

Landmines and conservation in Southern Africa: Peace parks in the aftermath of armed conflict

Clara Bocchino*

Peace parks are a modern means of conflict resolution through nature conservation. The Great Limpopo Peace Park (GLPP), which spans South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, was established to bring new hope to an area that is infamous for racial and political divisions, civil war and widespread poverty. This paper discusses the impact of international laws governing landmines, the current priority choices of the countries involved, and the situation in the two mine-affected countries: Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Minefields and politics are interrelated, and have an impact at local, national and international level. Using the GLPP as a case study, the article argues that although they have been presented as excellent examples of integrated biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development in developing countries, peace parks will not fulfil their main objective of promoting an image of peace in the aftermath of conflict without addressing landmine contamination.

* Clara Bocchino is a PhD candidate at the University of Bologna, Italy.

Introduction

I know of no political movement, no philosophy, no ideology, which does not agree with the peace parks concept as we see it going into fruition today.

It is a concept that can be embraced by all. In a world beset by conflict and division, peace is one of the cornerstones of the future. Peace parks are building blocks in this process, not only in our region, but potentially in the entire world.

Nelson Mandela

According to van Amerom and Büscher (2005), transfrontier conservation areas, or 'peace parks' as they are popularly called, have been identified as key instruments to promote the African Renaissance dream, and are increasingly advocated and justified on this basis.

Five years after the groundbreaking meeting between the governments of Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, the treaty for the establishment of the Great Limpopo Peace Park/Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLPP/TFCA) was signed in 2002.

Through a series of land corridors, the GLPP links Mozambique's Limpopo National Park and South Africa's Kruger National Park to Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park. According to the treaty, a joint monitoring board and a ministerial committee will manage the GLPP. The total surface area of the peace park will be approximately 35 000 km².

Although the Southern African region has a history of over thirty years of conflict, the creation of an ad hoc organisation for the joint management of the peace park has contributed to the promotion of an image of unprecedented ecological and humanitarian success. However, many controversial issues arising from this process have been discussed both in academic and policy-driven literature. These issues include governance (Duffy 2001 and 2005), politics (Wolmer 2003 and Dzingirai 2004), and the impact on local populations (Refugee Research Programme 2002; Anderson & Pariela 2005).

Landmine contamination has only recently been addressed by scholars (Unruh et al 2003; Unruh 2001; Gruhn 1996), although without specific reference to the GLPP.

International conventions on landmines: A legal framework

Actions to address international concern over the legacy of the use of anti-tank/vehicle mines and anti-personnel mines in conflicts are relatively recent, dating to the late 1970s

and early 1980s. Today, emplaced mines affect some 85 states and other areas. In Africa, these include Angola, Burundi, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Somaliland.

The United Nations, as the only international body encompassing all aspects of human life from war to culture and development, was one of the first institutions to take an interest in the lack of regulation over the use of such devices and other conventional weapons, whose impacts endure long after wars have ended and mostly affect civilians. In 1980, after protracted negotiations, UN member states agreed to a Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects (UNCCW).

The agreement, which opened for signature in 1981 and entered into force in 1983, contains a protocol on mines, booby-traps and similar devices (Protocol II). In 1996, Protocol II was amended to deal with the ever-increasing indiscriminate use of landmines and in particular as a response to surgeons of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), who were confronted with large numbers of traumatic amputations resulting from blast anti-personnel mines (Maslen 2004). Despite the amendments, UNCCW Protocol II has been considered a soft agreement and insufficient to reduce the level of civilian landmine casualties. This encouraged non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and some governments to call for a special treaty banning landmines. As such, it has been largely superseded as a point of reference by the more recent (1997) Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, referred to by the African Union as the APM Ban Convention.

The APM Ban Convention was opened for signature on 3 December 1997 and entered into force on 1 March 1999, becoming binding international law. This is believed to be the fastest entry-into-force of any major multilateral treaty. As of February 2007, a total of 153 countries had signed the treaty, and two more had signed, but not ratified, constituting well over three-quarters of the world's nations (Mine Action Canada 2006). Notable non-signatories include the US, China and the Russian Federation, as well as Finland, Israel, and the countries in the Arabian peninsula. Some non-signatory countries, however, are members of the UNCCW. Despite the process being independent of the UN, the convention is deposited with the UN Secretary-General, who is responsible for sending fact-finding missions to countries alleged to be in breach of the agreement or requiring assistance. Hence it seems very unlikely that non-signatory countries would choose not to adhere to its provisions on the grounds of its illegitimacy or contrast with the UN principles and the UNCCW. Rather, it seems more plausible that the conditions set by the convention, although only covering anti-personnel mines (APM), are more

compelling than those in the UNCCW, as is clear from its very first article, which states that each state party undertakes to never, under any circumstances:

- Use anti-personnel mines
- Develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, anti-personnel mines
- Assist, encourage or induce, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a state party under the convention

In addition, each state party undertakes to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in accordance with the provisions of the convention (ICBL 2004a).

Protocol II of the UNCCW bans only non-detectable APMs and prohibits the intentional use of mines against civilians. It stipulates that reliable records of minefields must be maintained and that all efforts must be taken after the end of hostilities to clear minefields. While the APM Ban Convention specifically states in article 2 that only mines designed to be detonated by contact with a person are the object of the treaty, the UNCCW makes provision, albeit with restrictions, for the use of all types of mines, with the exception of anti-ship mines at sea or inland watercourses (UN 1996). The UNCCW clearly states that the protocol applies only to situations of armed conflict, whether intrastate or interstate, thus excluding rioting and internal sporadic turmoil (UN 1996). In the same vein, signatory states are allowed to use such weapons ‘to maintain or re-establish law and order in the State or to defend the national unity and territorial integrity of the State’ (UN 1996). Since the peripheral areas of states are those where national unity is more often questioned, this permission has the potential to place border areas in immense danger. Paradoxically, article 1(4) invalidates the whole protocol in its provision to diminish the number of deaths and casualties in conflict and post-conflict in the name of state sovereignty. However, article 1(5) adds that the protocol ‘shall not be invoked as a justification for intervening ... in the armed conflict or in the internal or external affairs of the High Contracting Party’ (UN 1996). If respected, this clause simply implies that the UN has not made any provision other than punitive sanctions for breaches to the agreement, addressing ‘persons who ... wilfully kill or cause serious injury to civilians’ (UN 1996).

In contrast, the APM Ban Convention is explicitly humanitarian in approach. It is couched in terms of introducing measures to alleviate suffering on an individual level. This is made clear in the first preambular paragraph, which is a declaration of its determination to stop the killing and maiming of civilians by APMs. The convention, while dealing only with anti-personnel mines, thus presents a constructive solution to a problem that has deeply affected people in developing countries, leaving them with

physical and psychological damage, as well as reduced access to resources. It takes a more holistic approach, concerning itself not only with a total ban on the manufacture, use and stockpiling, but with psycho-physical support for victims, survivors and their families (article 6), and sets deadlines for the clearance of minefields (ICBL 2004a). In this sense, it is closer to field experiences than the UNCCW, thus transferring priority targets from military to socio-economic development (Hasselberg 2003).

The GLPP spans South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. South Africa is not affected by mines, but Mozambique and Zimbabwe are. All three signed the APM Ban Convention on 3 December 1997. Mozambique ratified it on 25 August 1998, South Africa on 26 June 1998 and Zimbabwe on 18 June 1998. For all three, it thus became binding international law on 1 March 1999.

Under article 5 of the convention, both Mozambique and Zimbabwe are required to destroy all antipersonnel mines in mined areas under their jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but no later than 1 March 2009.

Landmine contamination in Mozambique and Zimbabwe: A history of conflicts

The countries that form the GLPP were historically involved in domestic and international conflicts. The separatist regimes enforced by local white governments in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe left a social legacy that these countries are still struggling to resolve internally for the benefit of all communities. The most relevant difference between Mozambique and Zimbabwe is that in Mozambique mines were laid in response to neighbours' military pressure, whereas in Zimbabwe they were laid by the national government, in the context of civil independence warfare. Virtually all parties laid mines before and after the independence of Mozambique from Portugal in 1975. The Portuguese military used mines to protect their strategically important assets in the 1960s. The *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Mozambique Liberation Front, Frelimo), having obtained independence, began to support the liberation movements in neighbouring Rhodesia against Ian Smith's regime. To prevent weapons, goods and rebels from entering the country from the south-east border, the Rhodesian army laid mines on the strip of land that stretches from Crook's Corner to the Gonarezhou National Park, an area known as Sengwe Communal Land.

When President Samora Machel closed the common border with Rhodesia in March 1976, thus imposing UN sanctions, Rhodesia retaliated by forming the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance, Renamo), a task force designed to hamper Mozambican development through guerrilla warfare (Minter, 1998). On the independence of Zimbabwe in 1981, Renamo was taken over by South

Africa with the cooperation of the CIA and other right-wing politicians and tycoons (Hanlon 1991 and Minter 1998) and socio-economic destabilisation became its only target (Finnegan 1992; Hall & Young 1997; Minter 1998). If mines in Zimbabwe are the legacy of the Rhodesian army only, in Mozambique both parties involved in the civil war laid most of the landmines, although with different strategies. Frelimo, the ruling party, was more interested in protecting the Cahora Bassa hydroelectric scheme, the South African and Malawian borders, the main cities, and other targets important for the economy of the country (Vines 1994).

Renamo had very different aims that also changed through time. The South African-Renamo targets were the regional transport routes linking the hinterland to the Indian Ocean (Vines 1994) and social infrastructure buildings such as schools and clinics, as well as agricultural land. However, after 1985, the movement became more ideologically independent of South Africa and began to target civilians and the army by mining roads and airfields, which impeded food and weapons supplies (Unruh et al 2003).

The lack of maps detailing minefields and the exact location of the landmines has greatly impaired efforts at effective mine clearance in these areas.

The Great Limpopo TFP: Priority setting and landmine contamination

The year 1995 was very important for the two countries that were still involved in domestic conflicts. The South African apartheid regime came to an end, and Mozambique saw the conclusion of a civil war that had lasted for over a decade, had starved its population, and had seriously depleted its natural resources. The then president of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Dr Anton Rupert began to discuss with the Mozambican president, Joaquim Chissano, the possibility of creating a conservation area across their common border in order to free the growing elephant population from the Kruger National Park (KNP) into the Coutada 16 hunting reserve, where they had been depleted by poaching for food during the war. On 1 February 1997, the Peace Park Foundation (PPF) was founded under the new WWF president, Dr John Hanks, thus laying the foundations for the creation of the Gaza-Kruger-Gonarezhou Peace Park, encompassing Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, and covering the supposed old migratory route of large mammals. Together with the WWF, other international organisations decided to take part in the innovative project of transfrontier conservation in an area of the world whose natural capital is very rich and beautiful. The World Conservation Union's Regional Office for Southern Africa (IUCN/ROSA) provided its knowledge, while the World Bank funded the projects through its Global Environmental Facility (Peace Parks Foundation 2002). Enlightened as it was, however, the idea was not so groundbreaking. Gomes de Sousa, a Mozambican ecologist, had proposed adjoining

Kruger with bordering areas in Mozambique for ecosystem management in 1938 (GLTP 2003b), and the juxtaposition of national parks with country borders in Southern Africa had been discussed two years earlier by Griffiths. He pointed out that 76 of the 200 national parks of Africa at the time were located on international borders, and 35 of 109 African boundaries had a national park on either or both sides (Griffiths 1995).

The number of national parks on the continent had increased with greater political stability and international interest. Rupert's concept of creating a conservation area that spanned the whole of the African continent – by connecting existing national parks with ecological corridors – appeared feasible. The idea, posited by Moore (only two years after Griffiths's publication) of a new 'Cape to Cairo' (Moore 1997) colonialism does not seem so absurd. Other researchers expanded the concept in terms of governance (Duffy 2001; Nhantumbo & Magane 2004) and political ecology (Wolmer 2003).

The ecological justification of the project has always been brought forward as the most urgent aim of transfrontier conservation in the area. However, with time, other priorities were introduced that provided a clearer picture of the aims of the GLTCA. In line with publications on Transboundary Natural Resources Management and Transboundary Protected Areas of that period (Cumming 1999), the priorities determined by the PPF for the establishment of the then GLTF Peace Park can be summarised as follows:

- To protect biodiversity, through ecosystem management
- To re-establish migratory routes for animals, lost to electric fencing, famine and conflicts
- To promote the image of a peaceful region, in the aftermath of segregation and wars
- To contribute to the socio-economic development of neighbouring local communities

All four objectives are related indirectly to landmine contamination in so far as awareness of their location and their clearance are concerned. Where local biodiversity is concerned, first, it is clear that the presence of minefields in ecological corridors or in single parks poses a serious problem to wildlife movement and access to water points. Most of the landmines are located along the Zimbabwe–Mozambique border, thus impairing the proposed Sengwe ecological corridor between Kruger and Gonarezhou and access to the Limpopo River. Although the parties were fully aware of the presence of landmines in Sengwe, as late as December 2001 the area was not listed as a priority for clearance. GTZ used a framework known as Community Mine Awareness Development (CMAD) 'for those communities who are deemed low priority for mine action support' (Weyl 1999) in the area as part of the WB/GEF Transfrontier Conservation Project. Similarly, being concerned with local socio-economic development, mine contamination should

be addressed as the first step towards allowing people access to resources (Gruhn 1996) and halting the loss of domestic livestock, as well as local wildlife (Roberts & Stewart 1999; Weyl 1999). This would promote a real message of peace among local communities by eradicating the psychological damage provoked by the presence of minefields, in terms of lack of safety and a constant reminder of past conflicts (Gruhn 1996; Hasselber 2003), as well as the current reticence towards any conservation programme in interstitial areas.

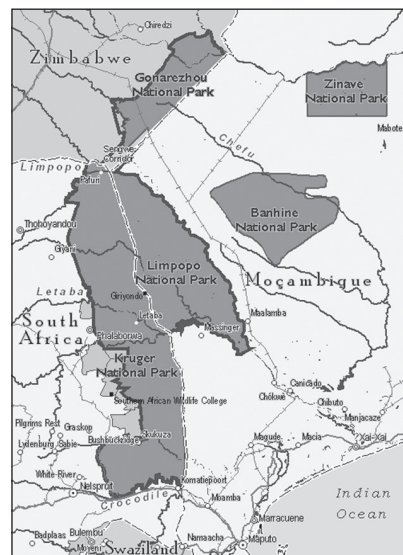
All three countries involved in the creation of the GLPP participated in the APM Ban Convention from the beginning of the process. However, Mozambique still needs to develop relevant national legislation (National Demining Institute 2004). Although South Africa is not affected by mines and unexploded ordinance (UXO) in terms of the SADC Landmine Report (Grobbelaar 2002), South Africa and Zimbabwe (ICBLc 2004) have integrated the provisions of the treaty into their national legislation. Nonetheless, as far as the peace park is concerned, the problem of mine-contaminated land did not appear as a priority in the 2002 Treaty on the Establishment of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP 2004). In addition, only two references to minefields have been found: the first in a divulgative paper, stating that:

The Zimbabwe Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management and the Joint Management Board will establish working relationships with the parties involved in clearing mines in the Sengwe corridor. Thereafter, the department will prioritize the areas to be cleared and participate in the planning to reoccupy the cleared areas (GLTP 2003a:9).

The second is included in an unpublished funding application for Nepad, where minefield clearance in Sengwe is identified as a priority for the creation of the ecological corridor and the integration of the Gonarezhou National Park in the TFP (UACT 2004:20).

In the context of the TFCA, the Sengwe corridor has indirectly become a priority area because of two major events: the creation of the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique, thus clearing the way for the union of three existing national parks; and the completion of mine contamination surveys in Mozambique and the clearing of their priority areas for the development of the transfrontier project. Zimbabwe appears to be the only country

Figure 1 *The Great Limpopo Peace Park and its area of influence*



that still has a mine contamination problem in the context of the peace park. However, in the second half of 2006, de-mining began in Sengwe with the aim of clearing the corridor by the year-end. Unfortunately, it appears that this work is not being publicised, despite the obvious benefits to the local population in the border area.

Landmines and politics in Zimbabwe and Mozambique

Although to some extent they have a shared recent history and foresee a common future in conservation and development, Zimbabwe and Mozambique are currently experiencing different political and economical situations. Despite their commitment to, and implementation of, the APM Ban Convention in the context of the GLPP, there are considerable differences for political, rather than ecological reasons.

On the one hand, with the General Peace Agreement in Rome, Mozambique entered a phase of political stability and development. On the other hand, Zimbabwe, while stable for a relatively long period, has recently been affected by political turmoil evidenced in the problems experienced in the 2002 and 2004 elections, the food and fuel shortages and the land reforms, involving first the white farmer community and recently destitute and underprivileged people in shanty towns in the suburbs of Harare.

Mozambique has proven through its policies during and after the civil war that socio-economic development is the main priority for its government, thus facilitating the arrival of international organisations, donors and other sources of funding into the country. The creation of the LNP from the ashes of the Coutada 16 hunting reserve has accelerated the process of unification with the KNP, thus providing unique opportunities for private development in the surrounding areas, facilitated by the 1997 amendment to the law on land use and exploitation. Furthermore, until 2006, Mozambique was responsible for the management of the GLPP and TFCA as a coordinating party. By completing the landmine contamination surveys in the areas included in the TFCA, as well as clearing potential residues, it has proven itself fully appreciative of the park project not only as a metaphor for newly found peace, but also as a unique opportunity to re-stock wildlife lost to landmines and consumption during the famines; to include the country in international tourism routes, exemplified by the 'bush-to-beach' programme; and to improve border security, because informal migration between the countries is ongoing. These accomplishments coincide with South African priorities in terms of relocating excess wildlife, in particular elephants, to maintain the ecological balance of the KNP; facilitating access to Mozambican beaches for national tourists while ensuring a market for the new Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport; and decreasing the number of illegal workers that regularly try to reach South Africa from Zimbabwe and Mozambique through the KNP.

The proactive attitude shown by Mozambique – together with governmental awareness that minefields pose a serious threat to economic development, which is why mine action was included in the 2006 Poverty Reduction Strategy (*Plano de Acção de Redução da Pobreza Absoluta*, PARPA II) (ICBL 2004b) – has led to the presence and cooperation of many donors, NGOs and commercial companies involved in mine action. According to the ICBL (International Campaign to Ban Landmines) report, currently 18 donors, five NGO operators and five commercial operators are involved in de-mining in the ten provinces that are affected by landmine contamination (ICBL 2004b). Although the Gaza province, in particular the TFCA zones, is considered one of the least affected (ICBL 2004b; NDI 2004; Vines 1994) Gruhn (1996:690) points out that ‘Gaza, Manica, Maputo and Sofala [alone] contain[ed] 75 per cent of the deployed mines’. The three provinces represent part of the TFCA and most of the areas concerned with the ‘bush-to-beach’ programme.

In the past two years, however, all the mines affecting the park and its immediate proximity have been surveyed and UXOs were the only residues to be found and removed.

Zimbabwe is in a less positive situation than Mozambique. This is mainly due to political decisions by President Robert Mugabe and his government over farm ownership and international supervision during elections. Although the country has always complied with the provisions of the convention regarding surveying and clearing of priority areas, in the last two years government politics have directly impacted on landmine issues, as witnessed by the 2004 ICBL country report (ICBL 2006a) as well as several newspaper articles. What emerges is a peculiar situation that seems to have reached an impasse.

First, most mines were planted by the Rhodesian army along movement corridors used by the two national liberation parties (UNMAS 2000). They are therefore located mainly along the border areas with Zambia and Mozambique. Second, tourism having been a major income generator in the country and contributing significantly to its national economy alongside extensive farming, Victoria Falls, with a 220 km mined area, was prioritised as the first area for landmine removal (UNMAS 2000). By the end of 2003, this area should have been cleared as well as the 1 km strip of land around Kariba Power Station and the 50 km strip between Stapleford Forest and Mutare (ICBLc 2004). However, the 2006 country report states that Victoria

Figure 2 Map showing minefields in Zimbabwe



Falls was completed only in May 2005, and by May 2006 only half of the surveyed minefield had been cleared (ICBL 2006b). The area known as Sengwe Communal Land, which stretches from Malvernia (Sango) to Crook's Corner, was not targeted as a priority, although it was reported to be badly affected by landmine contamination, and despite having been classified by UNMAS as the third in size (305 000 m²) and the fourth in length (61 km) (UNMAS 2000), with an estimated 247 600 anti-personnel landmines (ICBL 2004c). In April 2006, after a field visit to this area at the end of 2005, Zimac (the Zimbabwe Mine Action Centre) reported that a small parallel minefield had been discovered, raising estimates of the contaminated area from 50 to 70 km.

In addition, Sengwe is a very socially sensitive area. Weyl (1999) notes that disturbance to the local population began with their forced relocation as a result of the need to plant landmines, which would explain why the community knows exactly where the unsafe areas are (personal observation, 2001 and 2006), thus causing a total loss of about 24 159 ha of agricultural land and 12 000 ha of traditional grazing area. When Weyl's paper was published, over 24 000 people were directly affected by landmines, including the obstruction of traditional cross-border linkages with Mozambique (Weyl 1999). The impact of landmine contamination in the area on local livelihoods is severe, since the minefields are located along the Limpopo, where the most fertile land lies, and along the border with Mozambique, where informal commercial activities are carried out and social relations are being maintained. Within the space of one year, however, and probably because of international pressure on the opening of the peace park, Zimac was due to begin demining in Sengwe in May 2006, after a ten-day campaign in February on mine risk education, involving almost 2 000 people in eleven sessions (ICBL 2006b). These sessions were meant to continue during demining, which, according to personal observation, did not start until late July 2006.

Some authors have mentioned the disruption caused to wildlife because of the loss of traditional migratory routes (ICBL 2006b) which occurred in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, this being the rationale behind the creation of the GLTFCA. Such assumptions are debatable (Anderson 2002), because wildlife on the Mozambican side of the park was depleted for human consumption, commercial interests and personal defence by local communities and hunters, before and during the war. The subsequent erection of the electric fence to protect animals in the KNP completely blocked the little remaining movements. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, local communities in Sengwe beside the Limpopo and further north near and inside the Gonarezhou National Park exploited wildlife to increase their livelihoods and protect themselves and their crops. In recent years the application of the CITES agreement has inverted this trend, triggering a slow but natural re-stocking in some of these areas, which in turn poses safety threats to local communities.

There are key differences between the two affected countries within the peace park. The significant number of agencies and companies working on the landmines, together with

the understanding that contaminated areas hamper development and political interest in hastening the effectiveness of the Great Limpopo TFCA, have greatly contributed to solving the problem in the proximity of the park's boundaries. Owing to the current governmental situation, however, Zimbabwe has only one commercial agency for surveying, Mine-Tech, which is funded by the German Corporation GTZ (ICBL 2004c), and the clearing of priority areas is being carried out jointly with the Zimbabwean army, through ZIMAC (MAC 2004).

In 2002, the minister of the environment and tourism, F Nhema, called for US\$2 million to begin clearance in Sengwe (*Financial Gazette* 2002). Two years later, the minister of defence, Cde S Sekeramayi, quintuplicated the amount, stating that US\$10,5 million was needed 'for the demining of the landmine-infested Gaza-Kruger-Gonarezhou Transfrontier Park' (*The Herald* 2004). However, funding did not materialise and clearing had not begun. As public concerns grew over lack of funding for demining and the pulling out of donors owing to political decisions (*Zimbabwe Independent* 2005), European Union and US spokesmen have become evasive over the reason why that funding is denied (*Zimbabwe Independent* 2004), suggesting that international concern over the political situation is growing. Furthermore, since Sengwe is located in Matabeleland, also a stronghold of the opposition party, national political choices might have influenced decision making on demining. When up-to-date maps for minefields in Sengwe were sought, most of the organisations that were working in the field were reluctant to supply information, although the existence of maps was never doubted. Finally, Mine-Tech Harare claimed not to have any maps. When prompted, the spokesman replied: 'When Mine-Tech worked in this area, the surveys were limited and as far as we are aware, we do not have maps showing the minefields' (Yates 2005 – personal communication). Hence, the map (figure 2) is basic and has not been updated owing to lack of recent data. In this climate of political tension and uncertainty about the future of Zimbabwe within the international community, minefields have become sensitive issues and one is left to wonder how important a role politics plays on the safety of people and, in this case, wildlife. One year after the declaration by Mine-Tech, demining has begun in Sengwe, but this is known only from personal observation during a field visit in November 2006.

Conclusion

The Great Limpopo Peace Park/TFCA represents a major opportunity for wildlife and flora conservation that involves national governments, private companies and local people in the context of ecotourism development. This is particularly vital in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, because direct and indirect tourism activities could become feasible solutions for socio-economic development.

However, major physical and virtual constraints are hindering this process, delaying opportunities for success. Landmine contamination is doubtless one such constraint.

The interest of international agencies such as the UN, with dedicated sections such as UNMAS, and humanitarian demining NGOs, alongside the commitment of national governments, has contributed to creating binding agreements that ban or restrict mine use and promote clearance as a humanitarian, social and, in some cases, ecological priority. In this context the presence of minefields in the TFCA, as the broader influence zone of the GLTFP, should be considered a priority for the implementation of the peace park as posited by the IUCN (Sandwith et al 2001) on a worldwide scale and the PPF in the regional scale of Southern Africa.

Having considered the paradigm shift towards humanitarian mine action and the approach of the PPF with the countries involved, as well as the recent history linking Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, it is extremely unproductive to address landmine contamination as an ecological process related only to the Sengwe corridor. The holistic approach enforced by the APM Ban Convention and GTZ should be taken more into account for the long-term psychological and skill-developing effects it will entail. By involving the local communities in surveys and in clearance according to the International Humanitarian Demining Development (Pearce 1999), the people would feel confident in the process and hence in its context (the peace park), which would gradually dispel the memories of past conflicts and forced relocation. This would also improve cooperation with the park authorities.

When one considers the commitment of all three parties to the APM Ban Convention, it seems that a joint effort should have been promoted to introduce humanitarian demining among the top priorities of the peace park, in order to clear the Sengwe Corridor for the benefit of local communities, as well as wildlife (Buenker 2000) and future tourists. This attitude would have facilitated the resolution the second constraint: the impact of the current situation in Zimbabwe. The attitude of President Robert Mugabe and his government towards international and regional organisations for development, and the events of the past five years, have led to general mistrust towards the country. Now that Zimbabwe is in charge of coordination of the GLTFP, which was handed over by Mozambique, the country is facing criticism from the national press for lagging behind on its financial and operational commitments to the TFCA project. As early as 2005, an article in the *Zimbabwe Independent* stated that 'donors are withholding funds for the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park until Zimbabwe restores the rule of law [although] huge amounts of money have started pouring into South Africa and Mozambique for the development of infrastructure agreed when the trans-frontier park agreement was signed' (*Zimbabwe Independent* 2005).

Despite this climate of uncertainty, however, and against all odds, the demining of the Sengwe Communal Land is about to be completed, although humanitarian procedures have been limited to mine risk education, and the older military tradition of secretive missions has prevailed.

Solutions to landmine contamination and the enforcement of the idea of a Transfrontier Peace Park should rely more on socially sustainable methods. For instance, because Mozambique is receiving funding from international donors, including the World Bank with a dedicated five-year project, and has professional national demining teams in other parts of Africa and Europe, a joint team of Zimbabweans and Mozambicans should have conducted the demining. This would have shown real cooperation and integration between the two countries, while maintaining a high standard of professionalism. Completion might have taken longer, but would have been more likely to ensure future cooperation between the park and its communities.

By silently demining areas that were originally contaminated to prevent Mozambican access to Zimbabwe and to support liberation movements against the apartheid regime, the management of the parks has not conveyed the message of unity and cooperation that should characterise the Great Limpopo Peace Park as the nucleus of a broader east-west conservation area that will develop from Namibia to Mozambique and Tanzania. Rather it has proven that the legacies of the past die hard and will haunt all positive projects for many years to come.

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