

**QUALITATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF NATURAL DISASTERS ON TOURISM DESTINATIONS: CASE OF CYCLONE IDAI AND COVID-19 ON THE EASTERN HIGHLANDS OF ZIMBABWE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study was motivated by the observation that, after natural disasters have struck both human and tourist destinations, researchers and aid agencies focus on human beings and their domestic animals. Limited assessment of the impact of the disaster on the destination is done as a basis for recovery strategy data. The study was guided by a pragmatist philosophy to facilitate the collection of multi-variable data. Data collection was based on the Scriven (1974) Goal-free model to enable researchers to identify changes attributed to the disaster (intended or unintended). God's goals for the disaster are not known and researchers are external to the Eastern highlands tourist destinations. A sequence of desk research on the internet, newspapers and social media created the diving board. Field work visits to the Eastern highlands for observations and interviews was implemented to gather evidence. The study found that, communication by road was destroyed. Bridges were swept away and tarred roads demolished. Fish and all aquatic animals were relocated to other positions by the floods. Rivers got new shapes. Gorges and gullies emerged on the slopes of the mountains, which used to be covered by a green carpet of vegetation. Game fences, electricity pylons were destroyed. Trees were uprooted and rock boulders rolled down. Wild animals were crushed to death by the moving rocks or falling trees. Those wild animals surviving were maimed, moved to new locations or left disoriented by the shock, panic and trauma of the fateful night. Covid-19 regulations had nothing for wild animals although they are a tourist target at the Eastern highlands. Measures like the curfew and people working from home reduced game rangers' patrols. They also increased poachers chances of harvesting the cyclone injured, maimed and ill animals. National measures against the spread of Covid 19 such as, "*Prevent unprotected contact with farm and wild animals*" were not implemented to save them from poachers. The study recommends recounting of game park animals. Most are not accounted for after the disaster. Full-time ecologists can be employed to reconstruct the wildlife, aquatic life and the natural habitats of Eastern highlands tourist destinations.

**Key Words:** Tourism, wildlife, natural disaster, Cyclone Idai, Covid -19.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Contextural Analysis

Zimbabwe is one of God created tourist destinations in Africa. Its' landscapes comprising of vegetation, rock folds and balances leave geologists wondering at the creative sculpturing works of God. It boasts of being endowed with natural tourist attraction sites and monuments. In fact, Zimbabwe's wildlife is a spectacle pregnant with unique experiences of nature and its ecosystems.

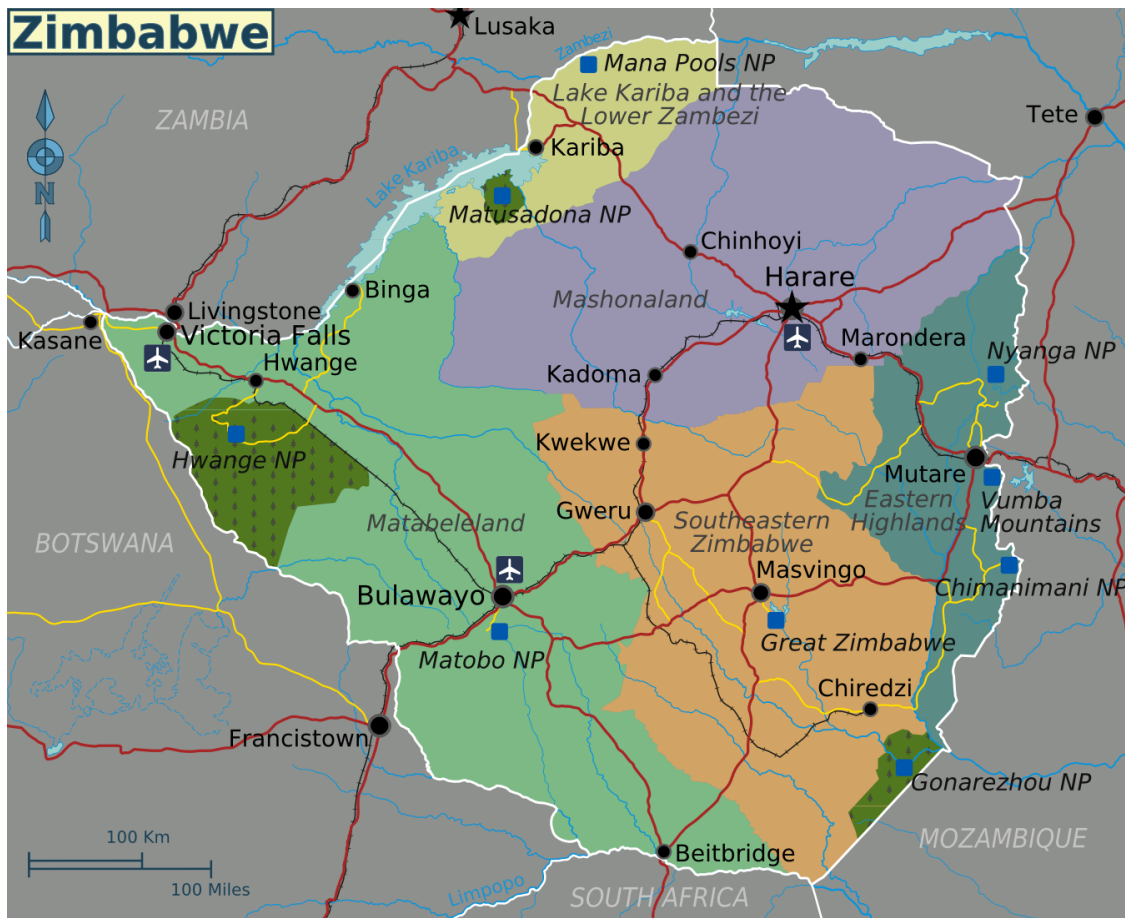
There are more than twenty tourist attraction sites in the whole country. Think of the mighty Victoria Falls and Kariba dam park which are both on the Zambezi river bordering Zimbabwe and Zambia. Hwange National park, Matopo hills and Khami ruins are in Matabeleland. Masvingo's Great Zimbabwe ruins deserve recognition for preserving Zimbabwe's ancient architecture. The Eastern Highlands is the focus of this study because of the impacts of cyclone Idai and Covid 19 on this God given colourful natural beauty which has not been fully assessed.

Although the focus of this study is on the impact of Cyclone Idai and Covid 19 in the Eastern Highlands, there is no way we can turn blind eyes to Mosioatunya (smoke that thunders) falls. In 1855, the explorer missionary, David Livingstone saw columns of spray (the rain forest) from the river when he was six miles away. Livingstone named it in honour of Queen Victoria, "The Victoria Falls."

Besides the escarpment being a world wonder, which Livingstone (1865) described as, "*A scene Gazed upon by Angels in Their Flight*," its rain forest is peculiar to Africa, specifically Zimbabwe. Gambanga (2020) suggested that, the Victoria Falls views from both angles are offered by a helicopter fly over. We assume that the tourist helicopter service providers got the insight of a helicopter fly over from the "*angles in their flight*" utterance. Brave tourists can also enjoy the plunge into the foggy river showers from the bridge which is approximately 111m above the river base. Gambanga (2020, p 3) called it, "complete adrenaline pumping sport."

We are not visiting all the tourist destinations such as, Kariba dam, Hwange national park, Great Zimbabwe ruins, Gonarezhou which are shown on the map below. These are not rich sources of the impact of Cyclone Idai and Covid 19. Our lenses are on Mutare's Eastern Highlands which satisfies the inclusion criterion for purposive sampling, being a rich source, available and accessible.

Tourist destinations in Zimbabwe.



Source of Map: Victoriafallszimbabwe.org

### The Eastern highlands

The eastern highlands are found in Manicaland province of Zimbabwe. Manica is the colonialist adulteration of Manhika (valleys) land. So the province is Manhikaland (land of vallies). The capital city of Manhikaland, Mutare is a living example of a city in the valley. Tourists start taking photographs of this city from the Christmas pass view on their stop over to Nyanga, Bvumba or Chimanimani tourist resorts.

The eastern highlands shown in light-green colour on the map, are composed of Chimanimani (southern range), Bvumba (the central range) and Nyanga (northern range) of mountains and national parks. Mount Nyangani which is the highest mountain in Zimbabwe is approximately (8504 ft or 2995m) above sea level, is in the Nyanga national park. These mountain ranges

provide a physical boarder for Zimbabwe and Mozambique.They are endowed with rolling stretches of approximately 300 km of scenic views from North to South. They are usually watered by relief rainfalls from the Indian ocean. As such, the eastern highlands is known for providing greenhillsides, mountain streams, scenic meandering drives and cool winds. In brief, the eastern highlands have a cool wet climate.

North of the Eastern highlands is the Nyanga range of mountains country side. It is so good, Cecil John Rhodes claimed it for himself. According to *Summers(1958: p37)*, in 1896, [Cecil John Rhodes](#) wrote to his agent:

*"Dear McDonald, Inyanga is much finer than you described.....Before it is all gone, buy me quickly up to 100,000 acres (400 km<sup>2</sup>), and be sure to take in the Pungwe Falls. I would like to try sheep and apple growing."*

Rhodes displaced the inhabitants and destroyed the chieftainship of the wonderful place. Namely, the Sakarombes of the Lion-Zebra (Shumba-Nyambizi totem). These were forced to find refuge in the semi-arid areas of Nyanga in Ruwangwe. Although this land is now a national park, Rhodes required it for agriculture not wildlife tourism.

The word “*displaced*” imply that, the locals were forced out of their land to benefit Cicele John Rhodes. The word “*buy me*” suggests that there was a financial transaction for the land. The financial transaction supports De Georges and Reilly’s (2009) who suggest that, the Whiteman regard the African land as a commercial commodity rather than inheritance. This study wonders who it was that received the money. Sure the Sakarombes who were evicted did not receive it. The eviction forms strong evidence of the view that, the blacks did not own any land or had the land but ownership was not supported by the legal systems of that day.

On Rhodes’s death in 1902, his Nyanga Estate was donated in trust to the Rhodesian nation. The original stables and shed were unused for years until a committee was set up under the National Trust to create a museum on this historic site. During the years 1971 to 1975 the committee, collected photographs and articles of historic interest relating to Rhodes and the development of the area from earliest times. In May, 1974 the National Trust Zimbabwe acquired from the Government, the right to occupy the building. In addition they restored the dilapidated structures and established a historical exhibition to enhance Nyanga national park as a tourist destination.

An Act to provide for the development and maintenance of Rhodes Estate by National Parks was passed in 1978, and both Rhodes Nyanga Hotel and Rhodes Nyanga Historical Exhibition (Rhodes Museum) are leased from National Parks. Rhodes museum attracts people by its rich sources of documentary evidence of Rhodes’s life.

The mountain ranges are ideal for hiking and mountaineering. They feature beautiful rivers and waterfalls, such as Mutarazifalls which drops for approximately (762m). It is the second highest waterfall in Africa. The falls can be accessed by 2WD vehicles with a high clearance.

Nyangombe falls is a popular family attraction whose flow tumbles over the rocks into a natural pool. Pungwe falls, Chipungu falls, Nyamuziwa falls and Thomborutedza falls are also residents of this park. Nyanga national park is the habitat for the leopard, blue duiker and samango monkeys, which are not found outside of the Eastern highlands. This national park is not primarily a game reserve although several species of antelope can be found there and the rich bird life makes it perfect for bird watching.

Other attraction activities include golfing, trout fishing, horse-riding, camping, hiking, walking trails, mountain biking, white-water rafting at the Pungwe river. Visitors can swim at Nyangombe pool where the clear, crisp and bilharzia-free Nyangombe river spills over a natural rock slide and can then dry off on the sandy beach away from sea waters. There is also a swimming weir in the Udu river below Udu dam. There are two largest archaeological sites: *Nyangwe and Chawomera Fort* from which tourists can learn the natural defense strategies used in Zimbabwe.

Further south of the Eastern highlands, are the mist-laden forests of the Bvumbamountain range. Bvumba mean sprinkle, hence Bvumba mountain is sprinkling mountain. Because of the wet weather conditions, the Bvumba botanical gardens are the major attraction here. The botanic garden has a wide collection of indigenous and exotic trees, shrubs and flowers. The herbarium is a rich learning environment for botanists. Bvumba botanic garden provides the starting point for quiet walks into the valleys surrounding the gardens. A wide variety of birds Butter-flies associated with the flowers housed here.

The southern most range is the Chimanimanimountains that has granite spikes which can be climbed. Chimanimani is an ideal place for serious hiking and enjoying the surreal beauty of nature with the variety of bird watching and plant life. Mt. Binga, the peak of Chimanimani is often veiled by the mist. Unadulterated raw nature keeps one captivated with its 186 bird species, evergreen forest, crystal clear river waters, mountain springs and wildlife. Several streams that are rich in trout are popular with visitors to Chimanimani, one of Africa's accessible mountain wilderness preserve.

Chimanimani's landscape abounds with rare ferns and orchids. It is home to several waterfalls including the beautiful Bridal Veil falls with a 50m plunge into a natural pool. Mount Chirinda adulterated to mount Selinda and the tropical Chirundu forest are popular for their exotic plant species including the historic 600 year old mahogany trees. Exotic plants and riverine vegetation remain undisturbed at HaroniandRusitu rivers and forest, making this area a must visit for botanists and birding enthusiasts. Much of the lower-lying ground is forested with pine trees and blue gums. In fact, forestry is the eastern highlands commercial activity.

The inaugural Game Count at Rhodes-Inyanga National Park done in November 2015, revealed the following statistics: Baboons 164, Blue duiker 1, Bushbuck 53, Bush pigs 2, Common duiker 34, Impala 9, Side-striped Jackal 3, Klipspringer 2, Kudu 222, Reed buck 56, Rock rabbit 1,

Scrub hare 1, Velvet monkeys 10, water buck 140, Wilder beast 316, Zebra 131, Cattle 227, Dogs 4.

We observed that cattle and dogs were also in the game park. Dogs are usually associated with hunting and people in the vicinity. We concluded that, the misty mountains, natural green flowers, wattle and pine trees, dense bush on the mountain slopes, the animals, birds and fish constitutes what God during creation, gazed at and said, "It is Good."

### **Human disasters**

Preserving Inyanga's beauty is proving to be a difficult task for Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA). Fire is probably the biggest threat with vast areas of grassland and dense forest being reduced to ashes from illegal burns. Poachers are slaughtering the remaining wildlife through snaring and hunting. Many of the larger antelope, such as waterbuck, wildebeest, kudu, impala, sable and eland have been shot out, or are under severe threat. Some animals have moved into Mazambique for safety. Another major problem is the unchecked growth of wattle and pine trees. These exotic trees have literally turned indigenous in the Eastern Highlands.

The fast-track land reform program implemented in 2000 brought new settlers facing the threat of hunger at the fringes of national parks. Their hunger is partly stemming from direct food aid from NGO's and partly by subsistence farming. They see over the Park's borders apparently limitless supplies of game meat. We assumed that, many of the fires are deliberately started to drive game towards poachers.

The former Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Francis Nhema (2020), explained thatveld fires are a direct cause of loss of life and property. It is also a major driver of biodiversity loss and habitat changes. A loss in biodiversity is associated with a loss of habitat and alteration of ecosystems like clean air, fresh water as well as ecological activities such as pollination. Fires also affect seed dispersal, greenhouse gas migration and decomposition of waste material.

### **Natural Disasters**

Natural disaster are God given. We accept them as and when they come. Tropical cyclones are intense storms, which form over warm tropical oceans. There are about 800-1000 tropical cyclones occurring globally in an average year. Although the tropical cyclones circulation extends over a 500-1000km area, the systems may persist for 6-12 days. They are known to rejuvenate at times, depending on environmental conditions in their paths.

Tropical cyclones develop within the 50 latitudes either side of the equator. Typically, they require the ocean surface temperatures to be equal to and greater than 270<sup>0</sup> C. The temperature allows a lot of evaporation of moisture into the atmosphere to take place. When there is a slight



disturbance in the wind regime there is severe thunderstorm development, which then becomes self-sustaining. These disturbances are carried in the easterly trade winds.

Sometimes a northerly component develops which then allows them to re-curve back to the east moving slightly towards the poles. Generally their paths are erratic. The primary associated hazards with tropical cyclones are severe thunderstorms and flooding. These are experienced in a small area near the circulation center (eye).

The coastal flooding is due to abnormally high sea levels, termed 'storm surge' and high ocean waves. Over land cyclones cause considerable damage to property, crops and loss of human life due to high speed winds, thunderstorms and flooding. The areas which are vulnerable are areas with steep terrains like the eastern highlands. Tropical cyclones lose energy as they move over land due to frictional air drag and the moisture supply diminution. The frictional drag explains why cyclone Idai was confined to the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe.

Cyclone Idai originated from a tropical depression that formed in the Mozambique Channel on 4 March 2019. On 9 March, the depression intensified, transforming it into a moderate tropical storm Idai. The reigning conditions in the Mozambique Channel greatly favored the intensification of the winds to speeds of 175 km/h on 11 March. Idai then weakened and died down for a day, only to re-activate on 13 March 2019.

On the night of 14 to 15 March 2019, Idai turned into a category four tropical cyclone making landfall near Beira. It brought strong winds (180–220 km/h) and torrential rain (more than 200 mm in 24 h), to Zimbabwe's eastern highlands at night. Night attack is strategically destructive for human beings and both domestic and wild animals. They were asleep, hence reaction time was reduced. Their vision is poor, they are not nocturnal animals. Collapsing buildings, uprooted trees and rolling rocks under heavy rains throw the majority of people and their domestic animals in a frightful panic with limited rationality.

Trees were uprooted and rock boulders from the slopes were rolled down, flooding more than 3000 km<sup>2</sup> of agricultural land. Bridges were swept away and electricity pylons uprooted. Cyclone Idai also displaced around 400,000 inhabitants, provoking over 600 deaths. The winds receded as the cyclone moved inland, from the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. The God created scenic views were defaced by cyclone Idai overnight. The majority of people focused on saving human beings and their domestic animals, limited attention was given to the assessment of the disaster impact on the tourist destination.

As if that was not enough, the first cases of COVID-19 reported in China in December 2019 got to Zimbabwe faster than expected. Zimbabwe Government (2020) reported it's confirmed first case of COVID-19 on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The case was a 38-year-old male resident of Victoria Falls. He had travelled to the United Kingdom on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and returned to the country on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020. It was also reported that a British tourist who had visited Victoria Falls earlier that week had tested positive for COVID-19 upon returning to the United Kingdom. We are left wondering whether the Covid-19 originated from the United Kingdom or the mighty Victoria

falls. All the same, these cases linked to tourism pointed at travelers being target super spreaders of the Covid-19 coronavirus.

Memorable strategies to reduce the spread of Covid 19 include the mandatory wearing of masks and observing social distance. Zimbabwe started by declaring a 21-day national lockdown starting on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020. National lockdown prohibited gatherings. Zimbabweans, including national parks workers were asked to work from home. The ban on inter-city travel interrupted tourists' schedules. That forced domestic tourists to cancel scheduled meetings at some holiday resort areas. Curfew implementation permitted limited travelling between 9.00 to 15.00h. It meant that, no tourist could see elephants at dawn.

Although permits of foreigners who were in Zimbabwe were automatically extended and border and airports closed, returning residency were allowed. These were quarantined and tested at different centers created in a hurry for the purpose. Manicaland had seven centers: Mutare Central, Mutare isolation center, Rusape General Hospital, Murambinda Mission Hospital, Hauna Hospital, Chipinge Hospital and Nyanga Hospital. Chimanimani clinic responded by turning itself to a local quarantine center.

The majority of positive imported Covid 19 cases were from the neighboring countries. South Africa contributed the most, with 404 cases as of 27<sup>th</sup> June 2020 (Madziwa, 2020). This has plausibility because South Africa was the most affected country on the African continent. Moreover, millions of Zimbabweans either live in South Africa or regularly travel to South Africa. These were returning home to Zimbabwe because they lost their jobs, were locked in neighboring countries when the lockdowns were initially imposed or they had been deported for one reason or another. The increasing numbers of quarantine facility inmates testing positive triggered debate on whether the individuals are coming into the country infected, or acquiring SARS-CoV-2 in these centers.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

During and after a disaster affecting human beings, domestic animals and wild animals in Manicaland, people focused on human beings first, followed by domestic animals. Limited assessment of the impact of the disaster is given to the tourist destination itself. The omission leads to untargeted planning for recovery. Under such circumstances budgets will not be accurate and leads to inappropriate resources purchasing. This study provides factual data to support mainstreaming planning of biodiversity into local, national and regional tourism policies.

### **Research Objective**

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of the consecutive cyclone Idai and Covid 19 on tourist destinations in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

### **Research Questions**

The study endeavors to find answers to the following questions:



1. What is the impact of both cyclone Idai and Covid 19 on tourist destinations in the eastern highlands?
2. What factors contributed to the impact of Cyclone Idai and Covid 19 on tourist destinations in the eastern highlands?
3. What are the implications of the impacts on recovering from the disaster?

### **Significance of Study**

Studying the impact of cyclones and disasters on tourism destinations is a crucial basis for enhancing conservation and destination maintenance efforts. Findings close the gap for the human instinctive oversight of wild animals' needs after a disaster. It provides evidence based decision making and disaster tourism management for recovery. The study raised awareness to all participants of the existence of both natural habitats and animals in need in the Eastern highlands.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The nature of the study's task, collection of empirical evidence for a change (impact) brought about by cyclone Idai and Covid 19 demands a combination of methods which depends on the contextual situation. Consequently the study is guided by the pragmatist research philosophy. Pragmatists emphasize the use of a method which is contingent with the nature of data, the environment and participants.

### **Research Design**

Since natural disasters are not planned, their assessment deserves to be done using Screven's 1974, goal free evaluation (GFE) model. The evaluator conducts the evaluation without knowledge of the intervention's (disaster's) goals. It is a philanthropic study. Youker and Ingraham (2014) advised the evaluator using the goal free model to observe and measure all actual outcomes, effects or impacts (changes) attributed to the disaster. These can be intended or unintended results.

One of the merits of the goal free model is that, it can be used with both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. That attribute enables the evaluator to capture and describe both qualitative and quantitative variable. Belanger(2006) used the goal free model to evaluate disaster relief responses. According to Brinkerhoff (2003), the evaluator must be external. That characteristic, which conceals the disaster's objectives, makes us appropriate evaluators for the CycloneIdai and Covid 19 disasters in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. This study's design was sequential. It started with document analysis to identify relevant impacts of the disaster. The internet and mass social media became handy. This was followed by visits to the Eastern highlands' tourist destinations. Visits provided opportunities for observations. Interviews with

locals and destination workers assisted to determine the degree of the impact of the natural cyclone Idai and Covid 19.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population of this study of the impact of a cyclone and Covid 19, on tourist destination is composed of the whole environment. Namely, the infrastructure, flora, fauna and the natural scenic slopes after the disaster. It is qualitative. Ordinary people (eyewitnesses) were rich sources of the impacts. The environment was a critical source in this case. Such a population called for purposive sampling. Its inclusion criterion was being available along the road, within sight, captured in the mass and social media.

Social media like videos provide captured actions as it was when it happened. They are done for the purpose of informing the public. Most important, is that researchers can attach their own interpretations. People who participated in this study were selected on their being rich sources of the impact of the disaster and willing to be interviewed. The major advantage is that, they are original sources whose responses are relied upon without a need for verification and validation.

### **Data Collection and Presentation**

Assessing the impact of a natural disaster on nature parks involves a thorough description of geological, scenic features, vegetation and wildlife. As a result, data collection was initiated by desk research. Researchers read reports of damages by cyclone Idai from both the Internet, social media, news and news-papers. They also watched videos on cyclone Idai from the internet and social media. The findings helped to identify the gap (limited coverage of impacts on tourists' destinations).

Researchers' discussions enabled them to identify study's indicator variables such as any changes attributed to the disaster. Three visits were done to observe and interview eyewitnesses. Collected data is presented using qualitative descriptive methods in which photographs are used to present reality.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Impact of Cyclone Idai on Road**



*Source: businesslive.co.za*

The photograph shows that, the cyclone destroyed roads thereby breaking communication by road. People were left stranded on both sides of the road. The flood waters are muddy, showing that the cyclone floods eroded gravel and topsoil which supported plant and animal lives. Rocks being rolled off their original positions destroy insects and reptile habitats. The water eroded the road from its base which was built by a thick layer of gravel covered by a thin topping layer of tar. There are trees on both sides of the road. Their roots which respond positively to geo and hydrotropism penetrated the gravel under the tar and facilitated water permeability. The thick vegetation on the roadsides trapped moisture for long times keeping the gravel base wet and vulnerable to erosion. This is an important finding for civil engineers and those in charge of road maintenance.

The discovery of gold alluvial and diamonds in Manicaland initiated river base mining activities. Open cast mining methods which involve stripping large pieces of topsoil disturbed the strength of the riverbank soil making it easy for cyclone flood waters to erode. In addition, roads constructed by miners' excavators as they moved from the main tarred road to the mine exposed the soil to cyclone floods erosion. Removed flora left various species of wild animals with no habitat and exposed to hunger. Those animals which managed to relocate reduced their numbers in the game parks.

In Zimbabwe, 90% of forest plantations are in the eastern highlands due to its' being mountainous and receiving the highest annual rainfall. Heavy deforestation by resettled and commercial farmers removed natural forest barriers increasing the impact calamities of cyclone Idai. Roads created by heavy poles being hauled down from the top of the hills to the plain were turned into gullies and gorges by the cyclone. Uprooted trees fell across roads and over other trees, thereby blocking communication and defacing the natural green scenic landscape.

Deforestation concentrated wild animals on patches of forests that provided protection and cover. One respondent interviewed at Bvumba feared that, the majority of samango monkeys which are peculiar to the Eastern highlands may have perished during the fateful night of cyclone Idai disaster.

MrTsopotsasaid, *“The big baobab trees and the rock curves where the monkeys slept were destroyed. The tree was uprooted and rocks rolled down. Several carcasses of them were littered along these hill slopes. They have not been seen since the cyclone fateful night.* [He pointed at the eroded trail from the hills to the plain where we were standing]

Natural dams were destroyed and fish swept away. That did upset aqua culture tourism. Amphibians, reptiles and snakes we used to locate at point A of the river died or were forced to find new habitat at point B. The floods also destroyed game park fences, enabling free entry into and out of the park. Free interaction between wild animals and their neighbors created different conflicting zones. There were no reports of animals killing people but villagers reported killing a zebra, two young hyenas, several kudu and rabbits. The villagers say, the animals were in their villages out of the game fences. There are also reports of hunters who ventured into game parks and harvested the injured, hungry, ill and maimed wild animals. We think, there is need for a recount of wild animals in each park.

We gathered that, Twala Trust Animal Sanctuary responded to the cyclone disaster by providing emergency veterinary care and feeding livestock affected by the disaster. Zimbabwe Society for the prevention of cruelty to animals (ZNSPCA) also focused on domestic (dogs, cats, goats and cattle) animals and not wildlife. They treated domestic animals for vitamin deficiencies, dispensing antibiotics and vaccinations to prevent diseases associated with being in water for long periods. Although the cyclone did not discriminate vegetation, animals and human being, rescuers focused on saving human beings and their domestic animals.

Covid-19 is a natural health disaster that degenerated into a socio-political, tourism and economic crisis. Covid-19 itself is expected to affect human beings but there is no evidence to refute the hypothesis that, animals like baboons, monkeys and rats are also susceptible to Covid-19 infection. Their anatomy is similar to that of human beings. Unfortunately in Zimbabwe, nobody educated wild animals in the tourists’ destinations on the wearing of masks and maintaining social distances.

Although one of the measures to reduce Covid 19 spreading says, *“prevent unprotected contact with farm or wild animals.”* The definition of contact, left milk man wondering how they were to milk the cows. Its implementation was not monitored. Hopefully wild animals in the tourist destinations were saved not travelling abroad.

Zimbabwe relies heavily on International tourism. The direct impact of Covid -19 was a reduction on tourists due to the closure of boarders and airports. The need for twenty-one days quarantine scared international tourists and dictated a direct increase on their budgets. Game park animals are in captivity and depend on human beings for their survival. When Covid-19 demanded that people work from home, there was limited monitoring of wild animal

movements. Remember cyclone had destroyed game fences. That exposed game animals to poachers. The 6.00am to 6.00pm curfew reduced poachers' chances of being arrested. Nobody knows how many animals were killed by poachers during the covid-19 disaster.

At local level, people got different views of Covid 19. These influenced the way Covid 19 was perceived to be treated. Those in the Eastern highlands thought Covid 19 could be treated by drinking Makoni tea. Others resorted to a shrub called zumbani in Shona and umsuzwane in Ndebele. Its botanic name is *lippie javanica*. It is believed to have healing effects for many diseases including Covid 19. The shrub is in abundance in the area. Because of the high demand for zumbani, the shrub was literally harvested to extinction. This was a direct alteration to the Eastern highlands flora. Insects which survived on it as food and shelter were affected by its harvesting. Since zumbani was harvested before its seeding stage, the chances of its survival are slim.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Zimbabwe's tourist destinations in the Eastern highlands are the misty Nyanga, Bvumba and Chimanimani mountains. Their aerial green scenic views, forests and rivers provide the God given basis for human and wildlife. Human activities like deforestation and agriculture increased the impact of cyclone Idai on the tourists' destination. Cyclone Idai defaced the green scenic views by uprooting trees and rolling rock boulders off their positions. Cyclone Idai's floods created drains and gorges along the hill slopes. The floods also destroyed roads and swept away bridges. Wild animals, farm animals, aquatic and pets were affected by the disaster. They went without food or water for long periods. Game park fences were also destroyed exposing wild animals to poachers. Covid-19 reduced human monitoring and maintenance. The cyclone destroyed wild and aquatic habitats leaving all surviving animals disoriented. The majority of wild animals are not accounted for. Flora and fauna is in a retched state. The overall destinations target of attraction need man and natural rehabilitation.

Specifically, there is need for policies monitoring natural forests maintenance by locals. A recount of wild animals in each park is a must which tourist investors can seriously consider. Full-time ecologists are needed to reconstruct the wildlife and aquatic destinations. For example, we are not sure of how many elephants, antelopes or hyenas are still there. What their gender distribution is, their new routes and feeding habits. Re-fencing of the game parks is called for. Rivers in the tourist destination centers can be rehabilitated using natural materials. Road and bridge designers have the task of designing bridges and roads which can withstand such disasters.

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