



AFRA

ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL ADVANCEMENT

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REMOVALS, COMPENSATION AND THE KOSI BAY NATURE RESERVE

The Kosi Bay Nature Reserve was established in 1988 to protect a beautiful, environmentally sensitive and ecologically varied region in northern KwaZulu. It includes the Kosi Lake system with its delicate swamp forests. But the area is also home to hundreds of Thonga and Zulu speakers whose forbears have fished and farmed there for over a thousand years.

The KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources (the Bureau), which proclaimed the Reserve, has a reputation as a vigorous conservation body. At present it is planning a great u-shaped Maputaland Nature Reserve, which would stretch from the Swaziland border to the coast and southwards to Lake Sodwana.

But what will happen to the thousands of people who have lived for generations in those areas of Maputaland targetted as nature and game reserves?

Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi of KwaZulu said in November 1989:

'The old notion that conservation can only be successful if people are removed from the area concerned must be abandoned. We in KwaZulu are quite determined that we will not conserve nature in the human vacuums created at the cost of great misery.' [N.Mercury 27.11.89]

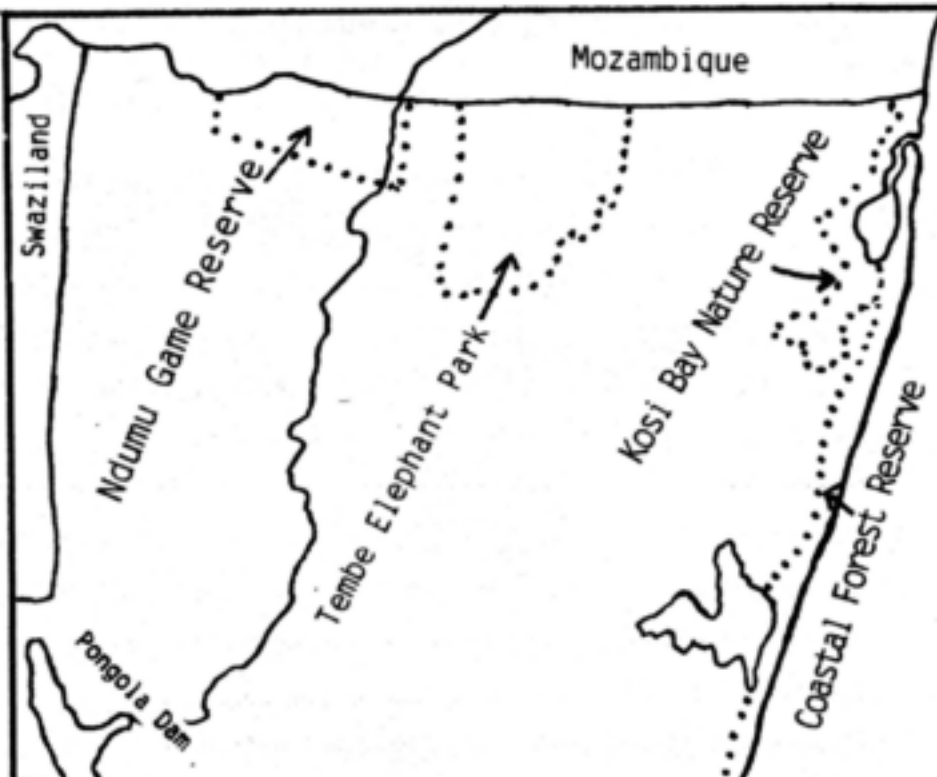
Unfortunately, such claims are not borne out by the experience of all the people of Kosi Bay. Mr R.M. of KwaZibi, whose homestead lies inside the Kosi Bay

Nature Reserve boundary, has claimed that in 1988 Bureau officials told a meeting that they were going to come and count the homes and that thereafter the residents would have to move:

'As far as we are concerned the Bureau is more concerned with the animals than about the people and as a result we are dying. So we are not prepared to move.'

[N.Witness, 27.6.89]

Such perceptions have generated great hostility towards the Bureau. The danger is that these negative feelings may eventually be focussed on conservation itself, and thus threaten the long-term future of conservation in KwaZulu. AFRA does not wish to see this happen.



SKETCH MAP OF INGWAUVUMA SHOWING MAJOR RESERVES

REMOVALS & COMPENSATION: KOSI BAY NATURE RESERVE

Evidence of people being threatened with removal

The claim by the Chief Minister of KwaZulu that people will not be moved to create reserves, is supported by an earlier document, issued by the Bureau of Natural Resources (the Bureau) in November 1988. The Bureau claimed that there were 158 homesteads affected by the proclamation of the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve, but said that **'No pressure to move is to be placed on people living within the proclaimed boundary.'**

But this assurance was then followed by the curious phrase: **'When the affected people themselves indicate that they have negotiated an alternative site through the Tribal Authority, they will in addition to their being paid compensation, be provided with transport to the new site for themselves and their possessions.'**

One wonders under what circumstances 'the affected people' (probably numbering hundreds) will voluntarily negotiate a move from their own land. Rumours that they will be forced to move at some unspecified date will certainly pressurise people to relocate themselves so as to avoid the uncertainty, but this is hardly voluntary removal.

In fact, there are a number of reports by local people that they have been told to move outside the boundaries, and cultivation in gardens which now lie inside the Reserve has been banned. People have complained about their crops being uprooted by Bureau officials, and 5 local farmers were prosecuted in 1988 for cutting down the fence - a charge they denied. All charges were later withdrawn by the Bureau, but their action soured relations with the local community.

The 11.11.88 official minutes of the Compensation Committee meeting (which assesses money compensation for those affected) report that the Director of the Bureau said that **'all the people concerned should be told that they are to move, but be given one to one and a half years.'**

At a meeting in January 1989 at KwaZibi, between the Senior Magistrate and the people, the residents were apparently told that they had 18 months to move.

Thus Bureau policy on removing people from the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve is not in doubt, although the time

sequence for the removals appears to be flexible probably due to administrative problems involving compensation.

The Coastal Forest Reserve

This Reserve was proclaimed in 1952 and lies adjacent to the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve. The fears are that these two Reserves will be combined into one. The implications of this are that the people who are still living in the 8 coastal districts of the Coastal Forest Reserve (which include the Kosi Bay estuary, Nkovukeni, Madipha and Malangeni), and which may number over 1500 persons, are also to be moved.

A woman who lives inside the Coastal Forest Reserve said in June 1989: **'No one has told us to move yet, but we know; we feel it. They are going to tell us to move.'** [N.Witness 27.6.89]

Response of local people to the threat of removal and the promise of compensation

A local farmer said in March 1989:

'We don't want compensation, we want land. Why must we be taken out of the land we have been living in? We don't just go around cutting down trees for nothing' [S.Tribune 26.3.89]

At a meeting of KwaZibi residents on 8.6.89, where a decision was made to fight removals, Mr R.M. said:

'How will we live? Once we lose our homes and our fields, where can we collect firewood, water and graze our cattle?' [N.Witness 27.6.89]

Mr C.T. of KwaMazambane:

'We do not wish to move. If the KwaZulu government forces us to move, they must find us a place that satisfies us and they must build us homes.' [Afra files 27.10.89]



The 8 foot game fence that has been erected round the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve
Photo: John Woodroof, Sunday Tribune

There are also signs of a political backlash in the Ingwavuma region: in August 1989 12 informal leaders publicly denounced KwaZulu's conservation policies and threatened secession from the KwaZulu Tribal Authority. In November the local people formed an organisation (called Isididi) to protest about the dispossession of people from their traditional lands as a result of the creation of the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve.

Dependence on the land

The Kosi Lake region has infertile soils and low rainfall. Agricultural productivity is low. The local people are extremely poor and depend for survival on a cash income, largely through migrant labour. But they also depend on agriculture, fishing and natural resource harvesting as supplementary forms of production. The recent increased banana cultivation in the swamp forests of the Kosi Lakes region for instance is probably a response to deepening poverty as much as new market opportunities. According to the late David Webster (an anthropologist), the people have a strong desire to remain on the land to

which they are accustomed and to practise some form of rural activity.

To evict them from their land with only the promise of monetary compensation is to condemn them to greater poverty and considerable social dislocation. Massive human suffering will be caused and there will inevitably be a negative political response.

Revenue from the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve

It is KwaZulu policy to hand over 25% of revenue from tourist-related conservation to the local tribal authority. The Kosi Bay campsite generated R35 764 for the local Tribal Authority in 1987/8. This income is supposed to be used for the material benefit of the local people.

It should be recalled however that such sources of income may be earned at the expense of the indigenous people, and as Newsletter 4 (Feb. 1990) explained, the local people do not have control over the way this money is spent by the tribal authority.



AFRA staff consulting the
Kosi Bay community
in 1989

Resource harvesting

The Bureau has claimed that it will permit controlled resource harvesting from the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve by people who live adjacent to it.

This is hardly encouraging to people who have been removed from their homesteads and whose lifestyle has been disrupted. An 8 foot high game fence has been erected, and this will effectively prevent easy access to the Reserve. People will have to obtain a permit, then walk considerable distances to gain access via a gate. This will be cumbersome, and the administrative costs of this system will also be expensive.

Employment opportunities?

The Bureau has also claimed that its tourist-related policies in Maputaland will generate thousands of employment opportunities in an undeveloped region.

These claims seem to be over-inflated. As at October 1989, AFRA was informed that at Kosi Bay itself the Bureau has 48 permanent posts in the Tourism Department, and no more than 50 posts in the Management Department. There is also evidence that some of the game guards are not locally employed. Unless local people benefit more obviously from tourism, they will not respect the conservation practices of the Bureau. Poachers can be changed into game guards if they gain material advantages from conservation.

Conservation and development

It seems therefore that a large number of people are threatened with removal from the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve, and there is some doubt that they will gain materially from this move.

These practices run counter to modern conservation thinking - such as that of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). Conservation planning now links species and environmental protection with rural development. It is now recognised that indigenous people have a fund of sound traditional conservation practices which should be used in planning. If local people are consulted and directly involved in planning, it is considered possible to avoid practices which are destructive to the environment by offering the people alternative resources. Thus conservation need not lead to evictions.

At the very least, the Kosi Bay people should be offered alternative agricultural land and resources to compensate them adequately for reducing exploitation of local natural resources.

This implies a close link between conservation and agriculture. But there are enormous obstacles to such a policy being implemented by KwaZulu, which lacks extension officers, staff and material resources. There are also indications of poor co-ordination between the Bureau and the Department of Agriculture. Unless a solution can be found however, the long-term success of conservation in KwaZulu is under threat, for there will be deep-seated opposition amongst the local people.