DECENTRALIZATION OUTCOMES IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY IN ZIMBABWE: A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT FROM CO-MANAGEMENT AND CAMPFIRE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

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Abstract

Forest and wildlife governance reforms through decentralization have aimed at making rural citizens with rights to benefit from natural resources within their areas of jurisdiction. What is the impact of political uncertainty on forestry and wildlife decentralization in Zimbabwe? This paper uses a detailed case study approach to distil lessons of experience for policy makers and practitioners on decentralization between the aforementioned resource sectors. The study selected variables to analyze resource management; integrity of resource area; non-quota use; financial management and benefits; and financial accountability and how these impact on decentralized resource management. The study was carried out in the Mafungautsi area (co-management) and Nenyunga area (Campfire) in Gokwe South and North Districts respectively. The two districts are both in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. The study used key informant interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions and literature review. One of the conclusions of the study is that there is a need to strengthen a more democratic and accountable local government in order to be able to implement the decentralized responsibilities. Partnerships between the state and Non-Governmental Organisations are important but they should be aimed at strengthening the decentralized units in order to have sustainable local management units. Partnerships between decentralized units and the private sector needs the support of NGOs to help tilt the balance of benefits in favour of the poor rural communities who pay the ‘real price’ of managing and living with natural resources such as forests and wildlife.

Introduction

For many years Zimbabwe was one of the leading countries in Africa for its innovative community-based natural resource management initiatives with the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) being one of the most well-known. But the growing political upheavals in the country have changed many aspects of life dramatically. This paper assesses the impact of political uncertainty in the new millennium and its social, institutional and ecological effects on community-level natural resource management.
Background

Recent Political History of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe became independent from Britain in 1980 after an anti-colonial struggle spanning more than two decades. Land ownership was a key motivation in the struggle for independence. The early 1980s were characterised by economic growth and the delivery of social services and infrastructure to the previously disadvantaged sectors of society (Hammar et al, 2003). Significantly, many farmers from communal land\(^1\) seized these opportunities and shifted from subsistence to commercial production in what has been dubbed Zimbabwe’s agricultural revolution (Rukuni and Eicher, 1994). By the late 1980s economic growth faltered largely due to the over-regulation and price controls inherited and maintained from the previous regime (Bond and Manyanya 2002). An Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) aimed to liberalise the economy and bolster economic growth. ESAP had many positive impacts across the economy; however, these were mostly confined to the private sector middle and upper income earners. A critical weakness of ESAP was the failure to provide safety nets to cushion those who lost out (Raftopoulos, 2001).

ESAP triggered a number of processes in the mid to late 1990s. These included a trend towards increased corruption, a decline in economic growth and an increase in the rate of inflation. Economic liberalisation which resulted in the decline in employment opportunities whilst opening up the media, also resulted in greater political aspirations and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government was defeated in its aim of establishing a one-party state. This gradually led to the emergence of the first credible opposition to the ruling ZANU-PF party.

In 2000, the government lost the February referendum for a new national constitution, representing the first defeat of the ruling ZANU-PF party in 20 years. The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) had campaigned against the government’s proposed constitution, which made provisions for large scale appropriation of white-owned farmland. Immediately, the government backed invasions of commercial farms as an alternative approach to redressing the land issue, as retribution against those who were perceived to have supported the opposition and to divert attention away from the declining economic situation. The farm invasions significantly cut agricultural output and exports, worsening the fiscal pressures on the government. Importantly, they also resulted in the loss of foreign capital, skills and decline in new foreign investment. The World Bank and the IMF withdrew their support to the government. The cumulative effect was that Zimbabwe entered a period of sustained hyper-inflation and economic contraction (Bond and Manyanya, 2002).

The declining national economy has resulted in a gatekeeper state, with Zimbabwean politicians acting as middlemen\(^2\) rather than regulators for local and (limited) foreign capital

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\(^1\) Communal areas are where most black Zimbabweans live.

\(^2\) These are people who facilitate business for a profit. In the wildlife sector, for instance, polician who are supposed to regulate the sector might facilitate hunters accessing wildlife for a fee.
(Logan, 2005). It is easier for authoritarian regimes to ‘maintain the loyalty of the core group during economic crisis than it is for democracies. With fewer favours, they can achieve far greater loyalty among the reduced number of actors that support them’ (Corrales, 2004, p. 37). This gatekeeper role is playing across all sectors of the economy, including forestry and wildlife management. Under the decentralisation rubric, rule making, decision making and rule enforcement powers are being usurped by the elite from the majority previously managing forestry and wildlife resources. Law enforcement is selectively applied to reward government supporters and punish their opponents as will be demonstrated within CAMPFIRE in Nenyunga.

Community-based Natural Resource Management in Zimbabwe

Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) emerged as a response to the failure of centralised natural resource management. CBNRM also became part of the broader Structural Adjustment Programmes within Africa and the developing countries at large. These were financial austerity measures which were meant to reduce central government spending. In southern Africa, donor organisations also played a key role through channelling resources towards CBNRM initiatives in countries such as Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe had two well-known and well-established community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) approaches: co-management and CAMPFIRE. The philosophy of both initiatives is that local communities need to realise commercial benefits in order for them to sustainably manage local natural resources. This philosophy attempts to link the costs of managing the resource with the benefits derived from the natural resource.

Decentralisation offers an interface opportunity with Natural Resource Management (NRM). Decentralisation is further viewed as providing a framework which enables lower level units of governance to perform duties and derive benefits from natural resources in line with the subsidiarity principle. The subsidiarity principle says that duties which can be performed at the local level should be devolved to the local level. Higher level institutions should only have an oversight role as a mechanism to ensure reinforcement of decisions made a local level and also as a check on excesses at local level (Chitsike 2000).

Co-management

Co-management, in theory, seeks to decentralise forest management powers to local communities living next to state protected (gazetted) forests in order to prevent resource use conflicts. It involves the creation of environmental or resource regimes featuring partnerships between local communities or resource users and agencies of (sub) national governments. These state agencies, the Forestry Commission for example, normally possess the legal mandate for forest management. In Zimbabwe, co-management began in 1993 in villages surrounding the Mafungautsi Forest Reserve. These villages formed 15 Resource Management Committees (RMCs) which were institutions through which benefits such as harvesting broom grass, thatching grass, reeds and firewood were to be administered. Previously this role was performed by the Forestry Commission’s district office. The

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3 Whilst Corrales (2004) was analysing the Cuban crisis and how the Castro regime seemed to have weathered the economic crisis, this explanation has resonance with what is happening in Zimbabwe.
proceeds from these minor forest products were then supposed to be used for community development projects such as schools, or a revolving fund for providing loans to projects such as beekeeping. In the Mafungautsi area co-management received funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Initially, it performed well as CIDA and other stakeholders such as the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) played a mediating role between the community and the Forestry Commission.

Figure 1 shows the co-management institutional arrangements. The Resource Management Committees (RMCs) were formed as sub-committees of the village. Their main role is to issue non-timber resource exploitation permits and help enforce the forest protection rules. The RMCs, it was hoped, would be able to collect revenue from minor forest products which would then be invested in community project.
CAMPFIRE has been operating in Zimbabwe since 1989, largely restricted to buffer zones adjacent to national parks. CAMPFIRE is a government initiative that decentralises the management of and the benefits from wildlife resources to local communities in the communal areas (Murphree, 1991). Previously, only private (largely white owned) farmers were able to manage and benefit from wildlife on their land. Most rural district councils have entered into contractual arrangements with safari operators who bring hunting clients into CAMPFIRE areas. The safari operator pays the hunting fees to the Rural District Councils (RDCs), and the RDC then passes on a portion of the revenue to the communities in CAMPFIRE wards.

Initial plans for CAMPFIRE envisaged the formation of natural resource management cooperatives at village level (Martin, 1986) but this was not acceptable to politicians who felt threatened by financially independent villages. A compromise was to devolve appropriate authority for the management of wildlife to district councils (Murphree, 1991). Such devolution of authority meant that powers would be given to the RDCs – rather than the CAMPFIRE wards or villages. In return, district councils nominally agreed to devolve the responsibility for wildlife management and the financial benefits to sub-district levels, namely the ward (Figure 2), administered by the Ward Wildlife Management Committee (WWMC). The WWMC is chaired by an elected councillor who represents the ward at rural district level. The rural district council then links with the national government via the provincial government.

The development of CAMPFIRE and its implementation were guided by a loose consortium of governmental, non-governmental organisations and university departments known as the CAMPFIRE Collaborative Group (CCG). The programme was funded by numerous international donors. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was the largest single donor, providing approximately US$20 million between 1989 and 2003 (Child et al, 2003). Prior to 2000, the programme was largely hailed as a successful example of communities deriving benefits from wildlife resources.

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4 The CCG members included the CAMPFIRE Association (CA), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS), Zimbabwe Trust (ZimTrust), Forestry Commission and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWM).
Methodology

Research Methods

This paper is a result of participatory research studies which were largely conducted by the Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) (in Mafungautsi) and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (in Nenyunga). The research period stretched from the early 1990s to 2004. Field interviews were carried out with members of local communities, current and former committee members of Resource Management Committees (in the co-management case study) and Ward Wildlife Management Committees (WWMC) (CAMPFIRE case study). Key informant interviews were conducted with the Forestry Commission of Zimbabwe (FCZ), the Gokwe Rural District Councils (RDCs) (both North and South), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) and Zimbabwe Trust (ZimTrust). Interviews with the CAMPFIRE Association (CA) were conducted later, in March 2005. Some former CAMPFIRE Collaborative Group employees and researchers also carried out key informant discussions. Literature review and Focus Group discussions with RMCs, women, men, youths were conducted in 2005 were also important tools for data collection.

Case Study Selection

CAMPFIRE research was conducted in the Nenyunga ward of Gokwe North District (Figure 3a). The Ward Wildlife Management Committee (WWMC) in the research area consists of
three villages. The co-management case study focused on Mafungautsi Forest Reserve and on two RMCs, Batanai and Chemwiro-Masawi, as shown in Figure 3b.

Both research areas are in the same agro-ecological region, which means that their biophysical environments are fairly similar. Both areas are largely communal areas with no large-scale commercial farming. Nenyunga is one of the prime CAMPFIRE wards as its habitat can support a resident wildlife population rather than being an area through which wildlife passes *en route* to more suitable habitats. Both areas also have a similar socio-political and economic history. This is a frontier region with a number of residents having migrated from other parts of Zimbabwe in search of land. Immigrants are largely from Masvingo and belong to the Karanga ethnic group. Most of the Karangas viewed the resident less educated Tonga as ‘backward.’ The Gokwe area was seriously affected by political turmoil in the post-2000 era. The political turmoil provided an opportunity for the ethnic contests to be inserted within the political struggles and contestation.

**Figure 3:** Location of the Co-management and Campfire case study sites in Zimbabwe:

a) CAMPFIRE study site (b) Co-management site
Assessing Social, Institutional and Ecological Effects of Political Uncertainty

A number of key variables were used to assess impact of the February 2000 watershed on the two initiatives, facilitating the comparison of the pre- and post-2000 periods. It is important to note that a few variables were selected which would provide a reasonable basis for making conclusions on how the political crisis has impacted on co-management and wildlife management. One also needs to appreciate the multi-dimension of decline in natural resource management in Zimbabwe. The data was collected as part of the Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS)’s longitudinal studies in Gokwe and also some of the data for Nenyunga was collected by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The variables assessed include the following:

- Resource management – It is important to assess impact on resource management practices.
- Integrity of resource area – This helps to assess what happened to the resource in terms of illegal resource extraction.
- Non-quota use\(^5\) (illegal resource extraction) – This is important proxy for sustainability.
- Financial management and benefits – Incentives are key for local level resource management. Decline in incentives will result in reduced interest as the cost will be higher than the benefits.
- Financial accountability – Accountability in the management of benefits (financial) is key in building trust and promoting collective decision making and enforcement of rules.

Research Findings

The following section presents the main findings based on selected variables. These variables are compared using the pre and post-2000 periods. As previously stated, only a few variables were selected to try and assess the impact of political uncertainty on the selected variables.

Resource Management

Co-management Case Study

Pre-2000: Other Studies have noted that there was generally more forestry cover in the pre-2000 period in Mafungautsi than the post 2000 period (Mapedza et al., 2003). This was done through using aerial photographs for the Mafungautsi area. There are clear trends showing that the rate of loss of forest cover from the 1980s increased after the year 2000 in the surrounding villages, but the image is less clear for the forest reserve area itself (cf. Mapedza et al, 2003). Vermeulen (1996) found that although the trees of the Mafungautsi Forest Reserve were generally larger and of greater biomass, and the woodlands denser, than the woodlands of the surrounding communal area, communal areas tended to have a greater variety of vegetation types. In the pre-2000 period, the Forestry Protection Unit (FPU) had

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\(^5\) Illegal resource utilisation. Legal hunting is based on annual quotas which are calculated on the basis of annual wildlife population.
more resources, including two forestry officers, and they made constant patrols using FCZ vehicles. Some RMCs helped in these patrols due to the limited financial resources.

Post-2000: Forest cover in Mafungautsi is generally declining as demonstrated in aerial photo studies (cf. Mapedza et al., 2003). This is more pronounced in the communal areas neighbouring the Mafungautsi Forest Reserve than in the forest reserve itself. Although figures were not available, the general impression of both the FCZ and RMCs is that poaching has significantly gone up since people started living within the forest area in 2000. Fires are used to drive wild animals to some parts of the forest to make hunting easier. The FCZ has also been blaming the RMCs for not playing an effective role in resource monitoring. One of the forestry officers has been transferred to another district since the post was funded from donor funds which have been withdrawn.

**CAMPFIRE Case Study**

**Pre-2000:** There were better infrastructure and institutional arrangements for managing both forestry and wildlife resources in the area pre-2000. For example, since the 1990s many low cost electric fences had been constructed to separate people and their crops from areas of wildlife habitat. Soon after the formation of the game corridor, a “problem animal reporting system” was established in Nenyunga with the support of WWF. The purpose of the system was to develop an effective response to serious incidents of human-wildlife conflict and to generate data that would support further measures. Under the system, farmers were to report problems, the scale of the problem or damage was then assessed and action taken accordingly, usually scaring away the offending animals. This was the job of the Gokwe North RDC Wildlife Unit.

**Post-2000:** The measures taken to reduce the human–wildlife conflict in Nenyunga Ward have largely been discontinued. Gokwe North RDC no longer has a functional CAMPFIRE vehicle and is therefore unable to support the rapid deployment of the wildlife unit to incidents involving wildlife. At the ward level the Problem Animal Reporters have not been working for over a year because they have not received their allowances. In addition, the District Board of Management (DBM) has been unable to buy ammunition for the shotguns that were used to scare elephants out of the fields. The electric fence on the northern border of the game corridor has been completely vandalised.

**Integrity of the Protected Area**

**Co-management Case Study**

**Pre-2000:** One of the main management challenges facing gazetted areas in Zimbabwe has always been illegal forest fires, which in most instances are blamed on the disgruntled neighbouring village residents. Before the June 2000 parliamentary elections, forest fires were relatively controlled – although fires have been a major issue dating back to the colonial period. However, the science of fire burning within the semi-arid savannas has always been

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6 The funds for the electric fence came from the Rio-Tinto Foundation. Rio Tinto (Zimbabwe) was at the time developing the Sengwa Coalfield in the adjacent Simchembu Ward.

7 This is land set aside to allow free movement of wildlife usually connecting two ecological zones.
controversial, with some researchers arguing that controlled burning is beneficial to the ecosystem (Mapaure, 2002).

Post-2000: Since 2000 forest fires have increased, according to both RMC officials and the Forestry Commission officer in Gokwe, for a number of reasons. After June 2000 there were fewer resources for fire fighting and a culture of acting with impunity was quickly developing amongst the villagers. This culture developed after land invasion began after February 2000 when people could do whatever they wanted in the name of ‘war veterans’ without being arrested. About 180 households invaded the reserved forest arguing that they were re-claiming their ancestral land stolen when the forest reserve was gazetted. The new settlers began using fires to open up fields for cultivation in the Mafungautsi forest area. Due to the political clout surrounding land invasions in Zimbabwe, both the Forestry Protection Unit (FPU) and the RMCs were powerless to stop them. In the neighbouring RMC in the Bomba area, people opened up fields within the forest. In the forest adjacent to Lutope FPU Camp, people went as far as to build huts within the forest. To safeguard themselves against eviction they have already formed cells and branches of the ruling party. The practice has spread to a number of villagers, who are assuming that the regulations have been relaxed and that they too can use the name of the ruling party to make them immune from prosecution. Some RMC members, in areas such as Chemusonde, have also moved into the Mafungautsi Forest. Due to the invasion of the forest reserve most of the RMCs are no longer exercising their decentralised powers. Whilst earlier studies show that there were attempts to move into the reserved forest at independence in 1980 and in the mid 80s, the difference was that in the earlier invasion attempts these were ruthlessly removed by the government. The 2000 forest reserve invasions were endorsed by the ruling party making it impossible to remove the settlers.

**CAMPFIRE Case Study**

Pre-2000: When CAMPFIRE was still vibrant a wildlife corridor was established in Gokwe within the context of very high levels of immigration, settlement and conversion of land from wildlife habitat to agro-pastoral uses. There was a significant influx of settlers from all over Zimbabwe into the region after the eradication of tsetse fly and the construction of a new tarred road after independence in 1980. It is estimated that wildlife habitat lost to new settlements in the Gokwe North area increased from 27% to 57% of the total district land area between 1985 and 1999 (Dunham et al., 2003). Initially, the main challenge to the integrity of the wildlife corridor was from cattle owners looking for grazing for their animals. Many of the residents of Nenyunga Ward B, on the southern boundary of the corridor, were agro-pastoralists who perceived little or no benefit from the maintenance of wildlife areas.

Post-2000: The integrity of the wildlife area was further undermined after 2000 due to acting with impunity for ruling party supporters such as the ward councillor. Aerial surveys carried out in 2001, one year after the start of political uncertainty in 2000, indicated that there was

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8 These are structures of the ruling Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union (ZANU) Patriotic Front (PF) party.

9 One should also note that this is the third wave of invasions into Mafungautsi. The first wave was around 1979/80, the second in 1984/5 and the current one began in 2000 alongside the “fast track land reform”.

10 Interview with the Forestry Commission of Zimbabwe, Gokwe, 17 June 2004.
an expansion in agricultural activities in the Nenyunga area and the broader Sebungwe region (Dunham et al., 2003). When the land invasions began in 2000 people also increased livestock grazing within the wildlife corridor area. In 2004, the RDC once again resorted to using the police to clear the corridor of cattle. Whilst there were no human settlements within the corridor, expansion of agricultural activities and cattle grazing has often been argued to reduce the wildlife habitat. Home ranges for elephants in CAMPFIRE wards had been compressed due to the expansion of agricultural activities (cf. Hoare cited in Dunham et al., 2003). A former Member of Parliament for the area argued that local residents wanted to see rural development in the form of agricultural expansion – not the wildlife model of development, which offers fewer individual financial incentives. These arguments are also supported by Chief Nenyunga who pointed out that some people who were evicted from the corridor area in 1991 when CAMPFIRE was about to begin still have grievances against the programme. To the evictees, the fence had symbolised the CAMPFIRE programme and had to be destroyed.

While there has been some habitat conversion on the edges of the corridor, these do not represent large-scale re-settlement and habitat conversion that has taken place on many large-scale commercial farms. This suggests, that at some level, the wildlife corridor has a de facto acceptance within some of the adjacent communities.

Non-quota Use

Co-management Case Study

Pre-2000: Since the introduction of co-management there has been no commercial logging inside Mafungautsi. Commercial logging did take place in 1999 in villages surrounding the gazetted forest. In this instance, the FCZ made it clear that co-management was mainly based on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) with the exception of dead wood, whose collection was strictly regulated. There were a few cases of illegal harvesting of poles and small animals. With funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) the Forest Protection Unit managed to patrol the forest and reduce illegal resource harvesting.

Post-2000: Another round of salvage logging, which entailed logging remaining timber in an area which had been logged recently, was being carried out by Mockdale Company in the villages surrounding Mafungautsi in 2005. This seems to be a desperate move by the Gokwe South RDC to get some revenue. The local community contested this through their traditional leader. The logging company was owned by a former employee of the President’s office and he was said to be underreporting his timber harvests. Illegal poaching increased due to a reduction in the number of FPU staff, as well as because of CIDA’s decision to stop funding co-management in 2000.

CAMPFIRE Case Study

Pre-2000: Hunting by local people, generally for subsistence protein needs, has always been a major problem in both Mafungautsi and Nenyunga. It has been estimated that in some of

11 The people of Zhomba feel that cattle and crops are more important than wildlife (Former Fence Supervisor interviewed on 2 September 2004).
the “wildlife rich” wards locally hunted wildlife accounted for 40% of the protein in the residents’ diets (Murindagomo, 1997). The Tonga people, the ‘original’ residents of the Zambezi Valley, have a long history of hunting, fishing and use of non-timber forest products. The loss of wildlife habitat, however, has always been considered the primary threat for wildlife populations in the communal lands, rather than local hunting. Evidence from aerial surveys shows that settlement in the Sebungwe Region dramatically changed the distribution of large mammals in the pre-2000 period. Studies from within Gokwe and the neighbouring Nyaminyami District showed that herds of elephant are reluctant to venture within 2 km of human settlement (Hoare, 2002).

Despite the fragmentation of habitat and the compression of the range, it was estimated that there were over 900\textsuperscript{12} elephants in 1999 within Gokwe North District, most of which were either resident or used the habitat created by the corridor (Khumalo, 2003). Between the establishment of the corridor in 1991 and 2000, there were low levels of illegal hunting within its boundaries. Critically however, the levels of illegal off-take were never considered serious enough to affect the commercial hunting quotas that remained relatively stable during the same period (Khumalo, 2003).

**Post-2000:** The general trend within the corridor seems to be of increasing illegal use of wildlife. Commercial poaching for ivory was not a major feature before 2000. After 2000, it appears to have developed and may involve representatives from the military and senior politicians.\textsuperscript{13} Informants estimated that between January and August 2004, at least 14 elephants had been illegally killed in the wildlife game area. Informants claim that the elephants are now being killed for their ivory and not their meat - suggesting that illegal hunting has moved from subsistence to commercial levels. The safari operator also noticed an increase in the use of licensed and unlicensed weapons in the area. Within the Nenyunga community there were unconfirmed sightings of poachers in army uniforms. Other poachers with strong political connections were not being arrested. In 2001 it was estimated that the resident population of elephant in Gokwe North had declined to just under 800 from 900 animals in 1999. More importantly the proportion of elephant in the communal lands of the Sebungwe had fallen from 37% to 29%,\textsuperscript{14} an indication of the loss of habitat through settlement (Dunham and Mackie, 2002). Further the 2001 national aerial survey showed that the carcass ratio, which is the ratio of dead to live elephants, within Gokwe had increased from 3.9% in 1999 to 5.8% in 2001 (Mackie, 2002).

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\textsuperscript{12} Precise estimates of wildlife populations are extremely difficult, if not impossible to obtain. Aerial surveys rely on a sample technique from which the total population is estimated within given confidence intervals.

\textsuperscript{13} Recently two Chinese nationals were arrested in Harare with 74 elephant tusks (See The Daily Mirror on www.dailymirror.co.zw accessed on 6 July 2005).

\textsuperscript{14} The Sebungwe communal area comprises Gokwe North and Nyaminyami Rural District Councils. The logic behind a combined survey is to assess if wildlife has not just re-located within the same broader agro-ecological region.
Financial Management and Benefits

Co-management Case Study

Pre-2000: Funds generated by co-management have always been limited, as shown in Table 1. Financial management at the RMC level has always been contested, with the misuse of funds occurring in some RMCs. There were even attempts to bring some of those who had misappropriated RMC funds before traditional leaders in the Batanai RMC. Despite the misappropriation there was an attempt to keep up to date financial records in the pre-2000 period.

Post-2000: The general trend in both forestry and wildlife over the period 1991 to 2004 has been a decline in real incentives for local communities to manage their natural resources. Table 1 gives the average annual revenue for the two RMCs since their inception. The revenue was largely generated mainly through selling of permits for firewood, mat reeds, brooms and thatching grass.

Table 1: RMC Permit Revenue from Batanai and Chemwiro-Masawi RMCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Batanai RMC</th>
<th>Chemwiro Masawi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Z$</td>
<td>US$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3,059</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>306</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>3,693</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>777</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6,543</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>12,912</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>187</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7,210</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>8,776</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>971</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>54,765</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>356,000</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The revenue generated by RMCs is not very high. One of the reasons given by the RMC members for the low revenue collected is the low permit fee for broom grass collection. The daily permit fee at the time of the fieldwork was Z$500 (about US$0.08). In 2004 the RMCs asked for all payments to be made in cash rather than in kind, which increased revenues.

15 These are real figures that have not been adjusted for inflation.
Timber can generate significant amounts of revenue but RMCs had no access to timber revenue because the Forest Act of 1996 says such revenue has to accrue to the Rural District Council as the land authority. The Forestry Commission gets 15% commission for making the forestry inventory and helping verify the quantities logged by the concessionaire. Legal distinctions between communal area forests (governed by the Communal Lands Act-RDC) and the Forest Act (reserved forest areas managed by FC) did not make sense to local communities who felt they should benefit from all forest types in line with co-management philosophy.

**CAMPFIRE Case Study**

**Pre-2000:** Gokwe RDC allocated revenue to wards on a producer/ward principle. Nenyunga Ward, with the highest proportion of land in the corridor, received substantial dividends between 1991 and 1999. The highest disbursement was US$19,488 in 1996. It is important to point out that whilst the situation was not ideal pre-2000, information was available on the proportion devolved to the rural communities at ward level. At Gokwe North RDC level 53% of the CAMPFIRE revenue was disbursed to communities in 1991, although by 1999 this percentage had fallen to 18% (Khumalo 2003). This was mainly as a result of the RDC not passing CAMPFIRE revenue to the ward level as the economic crisis worsened.

**Post-2000:** The financial incentives received by Nenyunga Ward have dramatically fallen over the years due to high levels of inflation and withdrawal of external donor support. Of the total revenue received from 1991 to the present (US$86,165), 95% was received in the nine years between 1991 and 1999 (average annual ward dividend was US$9,117). Between 2000 and 2005 the ward received a total of just US$4,134, an average dividend of US$827 per annum. The worst year was 2003 since the Nenyunga community was entitled to US$117 that year, the councillor took the cheque and allegedly failed to cash it. He then kept it until it expired. Rumours were also that the councillor had in fact successfully cashed the cheque.

**Financial Accountability**

**Co-management Case Study**

**Pre-2000:** Financial accountability was a major challenge even in the pre-2000 period, but whilst the accountability mechanisms were not effective, there were at least attempts to do something about it. There was even an attempt to incorporate into the RMCs educated people who were capable of carrying out internal audits. Through CIDA’s support basic record keeping courses were given. In Batanai some of the RMC members were arraigned before the traditional leaders for misappropriating RMC funds. In both Chemwiro-Masawi and Batanai RMCs the FCZ helped by auditing RMC accounts, and named and shamed those who had misappropriated RMC funds. In a number of instances, however, those named have never refunded the community funds.

**Post-2000:** The post-2000 financial uncertainty resulted in some RMCs introducing an informal loan system for the RMC members without the approval of the community. Any committee member who had financial hardships could borrow money from the RMC fund. When the FCZ discovered that RMCs could not account for all their income, the RMC members argued that they had decided to loan out the money to needy RMC members. Since there were no records of these transactions it was difficult to assess how much had been diverted in this manner. RMC members argued that they were not losing out as they were
asking for an interest of 25% per annum on any sum of money borrowed. In most instances the loans were never paid back. This was mainly as a result of the RMCs not being downwardly accountable to their constituency.

CAMPFIRE Case Study

Pre-2000: In the early days of CAMPFIRE financial management and accountability by Nenyunga WWMC suffered from the absence of financial systems, its distance from banks and the lack of skills. Although accountability in the pre-2000 period was not perfect there were genuine attempts by the WWMC to be transparent and accountable. Support from a variety of organisations, particularly Danish Association for International Cooperation (MS) (Zimbabwe) and WWF assisted in developing financial management systems and skills. Financial records were presented at all WWMC meetings and annual general meetings allowed interested residents to critique allocations and spending. Another technique used by the WWMC was to display financial statements in public places such as shops and community centres. In Nenyunga those who misused CAMPFIRE funds were removed from the WWMC, including the incumbent councillor.

Post-2000: In the CAMPFIRE area the RDC still maintains some oversight of the WWMC’s financial affairs and countersigns all the financial transactions carried out by the WWMC. However, the constraints on resources at RDC level mean that there is limited effort to monitor the role of the WWMC. More importantly, the WWMC is no longer perceived as being accountable to the residents of the ward. Financial statements are no longer made public. A longstanding Problem Animal Reporter (PAR) pointed out that if you ask for a detailed explanation of CAMPFIRE funds you would end up in hot soup. This has provided a good opportunity for elite capture as the CAMPFIRE programme in Nenyunga has been hijacked for personal benefits by some committee members, councillors and traditional leaders using political arguments to exclude and disempower the villagers and even threaten RDC officials (cf. Mapedza and Bond, 2006).

Analysis and Discussion

The post-2000 period has brought uncertainty politically, economically and socially, all of which has affected the management of natural resources in the Gokwe area. High inflation has seriously eroded the benefits that most resource managers derive from the communal areas of Zimbabwe (the annual inflation rate recently reached 1,730%). Within the forestry sector, proceeds from NTFPs, which have always been low, have been further eroded, making them even less significant for community development projects. One of the main weaknesses of co-management as practised in Mafungautsi is the exclusion of proceeds from timber, leaving the RMCs access only to low value forestry resources. Allowing local communities access to low value minor products is more likely going to act as a disincentive in co-management. In Mafungautsi, the local communities realised that they could not access the proceeds from the more valuable timber. Meaningful resources need to be devolved for the local communities to invest their time and effort in partnerships in the management of the

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16 Interview WWMC member on 4 September 2004.
17 As of January 2008 inflation was above 100,000%.
forests. In Zimbabwe, the partnership was tilted in favour of the state with co-management largely viewed as a cheaper form of maintaining reserved forests.

In Nenyunga, revenue has also been eroded by inflation and the withdrawal of donor support in the form of transport, Problem Animal Reporters allowances and the purchase of bullets, all of which now have to be paid for from the diminishing CAMPFIRE dividends. Financial difficulties have also led the RDC to reduce the proportion of revenue it can plough back into the wards. The weakened WWMC has become subject to the whims of a councillor who was more interested in advancing his interests in the name of the ruling party, at the expense of the initial intended beneficiaries of CAMPFIRE. The previously growing local resource management capacity and knowledge are now being eroded. In both co-management and CAMPFIRE, the withdrawal of external support from CIDA and USAID which was largely viewed by the Zimbabwean government as punishment for embarking on the controversial land reform program in 2000, has also had a detrimental effect. There is an increasing reversal of most of the pre-2000 achievements, despite their shortcomings.

The fact that the institutions for resource management in both co-management and CAMPFIRE still exist, though very weak, is some cause for hope. However, mere presence of institutions without meaningful powers will not positively contribute to CBNRM. Both the co-management and CAMPFIRE institutions did not have powers to make their own rules. Most of the legislative powers lied with higher level institutions. In both instances, the local institutions were reduced to enforcing externally derived rules and regulations. It is indeed true that local institutions need oversight by higher level institutions. Such oversight does not need to be dictatorial. But these have to be viewed in the context of the increasingly dictatorial policies in Zimbabwe. These local level institutions need to be accompanied by a more democratic dispensation and long-term solutions are needed which can be resilient in the face of continued and significant political uncertainty.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations have two goals: 1) to promote more sustainable livelihoods for people who rely on the two resource regimes; and 2) to sustainably manage the resource base (forests, wildlife) in order to keep on providing a livelihood for the resource dependent communities. These recommendations are directed at policy makers and funders within the environmental sector.

- **Increase the direct incentives flowing from sustainable resource management to local communities.** In the CAMPFIRE case this implies decentralising the relationship between the safari operator and the local community. A direct link between these two actors will help the local communities to derive benefits directly, rather than indirectly through the local authority as is the case at present. This arrangement was denied by politicians right at the conception of the CAMPFIRE philosophy. This more direct arrangement will enable local communities to get better incentives for managing their natural resources and promote local level accountability. In the Nenyunga case study, revenue was no longer being passed to the Ward Wildlife Management Committee on time and the proportion received continues to fall as central government reduces spending on service provision. This means that the local level institutions are being deprived of the necessary resources to monitor environmental management and outcomes. In the co-management area, there is need to change legislation to allow RMCs to access proceeds from commercial timber concessionnaires so that incentives going to the local communities are increased.
• **Give local communities greater powers to deal with problem animals and related local issues.** The effective management of problem animals could increase the incentives to local communities for living adjacent to wild animals. Effective PAC depends on a quick response. With local government facing transport constraints, local communities are better placed to carry out this activity and such a role would reduce human-wildlife conflicts. The state should devolve this role and the requisite resources to the local communities, with the state maintaining an oversight role. PAC can be effectively handled by the Ward Wildlife Committee with the support of the locally recruited Animal Reporters and former Fence Minders. Support would be needed to further train them in order to meet the minimum hunting licensing requirements in order to effectively deal with problem animals. Other local level decisions should be made locally in line with the subsidiarity principle.

• **Re-assess the balance between livestock and wildlife** in light of the difficulties of maintaining wildlife corridors, the need for tsetse control and the lack of prior research on the real risks of livestock grazing to wildlife. Some of the Nenyunga community members were of the view that agricultural production and livestock rearing would bring more benefits than wildlife. In the forestry area grazing and agricultural activities were also perceived as bringing more benefits to the local communities than protected forests. More rigorous cost-benefit assessments and ecological assessments of grazing impacts need to be carried out within the two case study ecological contexts to help strike a reasonable balance between agricultural activities and conservation.

• **Create mechanisms to add value to both wildlife and forestry resources.** Such initiatives might include eco-tourism, which has the potential to generate more income and offer employment opportunities. It is however important to note that ventures such as eco-tourism are capital intensive and might require going into partnerships with some investors. Training would also be needed for the local communities to be able to manage such ventures as a profitable business.

• **Increase donor support to the areas of local community representation and accountability within existing institutions.** Institutional support for the Resource Management Committees and Ward Wildlife Management Committees will enhance capacity not only to manage wildlife and forestry, but also to manage other natural resources. Donor support should be tailored in a way that it results in resilient institutions which will continue managing their natural resources after the external donors has withdrawn. Sustainable support is the one which builds capacity for management without further support. This would be similar to the support previously provided by USAID, WWF, Zimbabwe Trust and other Campfire Collaborative Group (CCG) members. In the co-management area the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provided resources for building the capacity of RMCs.

These policy recommendations have to be assessed in the context of the current unstable political context in Zimbabwe, which makes it difficult to effect central and local government functions. This makes it even more essential that local communities have the resources (financial, technical, governance systems) to manage resources sustainably in the face of instability. This paper and the broader literature show that this requires democratic decentralization which empowers the local community rather than administrative decentralization which increases central government monitoring at the local level. With increased threats to the state, there is now an increased tendency to centralise power and
undermine moves towards democratic decentralisation, which is largely perceived as
providing a forum for local level dissent. However, even within such an oppressive context
there are indications that increasingly undemocratic practices will not be sustainable for a
long period of time and international condemnation should eventually bring more democratic
governance to Zimbabwe.

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