

Are Community Based Natural Resource Management programs influencing attitudinal changes towards wildlife and the National Parks in Namibia and Botswana?

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Studies on attitudes and behavioral change as a result of Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) programs have seldom been documented. Existing reports show that the local people's attitudes are negative towards wildlife and the national parks. However, during a three month period working with the Conservancy in the Caprivi Strip in Namibia during 2007 and in Botswana in 2008, it has become clear that the people are very knowledgeable about the importance of conserving the natural resources. They have also professed favorable attitudes towards natural resources, wildlife and the national parks. It is important to understand people's attitude towards wildlife, natural resources and national parks because protected areas are continually being designated around the world under the umbrella of strict protectionism. Hence, local communities are not stakeholders in the process nor the management of such entities. Understanding the role that natives or local communities play in the management of these areas has not been given enough attention. Previous studies indicate that conflict among local people and protected areas management is evident. This conflict is a growing concern which has the potential to hinder both the objectives and the purposes of protected areas. Thus, this research investigates whether CBNRM programs are influencing attitudes and behavioral changes towards wildlife in the study region to try to understand how such programs can be used elsewhere.

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