholder involvement may compromise the long-term integrity of the protected areas (Cruz-Novey 2012).

Hulme and Murphree (2001) emphasise that people neighbouring protected areas experience severe exclusion from accessing wildlife. The most sinister aspect of this exclusion being the forced removals of African people from their ancestral lands that had to be proclaimed as protected areas. There are several examples of this injustice in present day KwaZulu-Natal, province of South Africa and the rest of the country. These examples include the eviction of people from the Pongola Game Reserve in the 19th century and the Sabie Game Reserve in 1903. The conservation ethos of the time rendered native African populations as undesirable nuisance and spoilers of nature who had to be banished and made invisible in the interest of both wildlife and mostly white tourists (Mbaria & Ogada 2016). These people only became 'visible' from around 1905 when the protected areas management needed them as a source of cheap labour. As Freeman (2013) argues, cheap labour is often the bedrock of conservation activity. The communities who had settled within the vicinity of the present day Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HIP) have also experienced numerous hardships, including eviction (*Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife* 1999).

In the Kruger National Park, numerous African communities were also evicted including the Makuleke people who were evicted from the park during apartheid regime. They later regained their land rights in post-apartheid South Africa under the land restitution programme initiated in 1994 (Brockington & Igoe 2006). The Makuleke experience is often cited as one of the success stories of community participation in conservation management. The community chose not to re-settle on their land and were instead given a chance to share in the eco-tourism revenue. However, it remains to be seen whether with these new-found powers the community can influence management decisions (Brockington & Igoe 2006).

According to McNeely (1993), since 1970 there has been a growing change in how the management of protected areas handle the neighbouring communities. Top-down management approaches to conservation and people were seen as having not

sufficiently tackled the social issues, economic growth and conservation benefits to the people surrounding protected areas. From the 1990s, local participation in protected areas was characterised by joint management structures such as co-management. This was one of the incentives of bringing people into the protected areas decision making process (Magome & Murombedzi 2003; Dzingirai & Breen 2005).

Since 1994, protected areas in South African have been operating under policies and legislative instruments that seek to promote relationships between protected areas and people (Hulme & Murphree 2001). Some of these include:

1. The National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act 57 OF 2003

2. Biodiversity Act of 2004 - aims to promote and conserve South Africa's biological diversity promoting the sustainable utilisation of South Africa's natural resources.

3. National Environmental Management Act 62 of 2008 (NEMA) (Hulme & Murphree, 2001).

The South African National Parks (SANP) and other key conservation specialists like Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNW) have been working on various ways to engage neighbouring communities. The main motivating factor for this engagement is to generate support for conservation activity from the local people (Makombe 1993; Picard 2003). With what could be described as an erroneous assumption that communities are a group of people with similar interests, resources, demands, and risks, EKZNW came up with a range of neighbour relations policies. These policies are structured in ways that will, presumably, help in improving relations with the neighbouring people. Neighbouring communities are regarded as stakeholders in the context of the Integrated Environmental Management Planning process for protected areas.

The strategies of improving relations, as illustrated from EKZNW policy documents are as follows:

1. Creating trust through: (a) improving communications; (b) negotiating solutions to common problems; and (c) encouraging participation in conservation activities.

2. Developing environmental awareness through education and interpretation programmes.

3. Facilitating access to the material and spiritual benefits of protected areas through understanding the neighbours' needs and encouraging access.

4. Fostering the economic and social development of neighbouring communities.

5. Training staff in order that they may engage effectively in neighbour-related issues and events (*Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife*, 1999: vi).

1.2   Research problem

Stakeholder engagement in environmental management is one of the most extensively studied phenomena (Reed 2008). The literature on this phenomenon is rich, varied and has reached what could be considered as a stage of consensus. Key challenges that bar effective engagement have been identified, and paramount among these is the issue of power asymmetry between, mostly, internal, and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are presented as enjoying more advantages than external stakeholders when it comes to influencing decision-making.

Enjoying the privileges of information and resource asymmetry, internal stakeholders convert this into power which they then use to undermine the contributions of the less powerful external stakeholders. As a result, some scholars, social and environmental activists have questioned the utility of stakeholder engagement. They argue that the process has become another tool for the powerful to entrench their positions through the vain exercise of engaging the public whilst doing exactly what they want to do. In this context, stakeholder engagement simply "legitimises" decisions without a legitimate consideration of the inputs of the disempowered publics (Reed 2008).

This is of course a serious indictment against stakeholder engagement as envisaged by the IEMP (Ross *et al.* 2002). It is therefore, of great interest and necessity to understand how stakeholder engagement is facilitated from the perspective of the protected area managers. Protected area managers are a key stakeholder group, and they are the ones who receive the bulk of the blame for the failure of this process. Their perspective of the process can help elucidate some of the reasons behind the attitudes that inform their engagement with the stakeholders.

Much of the body of research on IEMP in the past and present has manly focused more in bringing in external stakeholders in the IEMP process not paying much

attention on the levels of engagement by the stakeholders during decision-making process (De Beer 2009). The researcher identified a need to examine the point of view of the HiP management when facilitating IEMP stakeholder engagement as it is driven by the management. The park management are in a better position to assess the level of stakeholder's engagement when facilitating IEMP process.

1.3   Research question

The main research question addressed in the study is:

- How does the attitude of the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park management inform their facilitation of the Integrated Environmental Management Planning process?

1.4   Research aim and objectives

The main aim of the proposed study was to examine the perspective of the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park management regarding their facilitation of the stakeholder engagement in the Integrated Environmental Management Planning process. To achieve this aim, the study had the following objectives:

- To describe how the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park IEMP process is facilitated.
- To assess the level of stakeholder engagement at the HiP IEMP process.
- To identify the barriers to effective stakeholder engagement during the IEMP process.

1.5   Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is made up of five chapters and appendices.

The **first chapter** sets out the introduction, background of the problem, rationale for the study, research question and chapter outline. In addition, it introduces the aim and objectives of the study accompanied by some relevant literature.

Chapter Two presents the relevant literature reviewed within the topic of IEMP process in protected areas. In-depth literature on the IEMP process and diverse

understanding of the IEMP by stakeholders is also presented in this chapter. Furthermore, it introduces the conceptual framework accompanied by the terms and concepts definitions.

Chapter Three provides an outline of the research methodology, research design, data collection methods and tolls used in this study. The location, sampling methods of the study are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four presents the findings and critically analyses the role of stakeholders involved in the IEMP process and the challenges encountered during the development or reviewing process of the IEMP process at HiP.

Chapter Five presents the reflections and conclusions that were drawn based on the overall study. The recommendations and limitations are also presented in this chapter.

1.6   Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the background of the study considered relevant literature of stakeholder engagement in protected areas management planning process. It has also addressed the research problem, research question, aims and objectives of the study along with the structure of the dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to IEMP process in protected areas, the challenges faced by the management of protected areas when facilitating community involvement in the IEMP process and understanding of the entire process from a stakeholder perspective. In addition, the chapter provides the conceptual framework used in this study.

2.2 Integrated Environmental Management Planning as a process

Integrated Environmental Management Planning is a significant part of South Africa's National Environmental Management Act 62 of 2008 (NEMA), which advances integrated management of activities that have both positive and negative effects on the environment. IEMP aims to ensure that stakeholders who are involved in decision-making are well informed about the concepts, approaches, principles and the overall framework of environmental management. Environmental assessment frameworks used globally are comparable to South African Integrated Environmental Management Planning (DEAT 2004:2).

According to Lochner *at al.* (2003) IEMP used to be associated with the granting or gaining of permission for certain activities. It has, however, evolved to be an effective way of thinking about the nexus between development and environmental protection. The IEMP process brings different sectors onto a platform whereby they all strive jointly for environmental sustainability. The current definition of IEMP is as follows:

> IEMP provides a holistic framework that can be embraced by all sectors of society for the assessment and management of environmental impacts and aspects associated with each stage of the activity life cycle, taking into consideration a broad definition of environment and with the overall aim of promoting sustainable development (DEAT 2004:2).

Cassar (2003) identified a need for consistent contact with the main stakeholders in IEMP processes. The reason for maintaining consistent contact is to avoid unnecessary divisions, delays and misunderstandings which often results from a lack of regular communication causing the stakeholders to drift apart losing their shared vision.

The literature has revealed that involving stakeholders in protected area management planning contributes positively towards a long and successful relationship between the institution and stakeholders (Fortwangler 2003). Management plans are reviewed after a certain period, usually after five to 10 years in organisations such as EKZNW (*Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife* n.d). Management plans are regarded as one of the tools that keep communities, NGOs, Municipalities, Associations and protected areas in contact and updated about progress and matters pertaining to the protected area. Even in community planning for urban parks, the importance of public involvement has been stressed as one of the effective methods of keeping the park users updated about activities and development plans. Parks and protected areas are used by people, so it is of utmost importance to involve them in IEMP (De Beer 2009). Furthermore, management plans for protected areas should be adaptable and feasible both financially and politically (Lochner *et al.* 2003).

People's perception of protected areas has an impact on their engagement in the decision-making processes. Therefore, there is a need to explore people's attitudes toward protected areas (PAs) in a way that enables them to describe the values they have toward these areas. Recognition of both positive and negative perceptions of people toward PAs need to be considered in order to achieve meaningful stakeholder engagement (Allendorf 2006). A great need for constant contact sessions between protected area management and communities before negotiations about drawing up management plans are worth consideration. It opens room for identification of both positive and negative attitudes which can be taken care of prior to starting the development or review of management plans.

Jenks (2012) found that villagers need to be granted opportunities to learn about wildlife species' names and their importance in conservation before they find out about them in a process of reviewing or developing management plans. This will increase

and change their level of contribution which will be seen in their inputs when taking decisions which affect them regarding PAs surrounding them. It will also change the way they generally think of the species found in PAs.

Visitors form part of the stakeholders that are included in a process of developing or reviewing management plans for PAs at Hanuama Bay Nature Reserve. Pre- and post-visit sample questionnaires were used, and responses showed that the compulsory translation program added to guests' knowledge of the area and generated environmentally appropriate behaviour (Roberts 2013). Getting people to be aware of the importance of understanding the meaning of being a stakeholder which has an impact on neighbouring PAs can be achieved in various ways. Changing human perception towards PAs can have an impact in improving relations and levels of understanding between people and the PAs surrounding them (Roberts 2013).

Stakeholders should engage in the procedure of characterising the destination of tasks and checking progress. The partners should be open about their own main goals and targets in decision-making and planning. A distinctive approach also helps in connecting with partners in working together with each other (Ross *et al.* 2007). Participating groups or individuals have a role to play through engaging and really being effectively involved in negotiations. Participants are expected to understand their roles in the process for them to be involved meaningfully (Castro *et al.* 2006).

In IEMP stakeholders are expected to participate, nonetheless for most social experts, a meaningful interpretation of the term participation should meet certain phases of dynamic inclusion in taking decisions. Treby and Clark (2004) argue that the common challenge of so-called 'consultation' must be regarded as participation. Usually, the presentation of proposals for comment and feedback by organisations holding power in the decision-making process is called stakeholder participation. As Arnstein (1969) states, participation where stakeholders are not empowered is empty and serves only to frustrate participants lacking power.

2.3 Integrated Environmental Management Planning and Protected Areas

According to Nigel and Sue (2008), protected area management plans are a class of IEMP with a specific focus on statutory proclaimed conservation areas. The National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act 57 OF 2003, describes a management plan as a guideline which has terms and conditions for controlling activities for a certain period together with a programme of implementation. Management plans for protected areas are highly regarded in most countries as an effective tool in achieving conservation goals through the IEMP approach and principles. Protected Areas are defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN 1994: 261) as: "An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means".

There are various sorts of protected areas in South Africa as classified under the National Environmental Management Act: Protected Areas (NEMPA 57 of 2003). These are per the following:

1. Special nature reserves, national parks, nature reserves (including wilderness areas) and protected environments.

2. World heritage sites in terms of the World Heritage Convention Act 49 of 1999, are places of outstanding universal value with great importance in conservation, cultural and natural heritage. Their uniqueness needs to be preserved for future generations.

3. Marine protected areas are declared as marine protected area in terms of section 43 of the Marine Living Resources Act 18 of 1998.

4. Specially protected forest areas, forest nature reserves, and forest wilderness areas. This could be a state forest or part of it, or land outside a state forest declared as such under the National Forest Act 84 of 1998.

5. Mountain Catchment areas refer to any area declared under section 2 of the Mountain Catchment Area (Act 63 of 1970) for the conservation, management, use and control of land situated in a mountain catchment area (IUCN 1994:261).

The National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act 57 of 2003 (NEMPA),

charges protected area managers with the responsibility of ensuring adequate community involvement in protected area management planning (DEAT 2004: 2). According to the Act, management plans must include inputs from various stakeholders including neighbouring communities. Stakeholders' participation is also viewed as one of the key incentives that aid in building continuous relationships between communities and protected areas (Nsukwini & Bob 2016).

Protected areas are managed by managers, who are also the main part of the IEMP process in their PAs. According to Leverington *et al.* (2010) communication about present and planned activities for the future needs should be championed by the managers of protected areas as they are the ones who work with stakeholders constantly and who know about management plans. Globally communication incentives have been found to be one of the most effective methods to be utilised to strengthen protected areas management levels. EKZNW has stages they follow when formulating the IEMP process, they start with situational analysis, preparation of the draft, finalisation and adoption of the IEMP (*Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife*, 1999: vi). These stages will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

2.4 Contextualising the challenges faced by protected area management in facilitating community involvement in the IEMP process.

Harvard (2013) has argued that unequal representation of different sectors that are affected by the existence of a protected area, weakens the process of negotiations which leads to people having different perspectives of the protected area. People need to be clear on how they relate to values and characteristics of protected areas. Levels of authority need to be transparent to enlighten participants with expected inputs and the value of their engagement in the entire process.

It has been noted in many countries that there is an issue regarding communities participating in protected area IEMP processes without having a clear understanding of their roles, and the actual meaning of the process. For instance, in a study by Bockstael (2016) where observations were made at eleven gatherings at Sweden, it was discovered that representatives of various communities were unclear of their roles in the process. There were diverse individuals at the table throughout the span of the

procedure including individuals who were not officially there in a role of representing a community.

Linked to the above, the confusion of roles and responsibilities amongst communities has been identified as one of the major challenges encountered in a process of drawing up management plans for protected areas (Castro *et al.* 2006). Defining roles and responsibilities includes clarifying the level of decision-making authority as well as transparency about making decisions. Well-clarified roles and responsibilities amongst all stakeholders involved in negotiations can be an essential tool to acquire more constructive inputs from relevant stakeholders that will strengthen the process.

According to Ross *et al.* (2002) during the actual process of decision-making and planning there are factors that affect the level of engagement from community members such as communication disconnect, capacity to participate and conflict. These factors were observed through workshops and planning meetings with public participation in protected area management planning in coastal Brazil. The communities were represented but their representation faced the above-mentioned challenges. This on its own weakens the process and prevents meaningful participation from being achieved.

Lack of support and guidance for the communities is another factor which weakens the process of decision-making (De Beer 2009). Participation in environmental conservation needs to be reconceptualised, as much as agencies implementing it are well-intentioned regarding their agenda communities are still not allowed to decide. Furthermore, Behia *et al.* (2013) found that community participants were expected to organise themselves to engage in a stakeholder negotiation process without enough support and guidance. Protected area managers also expected community members to use their own meagre resources to participate in decision-making.

In environmental policy development there has been an improvement in stakeholder engagement processes, however challenges have been noticed on IEMP processes. Difficulties that have been identified include various levels of engagement in the decision-making processes by the public and the extent in which active participation is facilitated. The process of defining who participates to what extent remains the major

challenge with community engagement. Both sets of issues are closely associated with interest-based politics and the relations of social power (De Beer 2009).

According to Greening and Gray (1994) a challenge of low levels of community participation in management plan developments or reviewing processes may be linked with stakeholder relations, negative past experiences, information distribution, and communication gaps or the extent to which communication is received by intended agents. Self-confidence and respect are one of the factors that have been recognised in management planning in that they may differentially shape individual readiness to engage effectively (Oliver 1997). Arnstein (1969) has argued against participation where existing power relations are not re-arranged to accommodate and empower the powerless.

Most of the literature, (see for instance Khan 1998) acknowledge that indeed public participation is important in the decision-making process especially regarding the environment and IEMP. The priorities of impoverished stakeholders regarding IEMP processes continues to "revolve around issues of survival, with conservation often being perceived as a peripheral issue, and thus of little relevance to their lives." (Khan 1998: 73). Furthermore, illiteracy and low levels of education have been noticed in the public participation process. In certain areas, there has been a means of avoiding this challenge, by using interpreters who translate information in a language that is understandable by most. But the issue of illiteracy remains, however, as communities are represented by their traditional and local leaderships in IEMP. Some of them are illiterate, as much as the information is being translated into their own language but still the level of engagement is affected (Khan 1998).

Communication and commitment to the decision-making process is regarded as one of the major challenges encountered in community involvement (Beierle & Konisky 2000). Some stakeholders show up at workshops and meetings but their level of contribution in terms of input is not effective. Andre *et al.* (2006) single out communication transparency as one of challenges in the decision-making process and argues that the IEMP processes are weakened when managers are not transparent with their stakeholders.

According to Burger and McCallum (n.d.) public participation has some negative impacts upon Interested and affected parties, the authorities, proponents, and practitioners, which results in challenges during the process. The disadvantages of the presence of public participation in IEMP are noted by Burger and McCallum (n.d: 346-351) to be as follows:

1. Altered human relations – Public involvement processes can alter social, political and economic relations which exist between individuals and groups by, among other things, allowing for social tensions to occur, mainly due to the unequal empowerment of interested and affected parties.

2. Non-participation in current and/or future public involvement processes – stakeholders can lose confidence in elements of the decision-making process, and as a result be less inclined to continue participating in the current process or future public involvement processes.

3. Lack of commitment to a democratic philosophy – Authorities do not act consistently in accordance with people's right to be involved in decisions that affect their lives.

4. Lack of commitment to public involvement – Proponents display a lack of commitment to public involvement. This manifests itself in the proponent not including stakeholders in their plans, policies, and projects; not allowing sufficient time and/or budget for the participation to be effective and meaningful; or by seeking to maintain control of the public involvement process to the detriment of the principles thereof.

5. Loss of ability to subscribe to the principles of public involvement – The stress experienced by practitioners engaged in difficult public involvement processes results in firstly, a loss of motivation and secondly, a numbing and subsequent insensitivity of the practitioner to the concerns or beliefs of parties engaged in the participation process.

2.5 Understanding protected area IEMP from a stakeholder perspective

According to (Andre *et al.* 2006) protected areas have various impacts on surrounding communities which is often associated with people's perception of protected areas based on these impacts. Programmes like management plans development are regarded as one of the activities which has an impact on the surrounding communities, as it invites community representatives to the decision-making process. Bennett and

Dearden (2014) emphasised the importance of including communities and government in activities concerning protected areas as that will change the people's perceptions of protected areas and empower them more with knowledge related to management of protected areas. That will result in the society in the vicinity having more knowledge on protected area activities and that will enable them to engage effectively in decision-making processes of IEMP (Salm, Clark & Siirila 2000).

Once-off participation is common challenge in stakeholder engagement in protected areas. This is often the result of some participants only associating IEMP with a specific programme. For instance, stakeholders from the communities are incentivized to attend meetings where job opportunities are the main point of discussion and less enthusiastic with attending others. These stakeholders never come back because of the incorrect impression they had already attended the workshops or meeting. That somehow results in them participating with not much input on the process because of not being too clear on where they fit on the process (Burger and McCallum n.d.).

Participation of stakeholders on management plan development or reviewing process is a fundamental apparatus required by the protected areas management to adjust activities based on a management plan. However, the management needs to work more on trust between them and the communities before attending the IEMP workshops or briefings as that will assist on the level of engagement in the decision-making process and somehow have a positive influence on how stakeholders view the IEMP process (Ross *et al.* 2002).

Ferraro (2008) reveals that some protected areas surrounded by communities have been found to have the capacity to impose economic expenses on local groups by limiting them in utilizing the backwoods for farming purposes and hunting. That affects the way people view activities happening under the name of that protected area which is linked with the way they view IEMP processes (Ferraro 2011).

2.6   Conceptual framework

In this section, a conceptual framework that shapes the reason for this investigation is introduced. Conceptual framework is a plan that empowers the researcher to catch reality and answer research questions as per genuine discoveries (Adom, Hussein and Agyem 2018). The concepts that add to the center of this examination includes governance, stakeholder engagement, and protected area management planning. The concept of governance will be viewed as first since it is the all-encompassing idea under which other key ideas, for example, stakeholder engagement and public participation are connected. The study will use these concepts to investigate the extent of power distribution, relationship, transparency and accountability when facilitating IEMP process at HiP.

2.6.1   Defining governance

Several definitions of governance exist. A few that relate to this study are briefly presented below with the aim of generating a definition applicable to the study. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1997) governance is an exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at most levels. It consists of mechanisms, processes and institutions in which citizens and societies express their interests and their differences, exercise their legal rights, meet their commitments and intercede their disparities.

The Commission on Global Governance (1995) defines governance as a process where individuals and institutions, public and private, cooperate on their regular undertakings. It is a continuous process where conflicts or diverse interests may be accommodated through working together. It involves formal institutions and organisations empowered to enforce compliance, also informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or which are in their interest.

Governance is a process whereby sectors in a society hold power and authority, and influence and put into practice policies and decisions regarding public life, economic and social development. Governance is wider than government. Governance involves interaction between these formal institutions and those of civil society (Weiss 2000:4)

Governance is about power, relationships and accountability. It is concerned with how power is exercised among the different institutions so that citizens can enjoy their freedom of participation and have more meaningful participation in determining issues related to the public interest. It has five good principles namely: Legitimacy and Voice, Direction, Performance, Accountability and Fairness (Graham *et al.* 2003). Each principle has its characteristics in which when applied in protected areas are taken into account and actually are some kind of a guideline for each principle. The concept can be applied in various contexts globally, nationally, and locally. Governance also opens-up new intellectual spaces. It opens up an individual's mind to the possibility that groups in society other than government including communities, local boards, trustees bodies and NGO's may have to play a stronger role than previously in terms of their commitment and engagement in protected area planning, decision making and problem solving processes (Graham *et al.* 2003).

Therefore, power is central in governance theory. Freeman (1984) has defined power as the capacity to make someone do what he or she otherwise would not do. There are five bases of power, namely: control of resources, technical skill, and body of knowledge, power from legal prerogatives, and access to those who can rely on the previous sources of power. These power relations are therefore likely to influence the way local communities participate in protected area management planning. The literature has, for instance, identified the differential power relations as one of the challenges that prevent meaningful community participation (Andrade & Rhodes 2012). This is because the communities lack the resources, skills, and knowledge necessary to drive their perspectives on management.

According to Graham *et al.* (2003), governance is a term that has been used for many years, however it has various definitions. It has been commonly misunderstood as a synonym of the concept of government. Needless to say, the two concepts differ. The main difference between the concept of "government" and "governance" according to Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) is that government has a "…limited reach of set solutions to harsh political issues imposed through top-down government intervention", while governance opens "…up the cognitive commitments implicit in the thinking about governing and political decision-making: and also assists practitioners and theorists to break out of suggested patterns of thinking". According to Graham *et al.* (2003) governance is a process while government is seen as an institution or institutions.

Governance is mainly about how social institutions and government interact, citizens' relations and how decisions are taken in a world. Literature sources related to governance agree that it has to do with taking decisions about direction. One of many definitions on governance is "governance is the art of steering societies and organisations". It is also the "interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power and responsibilities are exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say". Governance is about power, relationships and accountability. The following table provides five key principles of good governance for protected areas, based on the United Nations Development Program's list of the characteristics of good governance:

Table 1: Governance principles for protected areas (Graham *et al*. 2003).

The Five Good Governance Principles	The UNDP Principles on which they are based
1. Legitimacy and Voice	Participation Consensus orientation
2. Direction	Strategic vision, including human development and historical, cultural and social complexities
3. Performance	Responsiveness of institutions and processes to stakeholders Effectiveness and efficiency
4. Accountability	Accountability to the public and to institutional stakeholders Transparency
5. Fairness	Equity Rule of Law

2.6.2   Stakeholder engagement and protected area management

Stakeholder participation in protected areas management planning involves all the good governance principles but for the nature of the study the focus is more into legitimacy and voice of parties involved. It is the most crucial part in decision making process. Stakeholders are expected to engage effectively on the planning process through effective inputs. According to Graham *et al*. (2003) legitimacy and voice in protected areas includes some of the key aspects that it allows the management of

PAs to take into consideration when planning management developments or reviewing processes:

1. A collaborative management in PA decision-making which must include representatives of all affected parties, particularly local and indigenous people.

2. Citizen participation occurring at all levels of decision-making related to PAs (legislation, system planning, PA establishment, management planning, and operations) with special emphasis at the local level and the equal participation of men and women.

3. High levels of trust among the various actors including governmental and non-governmental, national state, and local actors involved in the management of PAs.

4. Appropriate degree of decentralisation in decision-making for PAs; any devolution or divestment is through local bodies that are accountable to local people, have the requisite powers and capacity to perform their functions. Have some constraints, such as minimum environmental standards, to act in the broader national and international interest.

When PAs were established officially, traditional governance systems of local and indigenous people was somehow ignored. In recent years, spread of governance models for protected areas has been experienced in many countries, beyond the traditional direct management by a government agency. These consist of many different forms of collaborative management, namely:

1. Management by local communities or indigenous people,
2. Representative management by relevant stakeholders such as NGOs, trustee bodies and the private sector.

Governance is mainly about both 'means' and 'ends', it is also about the exercise of power by those who are in a position to do so that raises the question of what kind of power is used by the PAs management? One of the strongest powers is that of planning which is responsible for the entire system of planning for management plans, developments or reviewing processes Graham *et al.* (2003). Through the use of governance, PAs' management planning development programmes have been implemented successfully in many countries, however the literature has shown numerous challenges encountered by the communities and relevant stakeholders in

the decision-making process of management plans. However, there is not enough in the literature that shows challenges experienced by the management of PAs in a process of formulating management plan developments, which is what this case study on HiP is aiming to achieve.

2.6.3 Institutions, resources, and governance effectiveness

According to Zoogah, Peng, and Woldu (2015) resources are crucial for governance effectiveness in an African context. It influences the outcomes of organisation. For effective organisational operation in environmental institutions to be achieved meaningfully and maintained in the long term, adequate resources and capabilities are needed. There are various resource-related challenges encountered by environmental institutions in their efforts ate engaging the public. For example, Behia *et al.* (2013) found that community participants were expected to arrange themselves to engage in stakeholder negotiation process without enough support and guidance. Protected area managers also expected community members to use their own meagre resources to participate in decision-making. This example is related to resources being scarce in this case its human resource which was not sufficient to provide adequate support and guidance to community representatives. This is somehow a common theme in most protected areas as a factor that hinders effective or meaningful participation.

The challenges encountered by the community in environmental programmes are linked to insufficient support and guidance from formal organisations and agencies. This affects outcomes being since meaningful participation is not achieved (De Beer 2009). This raise concerns on whether state resource commitment in conservation governance has been met. As the literature reveals, that formal institutions are sitting with various challenges derived from insufficient resources and capabilities in place to ensure effective outcomes of programmes. Then too, how much more is this the situation in Non-Governmental Organisations that are surrounded by communities which are lawfully entitled to participate in decision-making processes on management plan developments. The question is, can resource commitments in conservation governance be met by non-state actors? Is sufficient guidance and support provided

to enable them to engage fruitfully in the process as it is a challenge in most protected areas?

The factor of insufficient guidance and support for the community representatives is a real one. IEMP as a governance tool has not been effective because of limited resources in most protected areas. Andrade and Rhodes (2012) discussing power relations, stressed the influence or the way community representatives engage with one another on IEMP decision-making process. They noted that communities surrounding PAs lack certain resources, skills and knowledge which will enable them to have meaningful input or to provide any input whatsoever on management planning processes. This means if there were enough conservation resources in place the community representatives and other relevant stakeholders who are part of IEMP would be in a better position to get the necessary support and guidance to drive them through their perspective on IEMP processes.

2.7   Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature considered relevant to the study. It has looked at previous studies of stakeholder engagement as they relate to protected areas and environmental management. The chapter also presented the concept of governance as a conceptual framework which informs and guides the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study area, context for the research and stakeholders involved. The chapter also discusses the study methodology, methods used and how data was collected, analysed, and reported on.

3.2 Study area

The study was conducted at the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HiP) in the KwaZulu-Natal Province (KZN) of South Africa. The park is located at about 237 km north of Durban. It is 32 km from Mtubatuba Town in Zululand. The park is managed by the provincial conservation agency Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNW), which is mandated to manage biodiversity throughout the province of KZN (Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, n.d.)

The Park is formed by two joined game reserves namely the Hluhluwe game reserve on the northern side and the iMfolozi game reserve on the southern side of the park. Proclaimed in 1895, HiP is one of the oldest parks in South Africa. It is also home to Africa's big five and is therefore a key tourist destination in the province.

Like most protected areas in Africa, the park is also characterised by a long history of land dispossession and resource exclusion of the African populations. The post-apartheid South African government came into power in 1994 with the expectation that the injustices of the past would be corrected, and pre-colonial land ownership rights restituted. However, for protected areas, restitution came with the clause that there shall be no re-occupation of the restored land. Instead, land rights claimants were either to be financially compensated or given a stake in the management as well as financial and resource gains accrued from the protected area. That is, they had to be assured of benefits from their land. Therefore, in addition to co-management agreements, management planning processes are also seen as crucial instruments for building cordial relationships between protected areas and the community by allowing community members to be part of decision making (EKZNW, n.d).

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park was selected for this study because it is one of the protected areas that has been involving communities in various programmes in the past and is somehow well known for having a continuous relationship with its stakeholders. There is therefore a good historical record and widely expressed commitment by EKZNW to engage communities and other stakeholders in decision making (EKZNW, n.d).
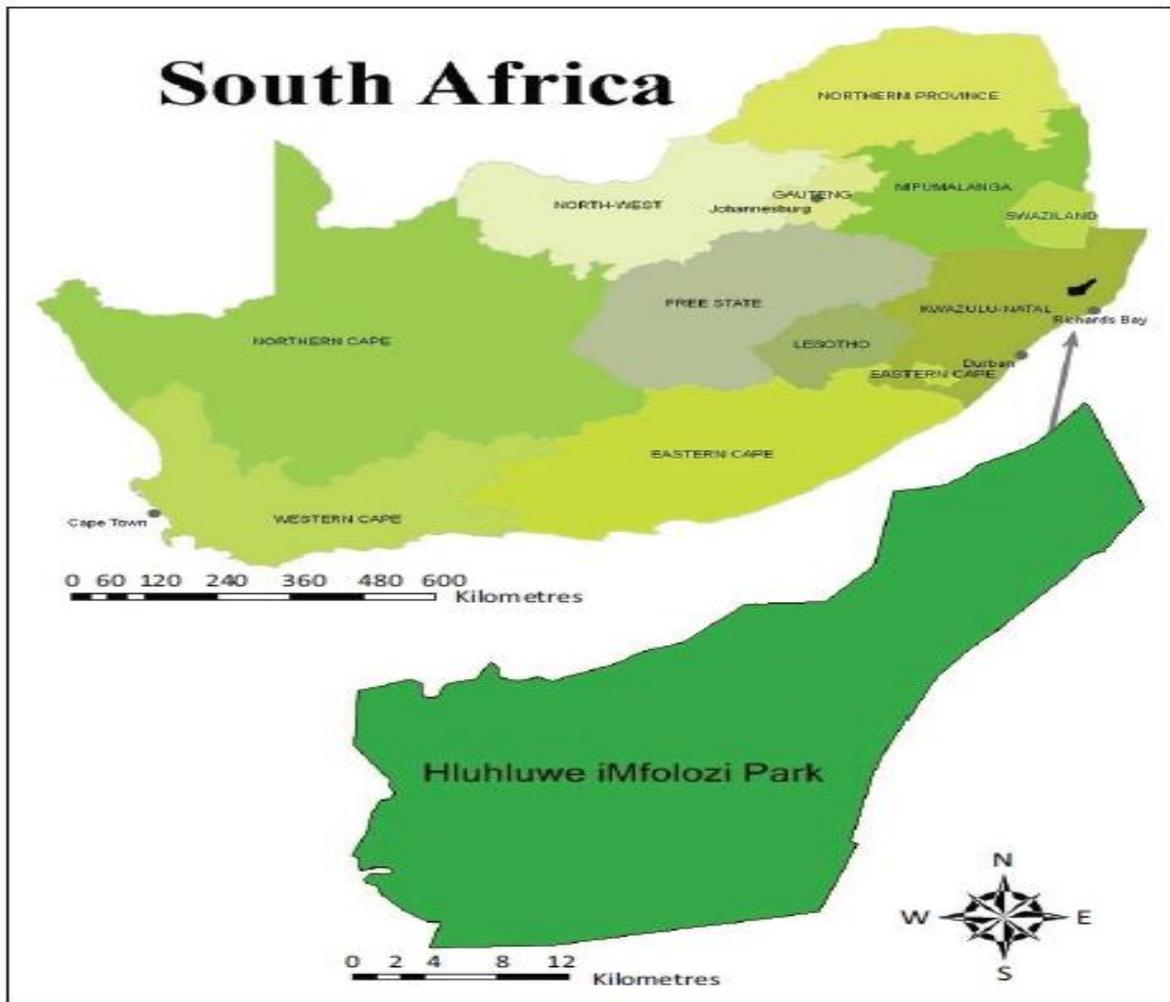
Figure 1: Map of the HiP, GPS coordinates: 28.2198˚S,31.9519˚E, (Brooks 2000)

The image above (Figure 1) shows the entire park and its surrounding areas as well as where the park is located within the KZN province. The park is surrounded by ten traditional authorities. These traditional authorities are regarded as key stakeholders of the park. They are among the African populations who lost some of their land when the park was proclaimed. A few of them such as the Mpukunyoni-Mkhwanazi, abakwaHlabisa, Mpembeni, Zungu and Ximba communities have lodged successful land claims against the park. A co-management agreement was signed between the EKZNW and Corridor of Hope Trust (representing Mpukunyoni-Mkhwanazi,

AbakwaHlabisa and Hlabisa-AbaseMpembeni communities) in 2008. The following (Figure 2) shows the surrounding communities to the park .
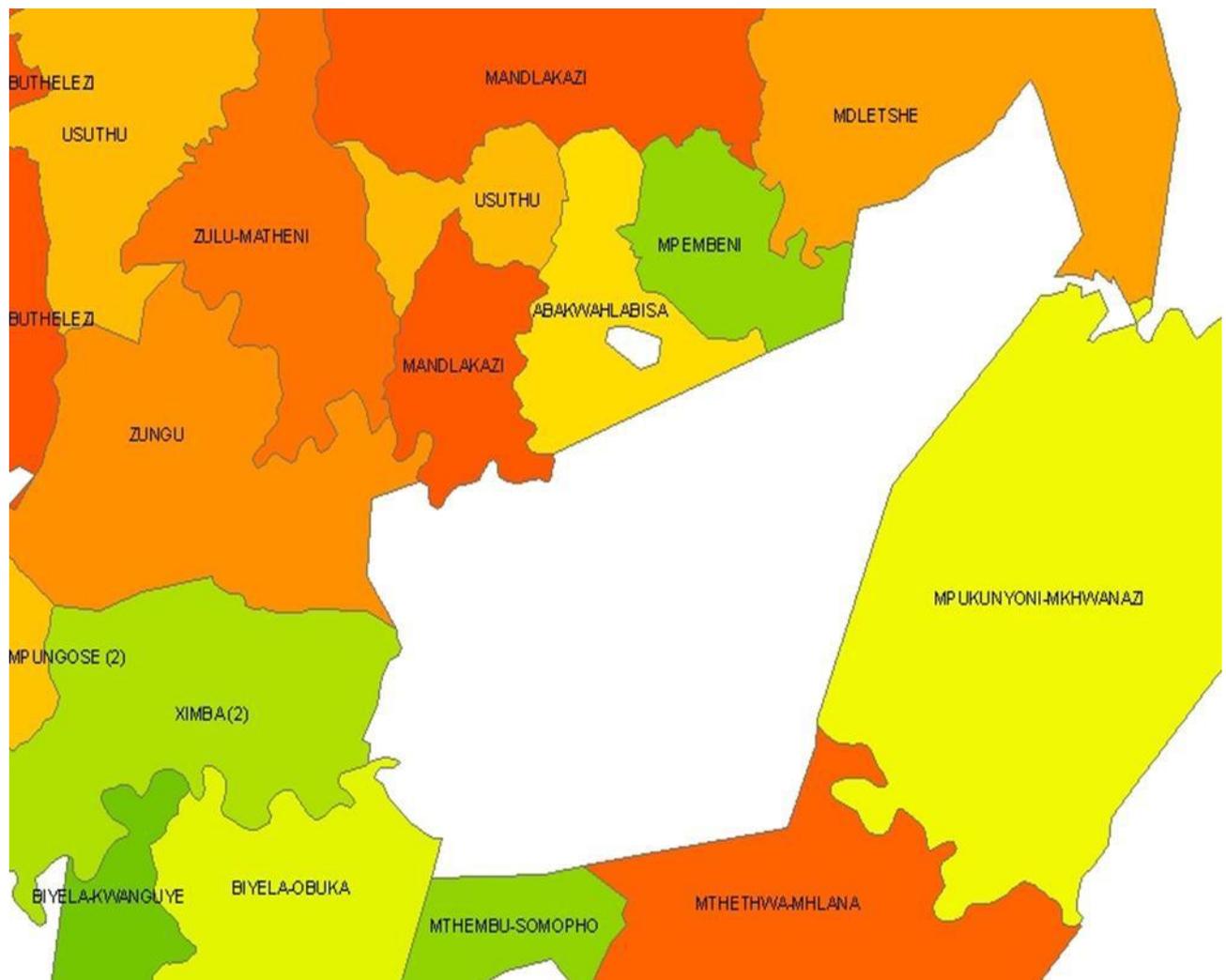
Figure 2: Traditional Authorities neighbouring the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (EKZNW, n.d)

3.3   Research design

In this part there are three sections, namely research design, data collection methods and data analysis. The research design has sampling and the selection of participants. Data collection methods has an overview of the research paradigm, case study approach, document review and in-depth interviews. Lastly its data analysis and conclusion of the chapter are presented**.**

3.3.1 Sampling

The study used the purposive sampling method to select the participants from the population of stakeholders. This meant that the researcher had to make specific choices about which people and groups had to be included in the sample (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

3.3.2 Selecting participants

Participants were selected based on criteria that they were either, (1) part of the management of the Hluhuwe-iMfolozi Park or (2) representatives of the stakeholders as identified by EKZNW. A total of six organizations as represented by 17 individuals were therefore, identified as participants and interviewed (see table 2 below).

Table 2: Participants who were interviewed for the study

Stakeholder group	Number of participants interviewed
EKZNW	10 (1 park manager, 1 former general manager, 2 conservation managers, 2 ecologists, 2 community conservation officers, 1 biodiversity planning officer, and 1 eco-tourism manager.
HiP Local Board	1
Corridor of Hope Trust (land claimants/owners)	1
Traditional authorities	3 (Mpembeni, Hlabisa and Mdletsheni traditional authorities)
Non-governmental organization	1
Local Municipality	1 (Big 5 Hlabisa Municipality)

The ten individuals who form part of EKZNW management team were identified and selected for interviews because they were involved in the development and review of HiP management plans. They were selected according to their roles when facilitating the process at Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. Participation or having participated in the IEMP

process of HiP was also the criterion used for selecting individuals to represent the other stakeholders. These other stakeholders were included in the study in order to examine the veracity of some of the statements from the management side of the park. A consent form (appendix 4) was given and explained to each of the participants, enough time for reading, understanding before signing was given to all participants. It must be noted, however, that the insistence by Park management that only "approved" individuals could be consulted was concerning and could have had bearing on the findings of the study.

3.4 Data collection methods

The study used two methods for data collection, namely document analysis and semi-structured interviews with key informants. This was to ensure convergence and corroboration of the evidence (Yin, 2019). The management of the Park is responsible for the Park management plan development and implementation. Stakeholders were also interviewed as they form part of the formulation and decision-making process hence the study aims to achieve results on challenges encountered in the formulation of the Park management plan processes.

3.4.1 An overview of the research design

The study used a qualitative research approach and adopted an interpretive paradigm. According to Creswell (2014) interpretivist researchers discover reality through participants' views and their own. The interpretive paradigm as a qualitative research approach has somehow shown to focus on the meaning of real-life situations or experiences, with the meanings held by participants in life situations regarded as important ones (Yin 2014). Advantages of qualitative research include its ability to capture the meanings of participants as opposed to being restricted to meanings proposed by the researcher. According to Yin (2014), the search for meaning is a search for concepts, a collection of which can be used to represent a theory about the experiences that have been learned. By gaining insight of how people become involved in IEMP formulation process of HIP the study was able to generate results which will be discussed in the next chapters.

3.4.2 Case study approach

A qualitative case study approach was adopted for this study (Yin, 2014). The study focused on the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. This approach was adopted because it allowed the researcher to be more flexible in using different data collection techniques including field notes, observations, in-depth interviews, and the review of documentation (Burton 2000). Using more than one way of data collection techniques and applying the triangulation principle helps in minimizing the continuity weaknesses of each technique while at the same time the rigour and validity of the data is increased (Yin 2019, Nyambe 2005).

3.4.3 Document review

Documentary review was adopted as one of the research methods to improve accuracy of the study as it allows the researcher to get into questions consisting of the 'how' and 'why' as they are associated with case studies (Mosimane 2013). A documentary review is not the same as a literature review, it dwells mostly on data and information specific to the organisation under study (Nyambe 2005). Hluhluwe - iMfolozi Park management plant, relevant government policy documents, documents in relevant private organisations, journal articles, published, unpublished documents, books and relevant websites were used as secondary data in data collection.

3.4.4 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are one of the primary sources of information in a case study (Mosimane 2013). The interviews with participants had gaps in-between to allow the researcher to listen, translate, write-up and analyse each recording to find out in which direction it leads (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016).

The interviews were semi-structured, with a duration ranging from 30 to 60 minutes per session. They were conducted separately. The question guide had some openended questions which helped the conversation to be flexible for both the researcher and the participants. Through open-ended questions the researcher was

able to seek clarification from the informants. Each interview session was audio recorded using a cell phone, field notes were used to capture non-verbal communication including facial expressions together with the way questions were answered. The audio recordings and field notes were used to present findings, discuss the results and for data analysis purposes of the study. Consistency was provided by means of the question guide (appendix 1 and 2) which helped the researcher to achieve uniformity while collecting data.

3.5   Data analysis

Data for the study was collected through in-depth interviews, the researcher's notes as well as all relevant documents. These data were analysed using the thematic analysis as described by Yin (2009). Themes were allowed to "emerge" from the data by searching for themes that re-occurred in the data. These themes were then used to guide the interpretation of statements that emerged from the data. Then the researcher searched for the relationships in the data, classifying them under the different themes. For anonymity and confidentiality purposes, participants' names were not used and instead each participant was given a code only known to the researcher. Moreover, management and various stakeholder groups each had their own coding used by the researcher to present study findings.

3.6   Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodology used in the collection and analysis of the data for this study. The study employed a qualitative case study approach by focusing on the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HiP). Being one of the oldest parks in Africa, HiP provides a rich and diverse history of interactions with the local communities. The study used in-depth interviews, document review and researcher notes to collect the data. Data was analysed using the thematic analysis. Ethical approvals were obtained from both UNISA as well as EKZNW.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to present and analyse the findings of the study. The chapter is divided into three main sections. Each section presents and analyses the findings for each of the three objectives of the study which are:

- To describe how the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park IEMP process is facilitated.
- To determine the extent to which meaningful and effective engagement has been attained in the HiP EIMP process.
- To identify the barriers to effective and meaningful engagement in the HiP IEMP process.

4.2   Facilitating exclusion: a critical description of the HiP Park IEMP process

This sub-section describes, with a critical eye, objective one of the study which is how the HiP IEMP process is facilitated. The description is not aimed at being exhaustive but rather highlights some of the key issues which indicate an inherent "exclusionary" nature of the IEMP process and its attempts at 'sanitisation'. This is by no means an indictment against HiP management and EKZNW but rather a critique of the process itself as stipulated in statutory and policy prescripts. As it would be argued, the IEMP process provides limited opportunity for an open, transparent and inclusive engagement.

This will be described by examining the nature of the IEMP process as envisaged by policy and legislative prescripts and the extent to which these inform praxis at HiP. The description will also analyse how the IEMP process is operationalised, who is involved within the Park and EKZNW, how are the stakeholders identified and notified, as well as the nature of the participation and so on. Therefore, it concerned the *modus operandi* of the IEMP process. The first part in this sub-section discusses the stages in the IEMP as identified in the IEMP procedures and the last part looks at the degree to which the IEMP process adheres to the governance principles.

4.2.1 Procedural exclusion: stages in the HiP IEMP process

Interviews with EKZNW informants as well as documents (HiP IEMP 2011) reveal that the HiP IEMP process has three main stages, namely, situational analysis, preparation of a draft management plan and finalisation and adoption of the management plan (see Figure 3 below).
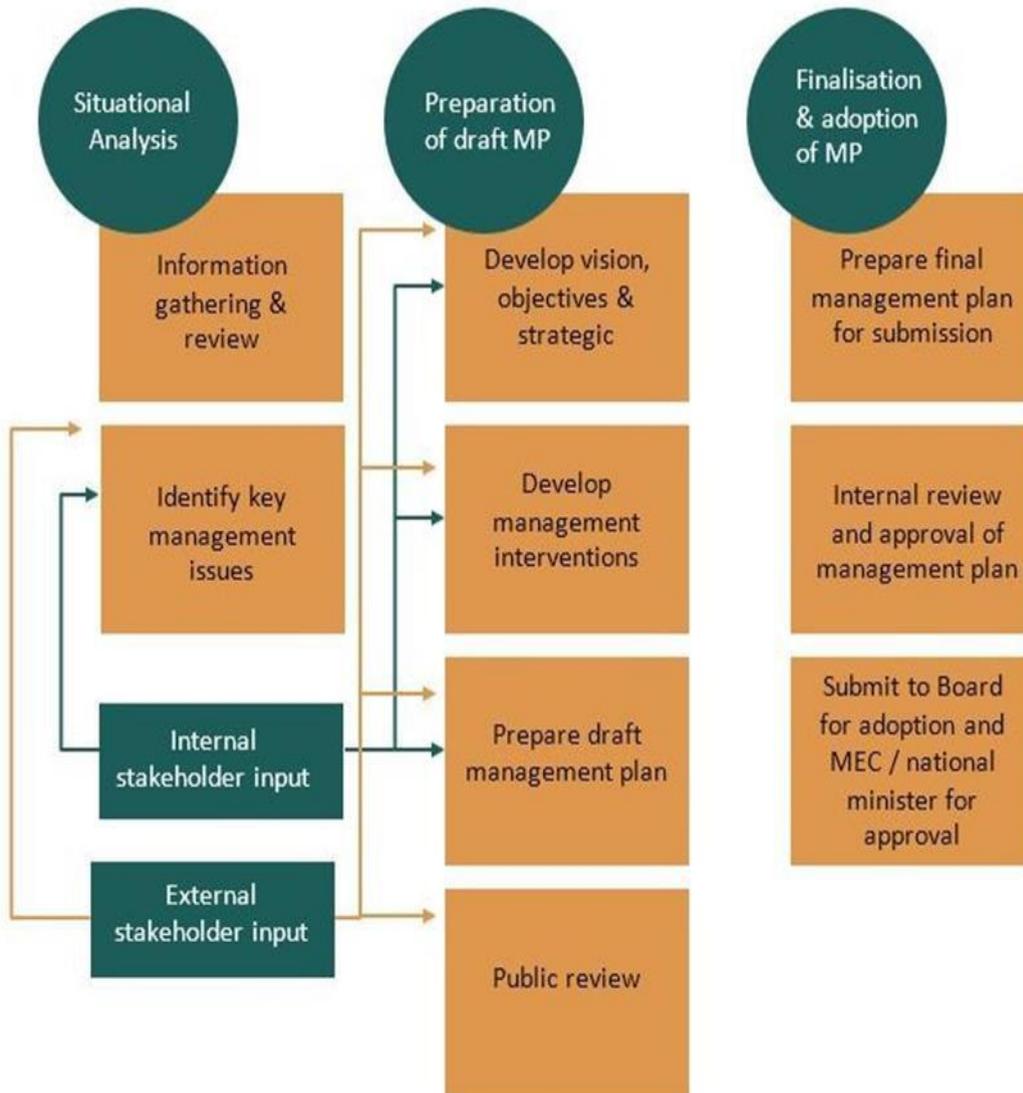

Figure 3: HiP management plan development process (EKZNW, n.d)

Stage 1: Situational Analysis

The first stage, situational analysis consists of four sub-stages, namely information gathering and review, identification of key management issues, internal stakeholder input and external stakeholder's inputs. These are discussed in turn below.

Information gathering and review sub-stage is where internal stakeholders meet to review the issues that are considered as hot spots emanating from the previous IEMP processes. This is also where external stakeholders are identified. This structure is also responsible for recommending the IEMP facilitator, who by law, should be an independent party. The table below indicate who from the park management is involved in stage 1 of the IEMP process. The planning section within EKZNW together with the top management of the park is responsible for facilitating this stage.

Table 3: Internal stakeholders (EKZW, n.d)

Internal stakeholders (Included)	Internal stakeholders (Excluded)
Exective Director: Biodiversity Conservation	Section Rangers
Manager: Planning	Community Conservation Officers
Manager: Community Conservation	District Conservation Officers
Park Manager: HiP	Hospitality Managers
Ecologist: HiP	
Conservation Manager: Hluhluwe Game Reserve	
Conservation Manager: iMfolozi Game Reserve	

As it can be noted from *table 3* above, the list of internal stakeholders excludes several designations such as section rangers and community conservation officers. EKZNW No.3 stated that: "*we get involved in the IEMP development when it's in a stage that involves external stakeholders, we are responsible for transporting some external stakeholders.*" The excluded internal stakeholders tend to be on the levels that have a far more involved and frequent interaction with the external stakeholders. These are, presumably, the people with the most intimate knowledge of the impact of the protected area activities on the external stakeholders. This is potentially a first

major flaw of the process. As some stakeholders are excluded in the beginning and included when external stakeholders are included (EKZNW n.d). However, neither the Act nor policies can be blamed for this internal exclusion, beyond perhaps for not stipulating the level of participation. It seems to have been simply an oversight on the part of the EKZNW management.

This stage also provides no room for the external stakeholder directly. It therefore provides the first opportunity for excluding undesirable stakeholders and their issues. This was also evident in the processes of this study. As a condition for gaining authorisation for the study, the researcher had to limit her enquiry to the stakeholders approved by the park. Officially, this was a list of people who had participated in the previous IEMP process. However, it does not escape notice that the list does not contain all the stakeholders who can be said to be affected by the activities of the park as envisaged by the Act. EKZNW authorisation letter for conducting this study appears to be quite intrusive and limiting to the researcher.

Although it can only be speculated why management felt uncomfortable with letting the researcher follow the lead of evidence, what is clear is that the IEMP process itself provides an opportunity, right at the beginning, for the exclusion of the undesirables and the "sanitisation" of troubling issues. This is one of the dangers inherent in stakeholder engagement identified in the literature (see for instance Bell and Hindmoor 2009). The "sanitisation" of issues and stakeholders can serve the purpose of entrenching established practices of those governing at the expense of the governed. Stakeholder engagement, as mode of government can thus serve as an insidious mechanism for entrenching state power whilst purporting to be a stratagem for the devolution of power to the communities.

The second sub-stage is the identification of key management issues. This is when both internal and external stakeholder's inputs are solicited. The sub-stage involves mostly senior management of the park and EKZNW, the Local Board and a few representatives of the invited external stakeholders. Superficially, this might look like a reversal of the preceding point about the IEMP process being exclusionary by design. That is the case until it is noted that the external stakeholders that are invited

to participate in this sub-stage are identified by the internal stakeholders. Moreover, the agenda for this sub-stage is also set by internal stakeholders with limited inputs from the external participants. It is of course possible to justify this action by pointing out the impossibility of getting everyone to participate and the logistical nightmare attendant to this. Indeed, it is not possible to get everybody to participate. However, that is not even a requirement. What is needed, instead, is to encourage participation from those who have an interest and a stake in the activities of the protected area. That is, those who are affected by the activities of the protected area. The table below indicates the list of stakeholders do participate on the IEMP when invited and those who do not attend. According to EKZNW No.4, the invites were sent to all the below listed stakeholders.

Table 4: List of external stakeholders (EKZNW, n.d)

External Stakeholders (participation)	External Stakeholders (No participation)
HiP Local Board	Okhukho mine (Zululand Anthracite Colliery
Corridor of Hope Trust	Local business associations (Mtubatuba, Ulundi, Mbonambi, Hlabisa, Nongoma)
Tourism Association	Youth organisations
UMkhanyakude District Council	Women's groups
Mpembeni, Mdletsheni, Zungu, Ximba, Hlabisa and Mandlakazi traditional authorities	Handicraft traders (trade within and outside the Park.)
	Mkhwanazi and Obuka traditional authorities

The list of these stakeholders is far lengthier than the one provided by the EKZNW and might even include mining houses, women's groups, youth organisations and so on. It, therefore, appears that at this sub-stage, park management ingrains its commitment to exclude and to sanitise.

Stage 2: Preparation of Draft Management Plan

This is the second stage of the IEMP process and consists of four sub-stages namely: to develop vision, objectives and strategy, develop management interventions, prepare draft management plan and public review. In this stage, the main focus is on the external stakeholder inputs. Workshops are hosted with the stakeholders, where the vision of the park is revisited, and its objectives ranked according to their importance. Ranking of objectives is regarded as a major challenge, EKZNW No.5 stated that: *"it is a battle that takes most time as some stakeholders want issues that are of main concern to them to be on the top list of priorities".*

Management interventions are developed and reviewed at this stage. They are various items that affect stakeholders in relation to the Park. Interventions that can be implemented to resolve them are discussed at this stage by only invited and engaged stakeholders. The draft management plan sub-stage is where items that need to be included on the management plan are arranged accordingly. If there is a new format to be used for the management plan, it is also addressed at this stage.

The last sub-stage, public review is when the plan has been drafted that includes items that stakeholders who were engaged agreed upon. The full IEMP document is then released for public review and comment. The IEMP document is released on the EKZNW website usually for +- 30 days for more inputs. During the above-mentioned stages both the internal and external stakeholder's inputs are considered for documentation purposes by the EKZNW planning section management for protected areas, responsible for the entire process of the formulation of the IEMP. Identification of the aims, goals, purpose/s along with identification of affected stakeholders will inform the design of engagement activities.

The following Table, taken from the HiP (2011) management plan report, shows clearly that consultation, involving the collaboration of external stakeholders is not a once off event, a series of events.

Table 5: Summary of the HIP management plan development process involving both internal and external stakeholders (EKZNW, n.d)

Date	Activity
23 November 2006	Stakeholder workshop
23 April 2007	Stakeholder workshop
21 January 2008	Stakeholder workshop
12 June 2008	Stakeholder workshop – Presentation of the draft plan.
10 December 2010	Internal Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife meeting with the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park management team
27-28 January 2011	Internal Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife meeting with the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park management team to finalise the draft integrated management plan prior to public review
17 March 2011	Draft integrated management plan published for final public comment
14 April 2011	Public comment closed
12 May 2011	Meeting with management team to consider public comment
5 July 2011	Submit final document to Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife committees for approval
After Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife approval	Submission of final integrated management plan and supporting documentation to Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) for approval

Stakeholders such as senior traditional leaders (AmaKhosi), were selected by default because of their status in neighbouring communities. Some stakeholders are local board members, according to stakeholder No.4 and 1, they were selected by their communities to be local board members. Written communication from the EKZNW organisation was requesting members of communities to become community representatives on the local board body of the Park.

Stage 3: Finalisation and adoption of Management Plan

This is the third stage of the IEMP process and consists of three sub-stages namely: the preparation final management plan for submission, internal review and approval of management plan, and finally, the submission of IEMP to the EKZNW board for adoption and then being sent to the MEC for approval.

The first sub-stage, the preparation of the final management plan for submission is mainly for calling the top management of the Park together with the IEMP section. It involves editing and ensuring that all items are where they belong. Should there be any parts that are not clear, the second stage is there to clarify them.

The second sub-stage, the internal review and approval of management plan is where top management of the park together with planning section meet for the preparation of the final draft. However, they have to come back to present the final draft to the internal stakeholders and get their approval before submitting the document to the board and MEC.

The final sub-stage involves the submission of the IEMP to the board for adoption and to the MEC for approval. This stage is regarded as a final stage, the top-level management of the park is responsible for ensuring that the IEMP document reaches the board, and after that it is sent to the MEC. EKZNW No.4 states: *"this is one of the challenging stages as on previous years the waiting period has taken up to two years."* This point will be discussed in detail under objective number three of the study

4.2.2 Adherence to governance principles

Procedural Compliance

Compliance concerns the degree to which the HiP Integrated Environmental Management Planning procedure adheres to the principles of good protected area governance (Lockwood 2010). It speaks to the nature of the HiP IEMP process as to whether it is indeed a governance tool as envisaged by the NEMPA No.57 of 2003 or a mere managerial instrument for "box ticking" in a "tool-kit" approach. As discussed in Chapter Two protected area good governance has five principles, which are Legitimacy and Voice, Direction, Performance, Accountability and Fairness (Graham *et al.* 2003).

Legitimacy

As discussed in Chapter Two, legitimacy and voice in protected areas are some of the key concepts that PA managers must consider during IEMP process. This is to ensure genuine engagement (Graham *et al.*2003). It emerged from the interviews that the HiP IEMP process is procedurally legitimate in that it adheres to legislative and policy prescripts.

Legislative and Policy Compliance

On paper during the documentary review stage, it was found that HiP is compiling their IEMP reports following the NEMPA No.57 of 2003. However, during data collection sessions, the majority of EKZNW informants emphasised the issue of implementation of the IEMP document as a major challenge from their side. In addition, the issue of Information asymmetry was dominant. One of the recommendations made by some of EKZNW informants was that in future they would like to have programmes where internal staff that are supposed to be involved, to be included from the initial stage to the final stage of the IEMP development. The also expressed the need for such staff members to attend proper workshop on IEMP document-related policies and Acts.

Procedural legitimacy

The process as detailed in Fig. 3 has room for stakeholders to engage in the IEMP development process of HiP. It is also in line with NEMPA No.57 of 2003. The EKZNW informants consistently mentioned that meaningful community involvement has not yet been achieved in the Park, based on their observations when the actual process was conducted. They expressed a strong opinion that further work needed to be done in order to achieve meaningful public participation, which was also mentioned earlier in the Chapter Two literature review (De Beer 2009) in a study that discovered that meaningful community involvement has not yet been achieved in environmental conservation issues. As discussed earlier in the literature, legitimacy is about power acceptance and exercise (Aspermont 2007). The literature has, for instance, identified differential power relations as one of the challenges that prevent meaningful community participation (Andrade and Rhodes 2012).

Performance legitimacy

According to EKZNW informants Implementation of the management plan document is a challenge for management especially lower management that deals with communities most of the time. EKZNW No. 5 stated that: *"most of the employees need to be included and well equipped on the importance of the IEMP implementation as it is a day-to-day guideline"*. In principle the HiP management is somehow better at documentation compared to implementation, starting from the initial stage of the IEMP up to the final stage.

Procedural asymmetry

EKZNW informants mentioned the point of irrelevant contributions which often comes from the community. According to EKZNW No. 3, 4, and 5 communities come with their own burning issues, for instance a common one is that of damage causing animals (DCA). According to all participants, this issue is hardly discussed during IEMP workshops as it is deemed by management to be a non-agenda item which is not relevant to the IEMP. According to EKZNW No 4, *"communities will take all the*

time talking about damage causing animals instead of discussing the management plan. Hence, we have to control the process for the sake of progress". These sentiments are in stark contrast to what the communities want and expect. They, for instance want and expect the issue of DCA to be resolved. They feel that this is the main issue in, second only to land dispossession, which impacts negatively on them. The issue itself seems to be tied-up in bureaucratic ineptness (EKZNW No. 5). This provides evidence that the management does indeed "manipulate" and "sanitise" stakeholder contributions if only, for the sake of getting things moving along. In this context, the process itself is flawed. It confirms the theory that governance remains a prerogative of the state to steer society (Bell and Hindmoor 2009).

4.3   The level of stakeholder engagement

This section presents and analyses objective 2 of the study which is to determine the extent to which meaningful and effective engagement has been attained in the HiP IEMP process. This was assessed based on the five levels of engagement as identified by (Bell and Hindmoor 2009) these are Informing, Consultation, Involving, Collaboration and Empowerment. Community engagement is defined as a process that brings together different groups of people with similar interests in the institution. For instance, in protected areas, it involves various stakeholders that consist of communities, municipalities, associations and government departments. Each stakeholder has a specific relationship with the protected area, some are similar, and some are different (Lockwood 2010).

4.3.1 Informing stage

During the informing stage, the goal is to provide the public with information that will assist them to have a better understanding and to have information that will enable them to reach solutions and alternatives. The main promise that usually comes from the management side is of keeping the public informed with new developments and progress to pending issues through various communication channels. In terms of limitations, there is often limited public input, one way communication and passive communication (Bell and Hindmoor 2009).

According to EKZNW informants, the HiP management does inform the various stakeholders when preparing and formulating the IEMP. The main goal for the Park is to provide the stakeholders with required information that will enable the public to engage in the decision-making process. The Park uses the Community Conservation Officers to send out invitations to stakeholders, however some stakeholders are inaccessible by means of technology and require hand-to-hand delivery methods. Letters, phone calls, e-mails, and a website are used for sending out invitations and to share information. Often it is the Park management that communicates with stakeholders and who send letters, make phone calls, and update recipients about coming events and other things. However, according to Stakeholder No.2, communication is intermittent *"the way the park communicates with us as communities is not consistent, some information does not reach us while some information they make sure that it reaches us"*.

4.3.2 Consultation stage

According to Bell and Hindmoor (2009), consultation refers to partnering directly with the public, throughout all the stages of the process to ensure that inputs are done and that there is feedback obtained, and that information is considered and understood by the parties involved. The management is in a position of providing the "how and how not" when it comes to the items promised to the public. It has the responsibility of keeping the public informed, listening the public concerns and mainly providing feedback on issues. Workshops and training sessions are among the instruments used to consult with the public. The issues of who can speak or participate in workshops and the actual process of the IEMP on behalf of communities are regarded as being among the limitations encountered during the consultation phase. Power differentials, legitimacy issues for those excluded are also limitations experienced in most cases.

Indigenous people form the greater part of the HiP stakeholders. According to Dovers *et.al.* (2015) Consultation with indigenous people is critical for the following reasons:
1. They are the original owners, who may have been previously removed from their land or are still living within a protected area. In the HiP case no one is residing to the

park currently, they are under the co-management umbrella. They have rights and can engage in decision-making regarding the IEMP of HiP.

2. Indigenous people have deep traditional ecological knowledge that is applicable in a contemporary management context.

3. Indigenous people have an important role to play in protected areas because these are some of the few places left on earth where their traditional cultural landscapes remain relatively intact, which is important for cultural identity and as a basis for power-sharing arrangements.

4. Protected areas have been known to fail if they do not have the support of local indigenous people due to unresolved past conflicts.

According to EKZNW No. 2, 3, 4 & 5 when they host workshops the main aim is to equip the stakeholders with necessary information that will enable them to engage effectively on the process throughout by providing inputs to obtain feedback. During consultation sessions some misunderstanding between the management and the stakeholders are cleared through information provided. In a situation where the Park management does not have the required information, they promise to keep the stakeholders updated as soon as the park is able to provide that particular information. Just before the session of decision-making commences, stakeholders are provided with information that enlightens them in terms of the main objectives of the IEMP process.

It is evident from EKZNW No. 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 that some stakeholders are given information on how to engage on the IEMP process when they are already at the workshop. This point refers to the people that are illiterate who also attend. So, for them getting information prior to attending the workshop will require the lower-level management to explain to them the importance of IEMP process. In the case of the HiP the same lower-level management who deal with the illiterate stakeholders or community members have little knowledge about the IEMP process according to their own admission during interviews. It is known from the literature that lack of support and guidance for communities is another factor which weakens the process of decision-making (De Beer 2009).

4.3.3 Involvement stage

According to EKZNW No. 2, 3 & 4, at HiP stakeholders are informed and consulted before they involve them on the IEMP development or reviewing process. There are various challenges that are encountered during consultation period where stakeholders haves different perspectives than those of the management. The management is responsible to help in solving local problems arising during the IEMP development process, through providing ideas and resources when available. Some of the stakeholders that were interviewed are local board members.

According to (Field notes, 2018 April 02) the local board members were more informative compared to other stakeholders interviewed. The EKZNW informants further stated that the HiP has structures called co-management and they represent the successful land claimants to the Park; the local board represents surrounding communities and trustees also represent surrounding communities. All these structures are informed, consulted, and are expected to participate when there are certain incentives that need to be conducted, which requires their inputs.

4.3.4 Collaboration stage

This stage takes place when the third party can become involved in the formal review process. Collaboration ensures that rights for all parties involved are protected. This is time consuming and costly process which has a tendency of being biased in favour of the well-funded interests (Bell and Hindmoor 2009).

EKZNW informants reported that there is a third party hired by the organisation, strictly for the IEMP development or reviewing process. The main function of the third party is to ensure that the rights of everyone involved in the process are not violated. They are also there to ensure that bias is always avoided. The process is guided by the EKZNW management and the National Environmental Management Protected Areas Act (No.57 of 2003). However, the question of who gets invited and how they are invited lies with EKZNW.

4.3.5 Empowerment stage

This is the stage where the organisation places final decision-making in the hands of the engaged stakeholders. This is the stage when it empowers the public with authority, when it chooses to implement the decisions taken by the public rather than the ones in government (Bell and Hindmoor 2009).

During interviews both the stakeholders and EKZNW No. 1, 3, 4 & 5, stated that in many instances during the process of IEMP development or reviewing, the involved parties do not have the same perspective on certain items on the management plan. What usually happens is that the management of the Park will elucidate, clarify the item using the legislation, policies and other resources to clarify the item requirements. Eventually they will agree in complying with the legislation governing the operation of the Park.

4.4   Constraints discovered at HiP during IEMP formulation

The previous two sections have made it clear that the HiP IEMP process does provide some opportunity for the stakeholders/communities to engage Park management. The engagement is in no way perfect and still leaves ample room for improvement. This section will therefore discuss some of the barriers that prevent an ideal form of engagement as envisaged by the environmental/protected area governance theory.

List of challenges discovered at the HiP during IEMP formulation:
1.   Information asymmetry
2.   Lack of interest
3.   Language barriers
4.   Sporadic attendance of workshops
5.   Bureaucratic inertia
6.   Resources
7.   Ranger hostility
8.   Curtailment of benefits
9.   Unfulfillable expectations
10.   Level of education

4.4.1 Information asymmetry and lack of interest

Information asymmetry was mentioned in chapter 2 as one of the challenges which face stakeholder engagement. It was stated that information asymmetry often leads to lack of understanding or misunderstanding. The majority of EKZNW informants stressed the point of lack of understanding as the key challenge amongst other challenges. According to EKZNW informants, the reason meaningful community or stakeholder participation has not been effectively achieved at the HiP is because most external stakeholders have little understanding of the IEMP.

According to EKZNW informants, information asymmetry is observed at an early stage of the IEMP development or reviewing process up to the final stage of the process. Information asymmetry occurs not only among the stakeholders on the communities' side only at the HiP, even the management admitted that they still need more information on the IEMP process especially at lower levels as some of them have never been part of internal IEMP meetings. They became involved when they assisted with invitations to stakeholders as they are the ones who work with them on a regular basis compared to the upper-level Park management. EKZNW No.10 reported that: *"so far during the IEMP process, most of the items are not well conducted, it is somehow a ticking box process"*.

According to EKZNW No. 3, 4 & 6 when they deliver IEMP invites to stakeholders one of the questions they receive from some stakeholders is about so-called burning issues which refer to concerns of stakeholders which have been pending for long time and remain unresolved. One of the most important questions they deal with is on damage causing animals. This issue had been raised in previous IEMP meetings and various other meetings and yet remains unresolved. This is perhaps a consistent issue from most community representatives whether new to the IEMP process or not. This issue keeps on being raised in the communities despite explanations and reassurances by park officers and community representatives that the issue is being addressed. Stakeholder No.6 stated that the damage causing animals is a sensitive issue to communities….

the park must come up with means that will resolve this issue of wild animals destroying our livestock's. When you tell community members about the IEMP development process, the first thing they tell you is that the park protects animals that destroy their livestock whom they depend on for livelihood.

During workshops, some stakeholders simply do not to participate in the discussions. The question is therefore, could it be because they are not interested? Or alternatively is it because they are not clear on how to engage? According to EKZNW informants who participated in previous workshops, when some stakeholders were asked the reason for their attendance and the main expectation from their side the response was mainly on getting updated about what the park can offer the neighbouring communities and other relevant stakeholders. In terms of expectations the response was mainly on the reporting of the issues that the stakeholders are currently experiencing. The only keen participants in the IEMP workshops appeared to be local board members. Thus, it appears that the reason why most local community representatives sit around the table not participating is because they are unclear about their roles and responsibilities.

Chapter Two identified confusion over roles and responsibilities amongst communities as one of the major challenges encountered in a process of drawing up management plans for protected areas as mentioned by Castro *et al.* (2006). However, EKZNW No.3, indicated that during the IEMP developing stage, some stakeholders assist the facilitator in terms of explaining and clarifying some items to community members. The ones that assist others are the ones that are local board members. Stakeholder No. 4 stated that local board members are called for various meetings in the park which is why it is somehow easy for them to engage effectively the IEMP process.

According to EKZNW informants, some stakeholders do participate through raising their concerns about so-called burning issues. At the first meeting with stakeholders, most of the time is set aside to attend the stakeholders' burning issues. When they have discussed these, the process can start with some attention and focus by the present stakeholders. Even when burning issues have been discussed the issue of non-participation on the part of stakeholders is still experienced. In fact, until the last

day of the workshops, non-participation together with information asymmetry is experienced.

The section of ranking objectives is regarded as the most challenging one by the EKZNW informants. This is the stage where stakeholders really demonstrate their level of understanding of the IEMP aims and objectives. It takes up most of the time of the IEMP formulation process. In this section, the management presents the previously agreed upon objectives to the stakeholders, explain each objective and its importance to the stakeholders. To move to the next objective, involved parties need to agree and then move forward. EKZNW No.4, described this stage as more of an educational one.

> The management spends much time explaining and clarifying the objective to stakeholders who want their own issues which are regarded as of importance to them to be listed as an objective. That is when management explains the meaning of the IEMP objectives and their importance. Ranking of the IEMP objectives remains a challenge up to the last day of meeting with stakeholders. Then at the last stage of reviewing the agreed upon objectives they will again raise questions about the same previously agreed upon objective.

This on its own still demonstrates information asymmetry as a major challenge throughout the process.

Information asymmetry is also exacerbated by the rather rampant inconsistent attendance of meetings and workshops by community representatives. There is a prevalence of new faces among stakeholders from the second day onwards of the workshops. These new people raise concerns already raised in the previous days by other stakeholders who are then absent. Either way the management must explain or clarify the issue once again. Because of that process there is a delay on the agenda. *"Then moving from that discussion, out of the blue, they ask irrelevant questions. For example, job opportunities are raised while the issue at hand is species conservation"* EKZNW No 2. Lack of interest from some community representatives is another factor contributing to information asymmetry. For instance, some stakeholders sit and sleep during the discussions. *"If you ask them why they came to the workshop, they will say*

the community leader said we must come and we obeyed his instruction" EKZNW No 4. So, the power of the community leader brought them to the workshop not because of interest or willingness.

4.4.2 Language barrier

According to EKZNW informants, on the previous IEMP developments the facilitator was not familiar with the language used by the majority of stakeholders. The facilitator relied on the Park management for translation. Any management team that knows the language that is used by most of the stakeholders becomes a translator for the facilitator. One of the greatest challenges in this regard is the fact that the person translating is not a trained translator.

According to EKZNW Employee No.10, it remains an issue the matter of translation…. *"on the part of the facilitator because the facilitator is not sure whether the translator translates the meaning as the facilitator is conveying it".* Even when the stakeholders ask questions to the facilitator, the facilitator remains unsure whether the conveyed message contains the real initial meaning from the original person. The issue of information asymmetry is somehow linked to the issue of the unskilled translator.

4.4.3 Sporadic attendance of workshops and meetings

Sporadic and/or non-attendance of workshops and meetings is a major challenge faced by the EKZNW management. According to them (EKZNW) careful steps are taken to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are informed of the meetings and workshops and yet the attendance is never ideal. Moreover, even those who attend, will attend on certain meetings and send someone else, if at all, into others. This remains one of the greatest challenges and it weakens the process because it results in non-participation amongst stakeholders who are at the workshop. They do not bring any inputs to the table, which is understandable because someone who has been active on the IEMP process decided to send them to represent them in their stead. These new people lack the requisite preparation and training for any proper and adequate engagement.

4.4.4 Bureaucratic inertia

According to EKZNW No.4 after the final draft has been adopted by both internal and external stakeholders it is sent to the board for adoption, after that it is sent to the MEC of Environmental Affairs for approval. Issue number one here is that the stakeholders submit comments late after the closing date. That somehow forces the Park management to extend the closing date with a hope of receiving more inputs. Either way, little input is received on the website from the public. The second issue is submission to the MEC.

The estimated waiting period is approximately close to two years. The estimation is derived from the previous waiting periods that the park went through on past years of submission of the IEMP to the minister. The delay has a negative effect in that it delays the implementation of the management plan actions. EKZNW No.4 states "*The stakeholders are waiting for the agreed upon items to be implemented, by the time the minister approves, the issue is somehow cold.*"

4.4.5 Resources

According to EKZNW No. 2, change of human resource, namely staff turnover is a challenge on its own. When dealing with stakeholders one needs people who are skilled enough to make the stakeholders feel welcomed and of most importance to the IEMP process. People with good communication skills build the relationship with stakeholders, and as part of their career journey they leave the organisation. Someone with not much interest in stakeholders fill in that position, the same stakeholders that has been working with someone who was passionate about them are now working with someone who shows less interest in them. Relationship with stakeholders is trust based, the more they work with someone who shows interest on them, the trust develops and then moving forward the relationship is stable. The impact that resources in this case human resource has on the IEMP process is that as it has been stated earlier on that one of the challenges HiP faces during the formulation of the IEMP is the non-attendance of stakeholders and new faces that are sent to represent someone who used to come and participate in decision making process before.

According to EKZNW No 5, most of the community representatives do not have transportation means to attend meetings. These people have to be transported to and from meetings by EKZNW staff. EKZNW Informants mentioned the issue of stakeholders coming late to the workshops as one of the challenges they encounter in the formulation of the IEMP. One of the reasons for this is stakeholders arrive late at the pick-up points. Then the driver must wait for them to arrive, then they arrive late to the venue and the workshop ends up starting late.

4.4.6 Ranger hostility

One of the issues that is a challenge is the way field rangers treat communities. According to Stakeholder No.5, Some of the field rangers have a tendency of communicating with communities in a way that is hostile and not polite according to communities' perspective. This often happens when there are poaching incidences Stakeholder No.3 states:

> Field rangers need to stop ill-treating community members because when you invite community members to the IEMP development workshops, some they tell you that they were ill-treated by people who work in the park while they were innocent.

This is a challenge for the IEMP process if some stakeholders are related to or represent these affected members of the community who were ill-treated by field rangers. During the IEMP development workshop some stakeholders will demand answers about why the rangers ill-treated community members. Therefore, they come to the IEMP workshop with an agenda of finding answers to their questions. The main content of the workshop is of little interest to them and that is why they end up sitting around the table without giving any input to the discussion or even falling asleep.

4.4.7 Curtailment of benefits

According to stakeholder informants, the Park has somehow changed the way it used to do other things which were of benefit to the communities. Some benefits are no longer accessible such as collecting firewood. It used to be one of the benefits communities gained from the Park and now this is no longer possible. Stakeholder

No.4 said that: "*communities are asking questions why the park has stopped offering some benefits that it used to offer before*".

Thus, this issue must be addressed so that they can engage effectively. Stakeholder informants further explained that some community members believe that those benefits have been discontinued because of changes in the availability of human resources. As stakeholders attend the IEMP process with those agendas, it weakens the process of decision-making because some participants are less interested on the IEMP concept for various reasons which includes information asymmetry.

4.4.8 Unfulfillable expectations

People demand more than what a park can offer. This is one of the challenges encountered by the Park management and which has a negative impact even on the IEMP development process. According to stakeholder informants the Park has been operating for a very long period but the benefits they have received from the Park are insufficient. They further compared the Park to industries in the area which started operating when the Park was already operating. They compare the benefits they get from mining industries and companies to those that they get from the Park.

This point of comparison of the benefits from the Park to benefits from mining and companies on its own shows that stakeholders who are part of the IEMP development of the Park are more concerned with possible benefits than with conservation management. EKZNW No 10 posed the question:

> So how can we expect them to engage effectively in the decision-making process when they are obsessed about what the Park can offer and less interested on the components that need to be discussed so that the Park will continue to function so that maybe one day it will be in a position to offer them more than what it is currently offering?

4.4.9 Education levels

According to EKZNW informants the major challenges they face at HiP during the formulation stages of the IEMP document are mainly because the stakeholders of the

Park have different levels of education which results in different levels of understanding. Some of the Park stakeholders are illiterate. That explains the reason why there are major challenges with information asymmetry, translation, and the use of English language during the IEMP process.

4.5   Conclusion

The chapter presented the findings and analyses of results found by the study. In this chapter, the facilitation of Hluhluwe-iMfolzi Park IEMP was described and it was revealed that the process is characterised by an exclusionary ethos. Moreover, some internal stakeholders within the Park have little understanding of the IEMP process.

The findings also demonstrated that to some extent, meaningful and effective engagement has not been attained in the HiP EIMP process. There are several constraints which prevent adequate participation by external stakeholders which are mainly due to uneven power relations between Park management and external stakeholders. Even the lack of interest by some community representatives can be read as a demonstration that mainstream conservation practices remain alinietaing to local communities as discussed by Mbaria & Ogada (2016).

The next chapter ties up the discussion and concludes the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1   Introduction

In this chapter, an analysis is made of the extent to which the objectives of the study were met. It links back to the framework and its efficacy in facilitating the outcomes of this case study.

5.2.   Reflection on the objectives of the study

The main aim of the proposed study was to examine stakeholder engagement in the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park IEMP process from the perspective of protected area managers. The study had three key objectives. The first objective was to describe how the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park IEMP process is facilitated. The second objective was to determine the extent to which meaningful and effective engagement has been attained in the HiP EIMP process. The last objective was to identify the barriers to effective and meaningful engagement in the HiP IEMP process.

5.3   Reflection on previous related research

IEMPs for protected areas are an essential tool for achieving conservation goals (Ross *et al.* 2002). Various stakeholders are invited to engage in this process of decision making. Local communities who adjoin protected areas are among key stakeholders affected by the existence of protected areas and their participation is therefore paramount. Previous studies have shown that meaningful community involvement has not yet been achieved in environmental conservation issues (Nsukwini & Bob 2016; Andrade & Rhodes 2012; De Beer 2009; Hulme & Murpheree 2001). This is a huge challenge faced by protected areas because inadequate stakeholder involvement may compromise the integrity of the reserve (Andrade & Rhodes 2012). However, these studies were mostly conducted from the vantage point of local community members.

These local communities have listed, among other things, the unwillingness or inability on the part of management to take community contributions seriously. Moreover, communities are not clear about their position and expected contribution during the IEMP negotiations.

5.4   Reflection on the methodology used in this study

A qualitative case study approach was used for this study as the research is social research. The interview method was one of the forms of data collection. In-depth interviews were conducted with the relevant stakeholders and the Park management to collect data regarding challenges experienced by the Park management in the formulation of integrated management plans development or reviewing of HiP.

The in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to obtain more information in regard to how the process is conducted from the start up to the end. There was sufficient time for both the researcher and the informants to ask questions and obtain clarity on various aspects in relation to the challenges encountered during the formulation of the IEMP document, the stages of the formulation and on how the entire process is done and the main reasons for the IEMP development or reviewing process.

5.5   Reflection on addressing the study objectives

The results obtained were arranged according to the study objectives. For objective one, which was to describe how the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park IEMP process is facilitated the results revealed that the Park is using the guidelines of the NEMPA Act 57 of 2004. The study discovered that there are different steps that are followed in the formulation of the IEMP document for HiP management development illustrated in Fig.3. However, as the stages are followed, the main striking challenge is of the effectiveness of the engagement of stakeholders. Objective one's findings were that some stakeholders attend meetings and others do not attend.

The stakeholders that attend some of them are more knowledgeable while others have little knowledge in terms of their roles and responsibilities so that they can engage

effectively. As a result, information asymmetry is one of the factors that has been identified in the initial stage of the HiP IEMP development or reviewing process up to the last stage in terms of stakeholder engagement. The study discovered that some members of the Park management have never been involved in the planning sessions, they only became involved at a stage when they had to assist the third party who does the invitations for the Park by delivering invitations to stakeholders.

The study for objective two which was to determine the extent to which meaningful and effective engagement has been attained in the HiP EIMP process. First the majority of the Park management, the ones that participated on this study admitted that some of them do not have a clear understanding of the IEMP document as they have never been involved on the internal preparation stage. Second on the stakeholders side the study discovered that when they attend the IEMP workshops, majority of them are unclear about their roles and responsibilities which results in them giving little, irrelevant sometimes no input in the decision- making process.

Furthermore, the study discovered that some stakeholders, the ones that sit on the local board structure are more knowledgeable compared to the ordinary stakeholders. During the workshop of the IEMP pre-operational stage some stakeholders were seen assisting other stakeholders in terms of clarifying the concept of the IEMP so that those who had little knowledge were able to engage more effectively than before.

The issue of information asymmetry remains the major factor that weakens the process of the IEMP development at HiP. The Park management saw at the end of each workshop that majority of stakeholders are unclear about their involvement based on the input they bring to the table. However, as much as the Park's management realises that some of the stakeholders do not fully understand the concept, the process continues until the last stage. Even on the final days of the IEMP workshops, some stakeholders demonstrated that they understood little about the IEMP process. The study discovered that the other factor that contributes to stakeholders not engaging effectively during the decision- making process is the fact that sometimes they skip some of the workshop days. The park management found out that on workshop days there would be new people representing the community representatives. This means that some stakeholders would have missed one or more

workshops sessions but when he or she comes on a certain day he or she will still pose the same questions that were resolved on the days while he or she was absent.

Objective three was to identify the barriers to effective and meaningful engagement in the HiP IEMP process. The study discovered that the challenges that are faced by the Park during the IEMP development or reviewing process are the factors that weaken the process of decision-making. Information asymmetry was found to be the main source of most of the challenges that hinder stakeholders from making a meaningful contribution. The study findings revealed that for meaningful stakeholder participation to be achieved the stakeholders involved in the process need to be clear regarding their roles and responsibilities. For everyone to bring effective inputs they have to be clear about the content of the IEMP process and about the importance of them participating in the process. The study identified that some stakeholders only discover when already at the workshop the reason why they were invited to participate in the process. In addition, it was identified that some members of management attend workshops without being previously involved in the internal gatherings regarding to the IEMP process.

The issue of language and illiteracy remains one of the main factors that are challenging during the formulation process. The facilitator uses English as a language of instruction throughout the process. This led to a situation of having an unprofessional translator providing a translation for the stakeholders and the facilitator. The study found this to be one of the strategies supposedly designed to improve the communication between the facilitator and the stakeholders with challenges in the language used. However, this strategy has a double effect, the message that is conveyed by the facilitator to the stakeholders is not guaranteed to be delivered with the exact or original meaning.

Temporary unqualified translators are often of low- level management of the Park because they are familiar with most of the stakeholders. This is problematic when taking into account the fact that, as this study also found, lower-level management of the Park are not fully aware of the IEMP development or reviewing process. The

translator, therefore, could be someone not aware what the whole business is about.

5.6 Contributions of the study in the field

The management side of the Park expressed a desire to see improvements so that meaningful stakeholders' involvement can be achieved in the near future. Majority of the park management would like to see the process of the IEMP not done merely as the ticking of box but being done effectively in such a way that involved stakeholders who are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities on the decision-making process regarding the formulation of the Park management plan. One of the main positive findings of the study is related to the fact that some local board members have a clear understanding of the IEMP process as they have been seen during the workshops helping the facilitator in terms of clarifying, not translating, but clarifying to other stakeholders the items being discussed. That means that those local board members have reached a stage where they are clear regarding the IEMP process and meaning as well as their roles and responsibilities. This suggests that stakeholder engagement is a long-term process requiring investments in time and resources. The current "once-off" approach where IEMP meetings are held once every five to ten years has to be re-thought.

The exclusion of low-level managers of the Park in the initial stages of the IEMP process is problematic. The fact that they became involved in the middle of the process when they had to assist with external stakeholders and translation leaves large information gaps in the process. This calls for serious concern regarding the study because one of the main challenges discovered to be a contributing factor in weakening the IEMP process, was that the process was sometimes merely seen as a ticking the box situation and leads to information asymmetry. Stakeholders at the table not providing inputs, providing irrelevant inputs, being absent on some days, sending people to represent them, people who have little knowledge on how to engage effectively and people who do not understand why they have to come to attend the workshop. These low-level managers could be key towards facilitating enough enthusiasm for the process.

For future studies, attention needs to be paid to the fact that some low level of management of the protected areas are not clear about the concept and content of the IEMP development or reviewing process. The findings demonstrated this unequivocally. That raises a major question with regard to some stakeholders and their understanding of the process. When people who work directly with stakeholders whom they see often at other events of the Park are not clear and knowledgeable about the importance of the IEMP process, to expect external stakeholders be clear is a stretch.

The entire management team from high to low-level need to be clear themselves on why the IEMP must be reviewed or developed. Firstly, all stakeholders need to be clear on why they are involving stakeholders, not to involve them because the Act says so, which indeed it does but because the management of the protected area as the implementing agency need to comply with the Act and implement effectively what is stipulated. Secondly, they need to be clear of what is expected from the stakeholders. Lastly, they need to come up with strategies on how they will go about ensuring that the stakeholders who attend the IEMP meetings are knowledgeable and know what is expected from them, as the stakeholders of the protected area.

It has been shown in previous studies and also in HiP case studies that the level of education amongst the stakeholders differs. Some are even illiterate, which is why the management of the park has to ensure that majority of stakeholders, regardless of their profiles, do understand the meaning and importance of reviewing or developing the IEMP document. Even the issue of translating, can be resolved once the people who has been translating for the facilitator who happen most of the time to be the management of the Park are themselves clear about the meaning of the entire IEMP process. If this is ensured translating would not be much of a challenge because they will be interpreting something that they themselves understand better.

5.7   Unexpected findings of the study

One of the unexpected findings that emerged during the process of collecting data from the informants was that stakeholders of the Park want more benefits. They do acknowledge the benefits that they have received so far from the Park including the

community levy benefit. However, they want more from the Park and even compare the Park to industries neighbouring the Park in terms of benefits received. In fact, some of the stakeholders have unfulfilled expectations from the Park and those stakeholders are the ones involved in the process of the management plan development or reviewing process.

The study findings relate this to the main factor that weakens the process of the formulation of the IEMP in the Park and which is information asymmetry. This clearly shows the level of understanding some of the stakeholders have in terms of the existence of the Park. To them the Park should mainly be a provider of job opportunities and bursaries for their children. Even the issue of rhino poaching on which they expressed a desire to be of some assistance, they linked this to the impact it has on job opportunities.

Communities are also concerned with the relationship they have with the Park. They are happy with the relationship as it stands but would like it to be stronger. They would like the means of communication to improve and to be through the channels agreed upon. The local board members indicated they would like to continue receiving information beforehand so that they can take it themselves to the traditional authorities then it is passed on to the communities. For instance, when the Park advertises a job even if it requires a high qualification, they would like the Park to bring it to the attention of the local board members so that the communities are updated about the job advertisement because they are at a disadvantage in terms of technology. According to stakeholders having communication channels improved would strengthen the relationship between the Park and stakeholders.

Some of the stakeholders indicated that they would like more individuals from their organisations to be engaged on the IEMP formulation process. The study found that according to the stakeholders the invitations from the Park address a particular portfolio or someone who is in a certain position. The stakeholders understand this approach but are of the opinion that there are other portfolios that they would like to attend the IEMP process.

This point is linked to the main factor that has been found to weaken the process of IEMP development or reviewing process, that of information asymmetry. Some stakeholders do not have enough understanding of who is allowed to attend the IEMP workshops. This means that some individuals who are interested miss out on the opportunity to be part of the IEMP development or reviewing process because they are unclear of who should attend, why that individual is chosen and what their role would be at the IEMP workshops.

5.8   Policy recommendations

It is recommended that protected areas must ensure that all relevant internal stakeholders are involved and properly trained in the IEMP process throughout all critical stages. This must be followed immediately by the involvement and training of external stakeholders, particularly from the neighbouring communities. This involvement must be continuous throughout the life cycle of the IEMP document. Therefore, there must regular IEMP meetings at community levels. These culminating at an annual IEMP meeting involving all representatives. This will ensure that engagement is constant, direct, and intimate.

5.9   Conclusion

To achieve meaningful stakeholder participation at the HiP IEMP process, much time and resources are required. Stakeholders need to be equipped on the ways and means of effective engagement. The entire management of the protected area, especially low-level officers must be involved in the IEMP process and properly equipped through training and workshops. This will go a long way in ensuring that most stakeholders are well equipped with knowledge and understanding of the importance of IEMP.

Blaming community representatives for lack of interest is unfortunate. The interest showed by Local Board members should be an indication of where the blame lies. Local Board members are in constant contact with the park authorities and are involved in most decisions. Once-off engagement is therefore the issue. What is

needed is some level of constant engagement at the community level. It is also crucial that the so called "burning" issues are not excluded from the discussions. This is what community members are interested in and ignoring these issues simply alienates these people.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide - EKZNW Members

Questions were arranged according to the following study objectives:

- To examine how the Integrated Environmental Management Planning process is managed and facilitated at the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park;

- To determine the extent of stakeholder engagement in the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park Integrated Environmental management planning process; and

- To identify the constraints to an effective Integrated Environmental Management Planning process at the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park.

Objective 1

1. How are the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park's Integrated Management Plan workshops conducted?
2. What are participants expected to do in decision making process?
3. What is your actual role in the management plan development or reviewing process?

Objective 2

1. From your previous experience or observation, do you think meaningful community involvement has been achieved in IEMP process?

2. According to your own opinion, do community representatives bring enough inputs on the table?

Objective 3

1. Is the IEMP process adequate to ensure community participation and buy-in?

2. If there is something to be added or changed in facilitation of community involvement when developing, reviewing Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park management plan what is it?

3. What are the things that you can point out as one of the major challenges for the park management team when facilitating community involvement in decision making?

Appendix 2: Interview Guide – Stakeholders
of HIP

Objective 1

1. How you were selected to be on the Integrated Environmental Management Planning workshop for the Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park?

2. What is usually expected of you in the decision making process?

Objective 2

1. What is your actual role in the management plan development or reviewing process?

Objective 3

1. Is there something that you would like to be added or changed on the Integrated Environmental Management Planning workshop for the Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park?

2. How do you go about giving information back to the people you represent?

Appendix 3: Stakeholder representatives

EKZNW members

Category of Person	Interview Code	Gender	Venue of interview	Date of interview
EKZWN Employee	EKZNW No.1	M	EKZNW Offices	3 April 2018
EKZWN Employee	EKZNW No.2	M	EKZNW Offices	3 April 2018
EKZWN Employee	EKZNW No.3	F	EKZNW Offices	3 April 2018
EKZWN Employee	EKZNW No.4	M	EKZNW Offices	4 April 2018
EKZWN Employee	EKZNW No.5	M	EKZNW Offices	4 April 2018
EKZWN Employee	EKZNW No.6	M	EKZNW Offices	4 April 2018
EKZWN Employee	EKZNW No.7	F	EKZNW Offices	5 April 2018
EKZWN Employee	EKZNW No.8	M	EKZNW Offices	5 April 2018
EKZWN Employee	EKZNW No.9	M	EKZNW Offices	9 April 2018
EKZWN Employee	EKZNW No.10	F	EKZNW Offices	9 April 2018

Stakeholder's representatives

Category of Person	Interview Code	Gender	Venue of interview	Date of interview
Community representative	Stakeholder no.1	M	Traditional tribal court	2 April 2018
Community representative	Stakeholder no.2	M	Traditional tribal court	2 April 2018
Local board member	Stakeholder no.3	M	Stakeholder's house	5 April 2018
Municipality member	Stakeholder no.4	M	Municipal offices	5April 2018
Trustee member	Stakeholder no.5	M	Stakeholder's house	8 April 2018
Local board member	Stakeholder no.6	M	Stakeholder's house	8 April 2018

Appendix 4: Consent form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I _____, confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the in-depth semi-structured interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname………………………………………

Participant Signature………………………………………………..Date…………………

Researcher's Name & Surname: Khumbuzile Zulu

Researcher's signature………………………………………..Date…………………