



International Journal of Development and Sustainability

ISSN: 2186-8662 – www.isdsnet.com/ijds

Volume 4 Number 7 (2015): Pages 780-788

ISDS Article ID: IJDS15021801



The utilisation of wildlife resources and the emanate conflicts: The case of Matetsi Woodlands, Hwange, Zimbabwe

Zenzo Lusaba Dube *, Walter Duve

Institute of Development Studies-National University of Science and Technology, P.O Box AC939, Ascot, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Abstract

The study was conducted in the Woodlands area of Matetsi Ward 1 of the Hwange District, Zimbabwe. The study assessed the role of the actors (the village households, Matetsi Environmental Conservation Committee, the Lands Office and the Parks and Wildlife Authority) in managing conflicts emanating from the utilization of the wildlife resources. The study involved 115 village households of which thirty percent were sampled. The establishment of the Matetsi Environmental Conservation Committee (MECC) is paramount as its ambit is to ensure the sustainable use and utilisation of Matetsi wildlife's resources. Dialogue and transparency is needed between the actors. The study unearthed the need for effective active participatory approaches in order to curtail any potential conflicts within Matetsi. One can posit that the community development structures in Matetsi need to be regulated through the legal mechanisms. This can enhance transparency and accountability in the management of community resources and development.

Keywords: Matetsi, Wildlife resources, Conservation, MECC, CBNRM

Published by ISDS LLC, Japan | Copyright © 2015 by the Author(s) | This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.



Cite this article as: Dube, Z.L. and Duve, W. (2015), "Assessing the role of actors in managing conflicts emanating from the utilisation of wildlife resources: The case of Matetsi Ward 1 Woodlands, Hwange, Zimbabwe", *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, Vol. 4 No. 7, pp. 780-788.

* Corresponding author. E-mail address: zenzo123@aol.com

1. Introduction

In Zimbabwe, rural development and natural resources are managed through an approach commonly known as Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM). This approach seeks to empower rural communities by giving them power to have a say on the natural resources in pursuit of sustainable development. The Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) seeks to empower rural communities by granting them custodianship over the wildlife in their areas. CAMPFIRE was conceived by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM). DNPWLM saw CAMPFIRE as a way of correcting the imbalances in dealing with natural resources especially in wildlife conservation issues.

Hwange District has a population of 133 961 (ZimStat, 2012). The Hwange Rural District Council (RDC) of 20 wards has a population of sixty two thousand six hundred and forty nine (62 649). Ward 1 under Hwange RDC has nine hundred sixty (960) households (ibid). Between the years 2001 and 2004, the District, embarked on a resettlement program of people adjacent to the Matetsi Intensive conservation area into the Woodlands area of Ward 1. Matetsi Intensive Conservation Area was renamed to Matetsi Environmental Conservation Area (MECA) after the 2002 to 2004 land reform program in Zimbabwe. The reform program allowed people to be resettled into the Intensive Conservation Area under a Wildlife Land Reform based program.

According to the Ministry of Lands, the community was resettled under the village model referred to as the A1 Model. Under the A1 Model each household is allocated an average of three hectares of land. The Woodlands area covers an area of approximately one thousand five hundred hectares of which one third is for subsistence activities such as livestock and crop farming and two thirds of the land is for wildlife conservation. The rainfall season in the Woodlands Ward 1 normally begins in November and ends in April. According to Nhemachena et al. (2014) the rainfall pattern is erratic with periodic dry spells and sometimes mid season droughts. The rainfall season is followed by a cool to warm dry season from May to September. Mean annual temperature is 20°C with a range of 18°C to 25°C. Soils are predominantly the Kalahari sands. Kalahari sands are of Aeolian sand origin, deep (>150 cm) with 93% sand, 4% clay and 3% silt in the 0 -11 cm (ibid). The landscape is generally undulating becoming rugged and hilly towards the Zambezi River. Altitudes are between 930 and 1200m above sea level. There are only very few seasonal streams cutting across the wards.

The dominant vegetation above the Kalahari sands consists of dense deciduous woodland with the species teak (*Baikiaea plurijuga*) being dominant. Other tree species found in the area are; bush willow (*Combretum collinum*), mopane (*Colophospermum mopane*), blood wood (*Pterocarpus angolensis*), pod mahogany (*Afezelia guanzensis*) and musasa (*Brachystegia bohemii*). Grass cover is poor. Common grasses are the Aristida, Heteropogon and Dactyloctenium species. The vegetation type is tree - bush - savanna (Nhemachena et al., 2014). The farming system in Ward 1 is semi-extensive mixed farming involving small stock and cattle production, and cultivation of drought tolerant crops. In summer, the farmers grow maize, sorghum and pearl millet as the major cereal grain crops. Groundnut, *bambara* nut and cowpea are the three legumes grown, but areas grown to legumes each season are generally small. Therefore the main source of income

generation for the Woodlands community is proceeds from wildlife utilisation. In the Ward 1 Woodlands community within the (MECA) area of Hwange District all farmers are in village model with the larger part of the land being on a wildlife corridor with limited grazing encroachment. Each household averages 2 – 3 hectares arable land and communal grazing resettlement.

1.1. Aim

The study sought to access the role of the actors in managing conflicts emanating from the utilisation of the wildlife resources. Through dialectic means it sought to identify ways and means in which conflict could be alleviated.

1.1.1. Study area

The study population was the newly resettled farmers in the Woodlands area in Ward 1 (Hwange District) (see Fig 1).

2. Literature review

The literature review is split into three subsections. The first covers natural resource management. The second is community participation and Natural Resources Utilization. The third section covers Community Wildlife Management and Conflict Management.

2.1. Natural resource management

Conservation refers to the management of ecosystems so as to ensure their sustainability and survival (IUCN/UNEP/WWF, 1991). In general, wildlife refers to non domesticated animals and plants

Conservation as a term has been viewed as a preservationist approach. The protectionist approach commonly known as the fences-and-fines approach has caused skepticism, lack of trust between the Parks and Wildlife authorities and the communities around the Matetsi Intensive Conservation areas. The protectionist approach sometimes also known as the 'fortress approach' has to some extent failed to protect the wildlife in Africa. Due to the perceived failure of the fences and-fines approach, since the late 1970s and early 1980s conservationists have been urged to search for alternatives to find a lasting solution. There has been a growing realization that conservation best works when the local communities affected by the wildlife are involved in the process. A stakeholder approach is needed. Increasing land use and population pressures have led to these utilitarian arguments for conservationist to link conservation with development (IUCN/UNEP/WWF, 1991; Adams, 1996).

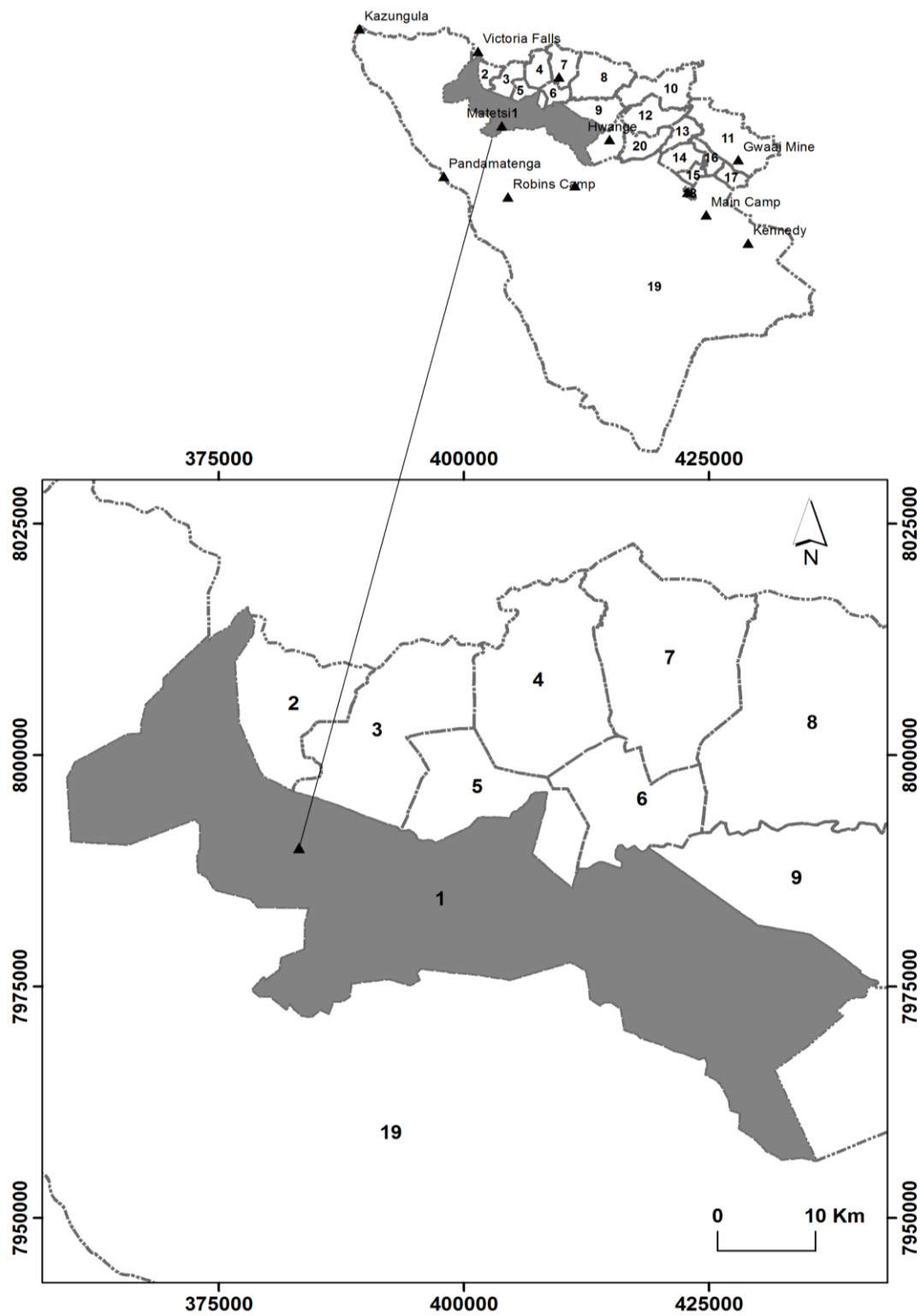


Figure 1. The geographical position of Ward 1 within the Woodlands community (Source: Parks and Wildlife Authority Offices, Victoria Falls, 2012).

2.2. Community participation in development and natural resources utilization

The Zimbabwe CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources) is a good example of the State and the communities working together in the conservation of natural resources (Metcalf, 1996). CAMPFIRE can be seen as devolution of state power in the management of natural resources. In development terms (CBNRM) is often interpreted as bottom-up approach" or "management by grass-root groups". Users are expected to lobby for policy change, making by laws, managing open access natural resources sustainability and conducting law enforcement. Participatory management of natural resources is often considered synonymous with "management by the user groups. The user groups tend to be classified as the poorest of the poor.

Tenure forms a critical factor for conservation as it entails property rights, the nature of those rights as to whether they emanate from the law or from custom (Murphree, 1996). Land tenure commonly refers to the possession of rights over land and its resources (bundle of rights) (Riddell, 1987). Okoth-Owiro (1998) posits that any system of tenure is dependent upon the historical and cultural circumstances of the community under which the community evolved from and its perception on land and tenure (Okoth-Owiro, 1988). Ultimately all lands and natural resources are controlled by the state, through various instruments such as the Zimbabwean wildlife land reform, grants and uphold a range of tenure and access rights to land and wildlife resources. Resources can be held through open access, communal property, private property and state property regimes (Okoth-Owiro, 1998). This is an analytic typology; in practice natural resources are rarely managed solely within any one of these types.

2.3. Community wildlife management and conflict management

CBNRM seeks to empower local communities with rights over wildlife, fisheries, water and the forestry's (Barrow and Murphee, 2001). This gives communities ownership and management of these natural resources. Community Wildlife Management (CWM) uses the active participatory approach in the management of wildlife. The active participatory approach puts resources under local control and gives local communities a decisive voice and representation through their own local institutions, which means participation in making decisions that affect them (Murphree, 1996). Conservation no longer requires that man and nature be kept separate by state coercion. Good governance, democratic involvement and strengthening of civil society are common conflict prevention strategies. The democratic and customary sources of authority present conflicting sources of institutional legitimation (Metcalf, 1996).

3. Methodology

The study used the inductive approaches as it explored wildlife resource utilization conflict management in the Woodlands farming community. The study did not seek to test any hypothesis but rather reach a generalization from perceptions of the actors. This study adopted a survey method. The study population was the newly resettled farmers in the Woodlands area in Ward 1 of Hwange District. Questionnaires were

administered to Matetsi ECA community members. Questionnaires with both open and closed questions centered on the themes of sources of conflict in resource utilization, nature of conflicts, community conflict management instruments, community member participation in management of the conflicts. The aim was to solicit as much participation and detailed information as possible. The study also partially relied on documentary data from the Parks and Wildlife Authority and Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement, and Hwange Rural District Council. Interviews were conducted on the other stakeholders to get their views on the conflict management. Interviews were conducted on stakeholders namely the Traditional leadership, Parks and Wildlife Authority, local police and the Ministry of Lands officials in the District.

4. Results

4.1. Personal (biographic) data

This section of the questionnaire covered the respondent's age, marital status, sex and levels of education. The section also helped to identify whether the respondents were committee members or not.

Out of all the respondents 82% were non committee members and 6 were committee members. The sex distribution of the respondents was 70% males and 30% females and 70% of the respondents were married and 4 were divorced with 6 being divorced. Out of the 34 respondents 82% were male headed and 18% were female headed households. Forty five percent had reached primary school level, 37% had secondary or tertiary education and 18% had no formal education.

4.2. The questionnaires

An absolute majority of the respondents (the Woodlands community in Ward 1) identified wildlife resource utilization as the source of conflict. The conflict came on two levels. The first involved the villagers amongst themselves and second level of conflict was the villagers with the MECC. The respondents cited that at times hunters were being brought to their area without their prior knowledge. All the respondents were aware of the existence of wildlife resource management constitution. Twenty six percent of the respondents contributed to the drafting of the constitution. Seventy four percent of respondents received a copy of the constitution as a circular drafted to the villagers. The non participatory governance system in Ward 1 could as much have been the major cause for continued conflict. The Woodlands community felt that the financial payouts were not reflective of the community income generated through wildlife utilization. In some instances the villagers failed to agree on how to utilize the generated income. Dialogue was seen as the major form of conflict resolution mechanism. Such dialogue was facilitated by other primary actors, such as the traditional leadership structures and secondary actors identified as the Community Liaison Department of the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the existing MECC structures. The community felt that data should on wildlife resources utilization should be made easily available. This would encourage transparency and trust between the community and the MECC. The MECC acted as a buffer for managing the resources in Ward 1 as well as managing wildlife resource utilization conflicts. It was also learnt that MECC is supported by a Ward 1

constitution acting a natural resource governance manual that amongst other uses regulate manages conflict. Twenty three percent of the respondents were of the view that conflict management was best left in the hands of the MECC. Thirty five percent were in favor of the traditional leadership structure. Forty two percent were in favor of the police.

4.3. The interviews

Interviews were conducted on stakeholders namely the Traditional leadership, Parks and Wildlife Authority and the Ministry of Lands officials in the district. The traditional leadership for the area revealed that several cases have been brought to their courts conflict related matters on disagreements regarding the utilization of the resources emanating from the wildlife. The leadership felt that the MECC needed to report to the traditional leadership rather than to the local government as they were the custodians of the local resources.

The Lands Office revealed that their department seats in the government established land redistribution committee where they are the secretary to the committee chaired by the District Administrator. The Lands Office noted conflict arose now and then within Ward 1 Woodlands. The Lands Office noted the need to remove parallel local wildlife utilization administrative systems. Such parallel systems were between the MECC and the Woodlands traditional leadership. The community felt that the lack of downward accountability by development committees could be addressed by vesting the power and authority onto the traditional leadership. There is need to amend the Traditional Leaders Act to include regulative and administrative structures that promote a top down accountability structure.

The Parks and Wildlife Authority identified conflicting interests amongst the villagers on how the hunting proceeds are to be shared. The authority also identified the lack of definition by the MECC as a challenge to the committee's ability to manage conflict. Parks and Wildlife Authority also identified polarized administration of wildlife utilization as a contributing factor to conflict. The MECC reports to the local government through the district council and yet the traditional leadership claims that they should oversee the administration. It was suggested that there was the need to train the MECC members as well as the community on the harmonized administration of their community resources.

5. Discussion

The analysis posits the need to decentralize powers such that the actors involved have more enabled authority to create, modify rules and their compliance and powers to adjudicate disputes. There is the need to adopt a stakeholder approach amongst the actors in the management and utilization of the wildlife resources. It was suggested during the interviews the need to train the MECC members and the community on administration of the community resources. Zimbabwe has experienced persistent droughts in last decade and wildlife utilization within the Woodlands area has become the source of livelihood. With increased dependency on wildlife benefits as a livelihood source, conflict is likely to increase as households seek more individual benefits to meet their household needs.

The local development committees have been initiated with administrative fiber of the local government structures thereby not being reflective of the local communities. The local development committees seem to have formed a parallel administrative structure within rural communities where there already exists an administrative traditional leadership system. The local development committees are not rooted in the traditional customary system but are a creation of the regulatory structure that forms the Rural District Administration. Conflict situations present a significant challenge in achieving participatory resource management and sustainable livelihoods. Rising tensions and disputes undermine the formal institutions such as MECC and constitution that govern wildlife resource use, resulting decline in community socio economic development.

For CBNRM initiatives there is need to harmonize by laws and not to have parallel governance structures between local government and traditional leadership. Stakeholder consultation through interviews revealed that socio-economic and political factors constrain local participation in conflict management processes. The factors were identified as requiring attention as well, through appropriate reform of policy, legislation, institutions and other realms of the policy environment. Training in conflict management processes may offer an important opportunity for the development of human and social capital in this regard. However, it should be noted that training alone is not likely to address all societal needs regarding natural resource conflicts. The local development committee was deemed necessary. It is therefore imperative that such structures are maintained within the community. However these structures need to be reviewed by providing legal mechanisms that make them accountable to the community and possibly reporting to traditional leadership. Community development has been conceptualized in Africa as an extension to local levels of central government institutions. If the MECC are regulated by traditional leadership they are likely to be a defined local community structure than an extension arm of central government.

6. Conclusion

Zimbabwe has experienced persistent droughts in last decade and wildlife utilization within the Woodlands area has become the source of livelihood. There is therefore need to review conflict management as benefits from wildlife are become the major source of income generation in the community. With increased dependency on wildlife benefits as a livelihood source conflict is likely to increase as households will require individual benefits to meet their household needs. Conflict situations are presenting a significant challenge to achieving participatory resource management and sustainable livelihoods. For CBNRM initiatives there is need to harmonize by laws and not to have parallel governance structures between local government and traditional leadership. All the stakeholders must be engaged in an open dialogue and transparency and accountability must be imbedded in all structures be they formal or informal.

References

- Nhemachena, C., Mano, R., Mudombi, S. and Muwanigwa, V. (2014), "Perception on climate change and its impact on livelihoods in Hwange district, Zimbabwe", *Jamba: Journal of Disaster Risks Studies*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 123-129.
- Metcalfe, S. (1996), "Whose resources are at Stake? Community based conservation and community self governance", *Rural Extension Bulletin*, Vol 10, pp. 14-18.
- Adams, W. (1996), *Conservation and Development*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Murphree, M.W. (1996), *Approaches to Community Participation*, Overseas Development Administration, London.
- Barrow, E. and Murphree, M. (2001), "Community Conservation from Concept to Practice", In Hulme, H. and Murphree, M. (Ed.), *African Wildlife and Livelihoods: The Promise and Practice of Community Conservation*, James Currey, Oxford, pp. 24-37.
- Okoth-Owiro, P. (1988). "Land Tenure and Land-use Legislation in Agroforestry Development", in Fisher, R. Barrow, E. and Jeanrenaud, S., *Linking Conservation and Poverty Reduction. Landscape, People and Power*, Earthscan, Milton Park, pp.125-130.
- Riddell, J.C. (1987), "Land Tenure and Agro forestry: A Regional Overview" in *Land, Trees and Tenure. Proceedings of the Int. Workshop on Tenure Issues in Agro forestry. In Nairobi, 1987*, ICRAF and the Land Tenure Center. Nairobi, pp. 1-45.
- IUCN/UNEP/WWF (1991), "Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living", available at: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/edocs/CFE-003.pdf> (accessed 10 April 2015).
- ZimStat (2012), "Census 2012. Provincial Report Matabeleland North", available at: http://www.zimstat.co.zw/sites/default/files/img/publications/Census/CensusResults2012/Mat_North.pdf (accessed 10 April 2015).