

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of sustainable development, which has dominated the development agenda, has become one of the most contested issues, more especially in cases where development practitioners have had to balance the interaction and relationship between the physical environment and human development. The implementation of conservation strategies in areas bordering game parks and reserves has been one of the conflict areas.

This study was aimed at investigating the issues and dynamics inherent in this particular area. The core focus of the research was on an analysis of the livelihoods of the Muyexe community. This investigation attempted to determine the extent of the benefits of the interventions by SANParks on the livelihoods of this mentioned community. The social impact assessment of these conservation strategies were analysed in view of how the community perceived them, and were based on the variables of human, social, financial and natural capital.

The study was mainly of a qualitative research design whose findings were informed by a series of in-depth focus group discussions, participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews. The main findings of this study revealed that, to a larger extent, a preservationist approach, in trying to protect flora and fauna, invariably leads to conflict and a general impoverishment of the community. A participatory conservation strategy to uplift the livelihoods of the affected community was recommended as a sustainable approach to both meet the environmental and human developmental needs.