Food security and sustainable livelihoods: Understanding Marine Protected Area impacts in the Tsitsikamma

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Fishing was closed to the local community residing next to the Tsitsikamma National Park when it was declared a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in 2000. Local fishers were barred from harvesting marine resources despite historically having had access to the ocean and coastal resources. In a study by Faasen (2006) the legislation change in 2000 under the Marine Living Resource Act 18 of 1998 was shown to affect not only food security for the indigenous fishers but also their cultural identity and heritage. This research investigated how limiting access to the coast has led to food insecurity and negatively impacted on the livelihoods of the fishers and their families bordering the Tsitsikamma National Park in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Census data from 1996, 2001 and 2011, local household surveys conducted within the communities and maps will be used to highlight changes in socio-economic and employment conditions of the local, indigenous population. Fishing activities before and after the implementation of the MPA were investigated through the triangulation of qualitative interviews, focus groups and quantitative questionnaires to determine how food security and subsequently livelihoods have been affected by conservation interventions. Social aspects, culture and heritage that fishers felt they were deprived of (Faasen, 2006) and criminalized against (Isaacs, 2006, 2011; Sunde & Isaacs, 2008) was reviewed and linked to exclusion through the MPA. Finally, the effect of loss of access to a resource that historically was theirs was examined, with attention given to how this exclusion from the MPA affected their self-perception and quality of life.