

TERRAVIVA



SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas at the *IUCN World Parks Congress*

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All is set for the 2014 World Parks Congress which is being held at eight venues within the Sydney Olympic Park.
Credit: Marshall Patsanza/IPS

All set for 6th World Parks Congress

By Usumuzi Sifile

The sixth World Parks Congress 2014 is scheduled to open today in Sydney, Australia. The Congress, which is convened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), is one of the biggest international platforms for engagement, knowledge sharing and innovation on conservation and natural resources management.

First staged in 1962, the congress is held every ten years. Southern Africa successfully hosted the last event that was held in Durban, South Africa in 2003.

According to the organisers, the event will feature 1,700 presentations and events, with Heads of State, international Environment Ministers and more than 4,000 delegates from 160 countries.

The Southern Africa Development Community

Transfrontier Conservation Areas (SADC-TFCAs) programme is participating at the congress through a team of thematic experts and policy makers drawn from across the region. These officials are scheduled to make presentations and participate in discussions in line with the congress' theme: "Parks, people, planet: inspiring solutions".

In a message released ahead of the congress, the SADC-TFCAs programme said their participation at the 6th IUCN World Parks Congress would focus a lot on transfrontier conservation.

"Transfrontier conservation was the driver of the 5th IUCN World Parks Congress, held in Durban, in 2003, and now – a decade on – forms the core of SADC interventions at the 6th IUCN World Parks Congress, here in Sydney. Now in 2014, we want to celebrate how Southern Africa de-

spite its geopolitical and economic challenges, has succeeded through multi-country and multi-stakeholders partnership and collaboration to establish a variety of transboundary protected areas," reads the message from SADC-TFCAs programme.

Among other interventions at the congress, the SADC-TFCAs will conduct an exhibition to showcase the region's various efforts to bring together conservation objectives with those of peace and stability.

"Southern Africa is not shying away from the challenges set upon her. All our contributions to this congress, be they government interventions, private sector or academia presentations and discussions will raise awareness to all people concerned that we have a vision for the future," reads the message from SADC.

The SADC TFCAs Exhibition Stand is located at stand no.s 71-73 in the Exhibition Hall.

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Transforming Communities and Conserving Wildlife through Protected Parks

“It makes no sense to have some natural resources commodified and heavily exploited because there is no moral value attached to them, while banning the commodification and sustainable use of others because the general public attaches a sentimental value to them,”

Busani Bafana interviews Dr. Clara Bocchino from the Animal and Human Health for Environment and Development at the Great Limpopo TFCA

While law enforcement is part of conservation in both state-owned and private protected areas, it can never work on its own, says Dr. Clara Bocchino, coordinator of the Policy Research Group of the Animal and Human Health for Environment and Development in the Great Limpopo TFCA.

In an effort to promote sustainable development while balance community needs and conserving its wildlife assets, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have developed Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs), or international cross border parks. SADC launched the first park — the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park — in 2000.

"TFCAs have a tremendous potential to deliver socio-economic development processes that are sustainable because they stem from environmental management and move towards sustainable and resilient societies," Bocchino told IPS.

Bocchino said a critical approach to managing wildlife and community development is one founded on sustainable development. She bemoaned the current economic model that commodified natural and human resources.

"It makes no sense to have some natural resources commodified and heavily exploited because there is no moral value attached to them, while banning the commodification and sustainable use of others because the general public attaches a sentimental value to them," Bocchino said.

Excerpts of the interview follow:

Q: Do SADC countries have adequate and robust policies and laws that promote sustainable consumptive and non-consumptive use of natural resources especially with regard to protected areas?

A: I think they do, certainly all legal revisions in Southern African countries speak in their favour. What is missing is not pertaining to the law, but to a favourable operative and enforcement environment both globally and regionally. Unfortunately, we are fully aware that government actions are constrained by global "trends".

For instance, we have the Convention on Biological Diversity with sustainable use of natural resources as a clause, but it is still under conservation.

We know that many international NGOs op-

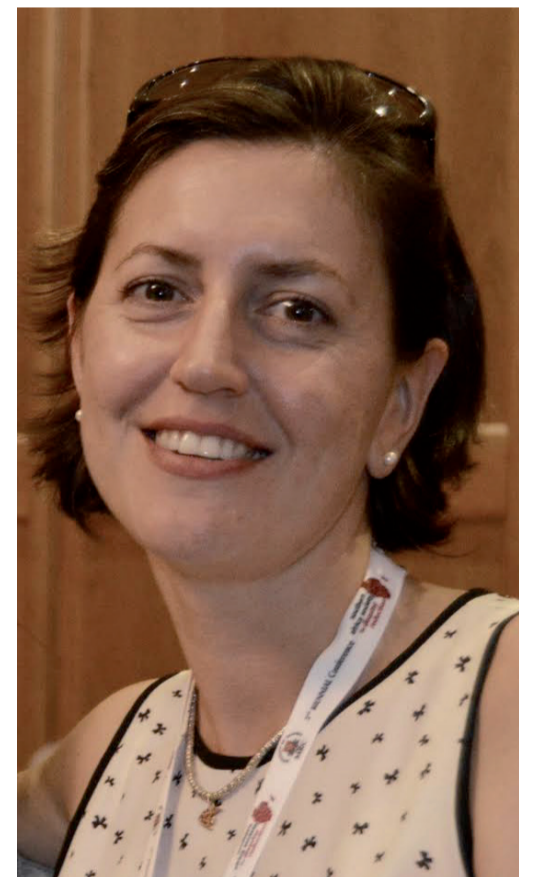
erating in Africa subscribe to the conservation but not to the sustainable use clause and so may simply not fund such processes or not get involved in countries where this is the trend.

In this respect, they sort of hold countries under check, and indirectly or directly set their programmatic agenda for conservation, based on their principles and values, not on national laws and needs.

Wildlife crimes and the tremendous attention they have received worldwide are frustrating the situation further. Not only do we now have a plethora of dubious NGOs supporting the war against poaching but we also have NGOs that directly threaten governments that have a different take on the solutions.

Q: What are the challenges of maintaining transfrontier parks and managing wildlife crimes with open border systems in place?

A: The challenges are many, as one may imagine, especially because wildlife crimes are thriving again and our legal systems are not fully geared towards operationalising joint cross-border patrol.



Dr. Clara Bocchino
Credit: Dr. Clara Bocchino

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TERRAVIVA

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A critical approach to managing wildlife and community development is one founded on sustainable development.
Credit: Malini Shanka/IPS

How SADC is Fighting Wildlife Crime

By Mabvuto Banda

"We are underpaid, have no guns and in most instances are outnumbered by the poachers," says Stain Phiri, a ranger at Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve — a 986 square km reserve said to have the most abundant and a variety of wildlife in Malawi — which is also one of the country's biggest game parks under siege by poachers.

Phiri's fears probably sum up the reason why there has been a surge in poaching of elephants tusks and rhino horns in southern Africa in recent years.

"We can't fight the motivated gangs of poachers who are heavily armed and ready to kill anyone getting in their way," Phiri tells IPS. He says he is paid a monthly field allowance equivalent to about 20 dollars, which is not enough to take care of his family of six.

"My colleagues and I risk our lives everyday protecting wildlife and it seems we are not appreciated because even when we arrest poachers, the police release them," says Phiri.

Malawi's Wildlife Act, he says, also needs serious amendments to empower and protect rangers and to also impose

stiffer penalties if the government is serious about tackling wildlife crimes.

Phiri's story resonates across southern Africa and gives insight into the challenges the region is facing maintaining transfrontier parks and managing wildlife crime.

TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade monitoring network that looks at trade in animals and plants globally, says well-equipped, sufficiently resourced rangers are needed on the ground to protect the animals and prevent poaching in the first instance.

Dr Richard Thomas, the Global Communications Co-ordinator of TRAFFIC, tells IPS that most countries in southern Africa have increasingly become the target for poachers because it is a region that has the most rhino and elephants in the world.

"Southern Africa is home to more rhinos than any other region in the world, with around 95 percent of all white rhino and 40 percent of all black rhino," he says.

According to TRAFFIC, 25,000 African elephants were killed in 2011, while 22,000 were killed in 2012 and just over 20,000 in 2013. This, TRAFFIC says, is out of a population

estimated between 420,000 and 650,000.

Last year, Zambia lost a total of 135 elephants to poaching as compared to 124 in 2012 and 96 in 2011, according to Zambia's Tourism and Arts Minister Sylvia Masebo.

The same is true for Mozambique. The country's local media have quoted Tourism Minister Carvalho Muaria as saying that the elephant population has declined by about half since the early 1970s. There are currently only about 20,000 left.

The Niassa Reserve, an area of 42,000 square km and home to about two-thirds of Mozambique's elephants, now has about 12,000 elephants. Poachers killed 500 elephants last year and have wiped out Mozambique's rhinos, Muaria says.

TRAFFIC says between 2007 and 2013 rhino poaching increased by 7,700 percent on the continent. There are only estimated to now be 5,000 black rhino and 20,000 white rhino.

Last month, South Africa reported that it had lost 558 rhinos to poachers so far this year.

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How SADC is Fighting Wildlife Crime

Continued from page 3

But not all hope is lost. Southern Africa is responding to the threats to its wildlife by collaborating between countries that share borders and protected areas for wildlife.

A case in point is this year's anti-poaching agreement between Mozambique and South Africa, which aims to stop rhino poaching mostly in the Kruger National Park, which shares a border with Mozambique. The two countries agreed to share intelligence and jointly develop anti-poaching techniques to curb rhino poaching.

Mozambique, said to be a major transit route for rhino horn trafficked to Asia, this year approved a new law that will impose heavy penalties of up to 12 years on anyone found guilty of poaching rhino.

"Previous laws didn't penalise poaching, but we think this law will discourage Mozambicans who are involved in poaching," Muaria tells IPS.

South Africa, according to press reports, is also considering legalising the rhino horn trade in an attempt to limit illegal demand by allowing the sale of horns from rhino that have died of natural causes.

Ten years ago the 15-member SADC regional block established the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) directorate. Since then regional protocols, strategies and programmes have been developed and passed, among them the SADC Transboundary Use and Protection of Natural Resources Programme.

Under the SADC Transboundary Use and Protection of Natural Resources Programme is the Regional Transfrontier Conservation Area Programme (TFCA) and Malawi and Zambia have benefited from this arrangement so far.

Malawi's Minister of Tourism and Wildlife Kondwani Na-



South Africa's white rhinoceros recovered from near-extinction thanks to intense conservation efforts. Credit: Kanya D'Almeida/IPS

“In Sydney, we will tackle these issues in the search of better and fairer ways to conserve the exceptional natural and cultural richness of these places”

khumwa tells IPS that the Nyika Transfrontier Conservation Area project has helped reduce poaching in Nyika National Park, the country's biggest park.

The Malawi-Zambia TFCA includes the Nyika-North Luangwa component in Zambia situated on a high undulating montane grassland plateau rising over 2000m above the bushveld and wetlands of the Vwaza Marsh.

During summer a variety of wild flowers and orchids burst forth on the highlands, making it one of Africa's most scenic views unlike any seen in most other game parks.

"Through the project, Vwaza has managed to confiscate 10 guns, removed 322 wire snares and arrested 32 poachers," Nakhumwa tells IPS.

Humphrey Nzima, the international coordinator for the Malawi-Zambia TFCA, says that since the project was launched

there has been a general increase in animal populations.

"Significant increases were noted for elephant, hippo, buffalo, roan antelope, hartebeest, zebra, warthog and reedbuck," says Nzima citing surveys conducted in the Vwaza Marsh and Nyika national park.

The escalating poaching crisis and conflicts on the ground occurring in many national parks across Africa will be one of the topics of discussion at this year's International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Parks Congress 2014, which is currently taking place in Sydney, Australia.

"In Sydney, we will tackle these issues in the search of better and fairer ways to conserve the exceptional natural and cultural richness of these places," says Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of Gabon and Patron of the IUCN World Conservation Congress.

Interview with Dr. Clara Bocchino

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This is, however, when cooperation between protected areas management can help through legal instruments provided in regional and international law.

Looking at the law enforcement side, Southern Africa has two valid instruments: the SADC protocol on Wildlife and Law Enforcement, which provides for TFCAs, and the Lusaka Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement Operations directed at Illegal Trade in

Wild Flora and Fauna, which provides for the institutionalisation of multi-national task forces.

Unfortunately, the Lusaka Agreement has not been signed or ratified by many SADC countries, thus leaving the continent and the region with a big legal and operational vacuum.

The history of regional TFCAs and of wildlife crimes teaches us a couple of very important lessons.

Firstly, one cannot treat all illegal hunting as a wildlife crime. This means that rural communities in and outside of protected areas should be able to sustainably access natural resources as part of their livelihoods, which

would begin to resolve an important regional conservation conundrum.

Secondly, whereas a lot has been said about human-wildlife conflict, we need to accept that where people are excluded from direct participation and ownership of the conservation effort, this escalates to a human-conservation conflict and creates a very fertile ground for criminal gangs dealing with wildlife and their products to penetrate these societies.

Ultimately, it widens the gap between people and conservation.

Q: Illegal killing of wildlife is on the rise, for example in South Africa. Would you

say then that the heavy hand of the law is adequate to halt poaching or to help local communities contribute to the conservation of wildlife?

A: I have yet to see a case where a heavy hand helps community contribute to the conservation effort.

I am actually concerned that all the "hate language" continually used by media and in social media will do more damage to local conservation efforts now and for a long time in the future.

Whereas law enforcement is part of conservation in both state-owned and private protected areas, it can never work on its own.

Opinion

How SADC Embraces the Active Participation of Local Communities in Nature Conservation

By Dr. Wibke Thies

Dr. Wibke Thies is the SADC Transboundary Use and Protection of Natural Resources programme coordinator

Ten years ago, the 5th World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa, left a legacy. For the first time it was recognised that we could not protect nature if the people living in and around protected areas were excluded. Excluded from the land, excluded from the basis of their livelihood, and excluded from deciding how natural resources are managed.

This new thinking has led to profound changes in the way nature conservation is conducted throughout the world today.

Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) are also a relatively new concept in the conservation arena. They were founded on the realisation that natural resources that straddle international boundaries are a shared asset.

They have the potential to conserve biodiversity and at the same time contribute to the welfare and socio-economic development of rural communities.

No other region in the world has taken up the TFCA concept as seriously as the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The 15-member countries of SADC have made TFCAs their vehicle to not only protect jointly invaluable ecosystems between two or more countries, but to also provide welfare — through joint tourism — to areas and communities that otherwise would not have a chance to participate in the economic development of a country.

SADC TFCAs embrace the active participation and involvement of local communities, in the planning and decision-making processes of natural resources management, who must realise a direct and equitable benefit from the sustainable utilisation of these resources.

And last, but not least, TFCAs and their joint management are also a good opportunity for neighbouring countries to establish peace and security in the region by providing a good ground for establishing trust by learning how to communicate and cooperate across borders.

All this fosters regional integration, which is the principle of SADC's existence. Germany, an enthusiastic follower of the principle of regional integration, helps SADC in its efforts by supporting the establishment and management of TFCAs through technical and financial cooperation.

Currently there are 18 existing and potential TFCAs in both terrestrial and marine environments in the SADC region.

These are not necessarily between SADC member states only but may also involve partnerships with non-SADC member states.

In general, SADC TFCAs are not necessarily set up between adjoining, already-existing protected areas.

They normally comprise so-called multiple resource use areas. This means that TFCAs can be established on communal land, private land, and different kinds of protected areas such as nature reserves, hunting areas, national parks and others.

This shows that people are an important factor in SADC TFCAs. It is because SADC member states acknowledge that the primary beneficiaries of TFCAs must be the local communities living in and around the TFCAs and as such there must be a direct and equitable benefit flow to these communities.

Nevertheless, many people living in TFCAs still see the establishment of a TFCA as a threat to their well-being. They still remember that not too long ago nature protection normally meant they had to give up their land and cultural practices of using the natural resources for food, medicine and building materials.

And more often than not communities are still not consulted when decisions are made about the use of the natural resources they depend on. More often than not they are still left alone with the question about how to access the benefits they were promised with the establishment of a TFCA.

However, SADC is on a good path. Member states have set up the regional TFCA Programme, which centres around improving the benefits that communities should get from TFCAs.

The German Development Cooperation, through its implementing agency GIZ, supports member countries implementing the TFCA Programme with various pilot projects. A TFCA Network was established with support from GIZ to exchange and disseminate good practices. Regional guidelines on the establishment and management of TFCAs in the SADC region outline how communities are involved in decision making and benefit sharing.

Another set of regional guidelines on concessions also focuses on the participation of local communities in the establishment of cross-border tourism products.



No other region in the world has taken up the TFCA concept as seriously as SADC.
Credit: Dr. Wibke Thies

But there is still a lot to be done. But the 6th World Parks Congress being held in Sydney, Australia, is now a good platform to share these SADC experiences with the rest of the world.



Events Diary

Thursday 13th November 2014, 13:00 – 14:30 (Hall 6): Opening Plenary – **Afternoon session Part 1, with the Hon. Minister Uahekua Herunga from Namibia.**

Friday 14th November 2014, 08:30 – 10:30 (Amphitheatre): **Opening Parallel Plenary PLANET, with the Hon. Minister Edna Molewa from South Africa.**

Friday 14th November 2014, 08:30 – 10:30 (Hall 6): **Opening Parallel Plenary PARKS, with Mr. Greg Carr, philanthropist and active funder of the Gorongosa National Park (Mozambique).**