

Community- Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) in Distress: Experiences from Omay Communal Lands, Zimbabwe¹

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Abstract

Some scholars have argued that the process of decentralization in CBNRM provides an opportunity for NRM policy and practice to become more democratic and accountable and that the same process increases the chances for the local community to have greater control over the process of planning and management. Others believe that this decentralization can lead to uncoordinated and incoherent policy, largely based on the interests of the wealthier and more powerful people. This study explored the degree to which institutional arrangements promote or negatively impact on options and opportunities for legal framework reforms that promote sustainable and meaningful livelihood options. It further evaluated the legal and policy context that affects local people in the use and management of their resources. A case study approach was employed using Participatory Rural Appraisal methodology as the central approach at community level. This study shows that resources in the study area are generally abundant but local people's access to these resources is largely problematic due to some policy constraints. The study revealed that there is lack of congruence between policy on paper and practice on the ground in Omay regarding implementation of CBNRM activities. The study therefore recommends that there is need for coordinated activities in policy implementation. Institutional activities need to be coordinated in consultation with communities and their involvement in decision making is central for them to appreciate their resources and utilize them in such a way that they do not continue to deplete them. In addition, communication between institutions and communities is needed to make the latter aware of current challenges and opportunities for them to be reliably informed about activities and plans regarding resource use, policy implementation and livelihood potential.

Keywords: community, decentralization, institutional arrangements, livelihoods, policies, resources.

Background and Introduction

CBNRM approaches represent a major shift from centralized and state driven Natural Resource Management (NRM) regimes, characterized by the colonial and early independence periods, towards decentralized Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) regimes (Nemarundwe 2003, Murphree 1991). Within the context of CBNRM, one of the fundamental elements of governance is the capacity of communities to participate and contribute to

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decision-making on access to and use of natural resources as opposed to 'fortress' or 'coercive conservation' in the pre-existing regimes (Adams and Murphree 2001). This is the process of 'decentralization' in the recent CBNRM discourses. In addition, it has been theorized that the process of decentralization provides an opportunity for NRM policy and practice to become more democratic and accountable. In this view, decentralization increases the chances for the local community to have greater control over or stronger representation in the process of planning and management (Brock and Harrison 2006). Brock and Harrison (2006), however, counter-argue that decentralization can lead to uncoordinated and incoherent policy, largely based on the interests of the wealthier and more powerful people.

Policy adequacy and law enforcement have to a significant extent been problematic, despite the significant progress and lessons in CBNRM. Moreover, lack of recognition of the high commercial value of resources has led to conflicts and management problems, resulting in livelihood insecurity. In the same respect, there is currently a dearth of detailed literature that could assist stakeholders to understand policy adequacy and local people's livelihoods in the context of natural resource use in Omay. In essence, the study area remains largely understudied. There was therefore need for a comprehensive study assessing resource use and policy adequacy in fostering and improving communities' capabilities in acquiring livelihoods. In addition, it was envisaged that there was need for a study to map a way forward for identification of the root cause of the challenges facing the governance discourse in CBNRM.

Given the above background, the broad objective of this paper is to understand how the legal framework impacts on contribution of high value resources to livelihood security. Specifically, the paper explores the degree to which institutions promote or negatively impact on options and opportunities for legal framework reforms that promote sustainable and meaningful livelihood options. The paper further evaluates the legal and policy context for local people in use and management of the selected key resources. In addition to the above two specific objectives, the paper identifies key high value resources in the study area, in the context of their abundance, availability, accessibility and distribution. The case study of Omay, Nyaminyami District, demonstrates lessons from the last two decades, which have seen the recent documentation of inconsistencies characterising the CBNRM governance discourse.

Conceptual Issues

A number of important concepts and theoretical approaches are useful in analyzing and understanding policies for natural resources management. Jones and Murphree (2001:43) have identified four conceptual foundations in conservation policy. Although the foundations have generally been approaches to wildlife conservation, it is my contention that they can be extended to various other resources. The following four roots have been identified;

- Economic instrumentalism

- Devolutionism
- Collective proprietorship
- Process as policy

The above cited concepts are adopted for analysis of research findings in this paper.

The general assumption behind economic instrumentalism is that decisions regarding resources use and management are primarily based on economics at state and landholder levels (Jones and Murphree 2001). By implication, policy should therefore provide a supportive investment climate and confer high economic values on resources. It is therefore essential to understand the context in which Omay communities interact with their natural resources within the confines of the existing legal framework regarding commercialization of resources. Economic instrumentalism suggests that a plethora of other livelihood options can be considered in the event that one resource fails to be economically competitive.

In the policy context, African countries have generally experienced the colonial legacy of centralized state systems, which have translated into state driven Natural Resources Management (NRM) (Nemarundwe 2003). Efforts have however been made to transform colonial policies into those that enable communities to be involved in the planning and implementation of conservation programmes. Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe is a case in point. It is important to analyze to what extent devolution has materialized and its impacts on commercialization and the ecology, among other variables.

In the 1960s and 1970s, legislation conferred strong proprietorial rights over wildlife to owners of private land (Murombedzi 1992). This model has been regarded as a 'successful model' which has greatly influenced further policy evolution (Jones and Murphree 2001:44). This evolution has seen the transfer of the model to communal lands, translating into collective proprietorship. It is important to define these communities and assess whether they have developed effective institutions of collective management in securing livelihoods, particularly where current social and economic realities call for individualism.

Process as policy is a perspective that is considered to deal with issues through a rigorous exercise of evaluation, operating by negative feedback in relation to defined objectives (Bell 1987). It is therefore essential to assess the efforts made by relevant stakeholders to evaluate NRM programmes in Omay.

Methodology

Case Study Approach

The case of Omay was used to gain deep insights of the issues under discussion. The study area is situated in the North Eastern part of the Zambezi

valley. The communal lands fall under Nyaminyami District, which is made up of 3 communal lands (see Figure 1 below). The other 2 are Kanyati and Gatshe Gatshe communal lands. Omay is on the Southern shore of Lake Kariba and is adjacent to Matusadonha National Park. In addition, Omay has a total area of 2 870 sq. km (Taylor, 1990). Omay Communal Lands are separated from Kanyati and Gatshe Gatshe communal lands by the Matusadonha National Park. The latter is located at the centre of the district and constitutes approximately 30 % of the total area. Omay is characterised by low agricultural potential and is located in agro- ecological zones 3, 4 and 5 (Murombedzi 1993).

The environment is semi-arid and there is generally a seasonal rainfall pattern that is highly variable and barely amounting to 650 mm per year. Omay has a hot climate with maximum temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius and rarely falling below 17 degrees Celsius. The soils are generally poor, resulting in consistently poor yields for the locals. The situation is compounded by the topography which is largely not amenable to intensive agriculture of any kind (Murombedzi, 1993; Taylor, 1990). In addition, Omay Communal lands are Tsetse infested, a characteristic that makes livestock rearing almost impossible. Largely, only goats are kept by the communities. Omay Communal Lands are made up of 9 wards which are under the jurisdiction of Nyaminyami Rural District Council. Ward 1, Chalala, does not fall under any chief but is governed by Nyaminyami Rural District Council (NRDC). It has been designated as peri- urban since around 1998. Before this, it fell under the jurisdiction of Chief Mola, it being adjacent to the Mola area. While wards 3 and 4 fall under Chief Mola, wards 5 and 6 are under Chief Negande. Wards 7 and 8 fall under Chief Nebiri and 9 and 10 under Chief Msampakaruma.

Each chief has two wards under him. The sampling frame came up with one village per ward, making it 2 villages under each chief. In each ward, 1 village was selected on the basis of its involvement with wildlife, such as the existence of a safari operator and the number of wildlife sub-stations within it. The general assumption being that this village has some revenues accruing from wildlife. The other village from the same ward was selected on the basis that it was less or not involved in wildlife *per se*, presenting a different scenario from the first one. Although there are a number of natural resources in Omay that communities use, wildlife is a major issue and the assumption is that communities are heavily involved with wildlife. As a result, it became imperative to make it a major criterion in coming up with the villages to be chosen as part of the sampling frame. Ward 1, Chalala, which has a different set up from the rest of the wards under the four chiefs was selected as the ninth ward. It is the only ward that is involved in fisheries and therefore provides a scenario for comparison. In addition, Chalala is considered to be peri- urban and therefore no longer governed by a Chief. Other criteria that were taken into consideration in coming up with a sample include the following;

- Population size of the village
- Infrastructural development of the village

- Ethnic composition of the villagers

Table 1 Sample for the Research

Ward	Chief	Villages	Sub-villages
1	NRDC		
3	Mola	Mujokere	Mujokere Kayi
4	Mola	Marembera	Siamavhu Shangwe
5	Negande	Mabulwe	Mabwadu Siachamwaika
6	Negande	Nselelo	Siachakanzwa Sianjalika
7	Nebiri	Maya	Chikwate Siampongo
8	Nebiri	Nzungu	Manyepa Gungu
9	Msampakaruma	Marova/Chidyamugwamu	Chacharika Zhambu
10	Msampakaruma	Chiweshe	Chibayiramagora/ Siatumbe

The sample presented in Table 3 was therefore settled on for this research, based on the criteria highlighted above. It is important to state at this point that the villages in Omay Communal Lands are large and are made up of smaller sub-villages. The number of sub-villages per each village varies with wards but range from 3 to 5. It was gathered that there is no specific formula for coming up with the number of sub-villages. Hence for this study, the researcher, with the assistance of the field assistant and the chiefs, selected 2 sub-villages per village.

The levels of inquiry were at ward and village level. Several leaders at both levels were interviewed and discussions carried out at village level. Key informant interviews were carried out with 25 interviewees from the study area. These interviewees include NRDC officials (Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and his deputy included). 2 chiefs were also formally interviewed, namely Chief Nebiri and Chief Msampakaruma. In addition, the researcher also had informal talks with Chiefs Negande and Mola to gain important insights. 16 Village heads of all the 16 sub-villages that were in the sample were interviewed as well. The representative for the councillor for Ward 1, Chalala was interviewed as part of the selected interviewees. In addition, other elderly men and women were also selected to be interviewed as it was thought that they had knowledge on the history of the area.

The qualitative approach was largely adopted to capture issues related to human perception of the phenomena under study. Qualitative research seeks depth of understanding, views social phenomena holistically and provides insight into the meaning of decisions and actions (Ulin et al. 2002). In this regard, the approach befitted the remote area of Omay, with the majority of villagers being semi-literate. It was thus important to capture their realities and the emphasis was on expressing knowledge in ways that do not always assume that the written word is the best means of communicating ideas. It is in this context that the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach was employed, based on the objectives of the study highlighted in the introduction section above. Among the techniques of the PRA were Resource Mapping, Scoring and Ranking and Historical Trend Analysis. Wealth ranking was also employed.

Figure 1 Map of Nyaminyami District

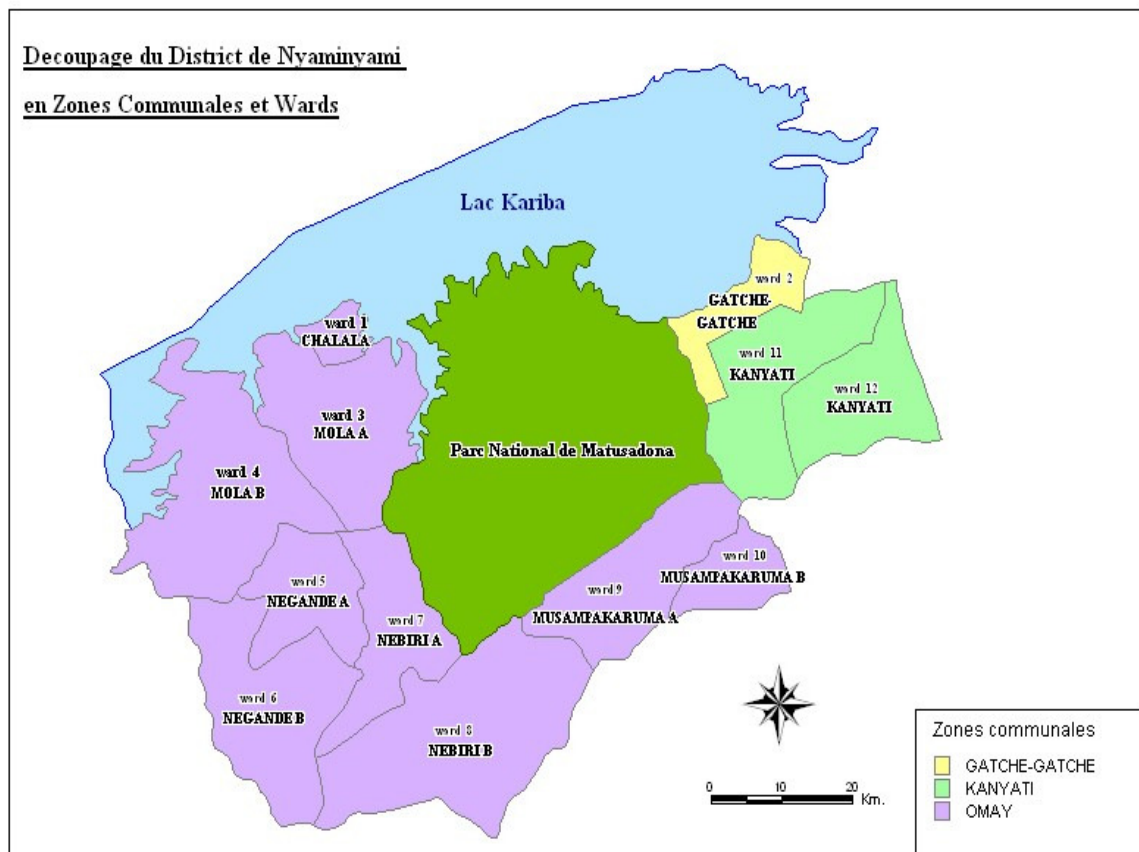


Table 2 Summary of methods, information collected and target informants

Research Method	Information Collected	Target Informants
Resource mapping	A comprehensive inventory of natural resources in Omay, Location of resources resource abundance, distribution, availability and accessibility Location of homesteads and significant infrastructure	Women, men, the elderly and leaders combined for the two villages, representatives of various committees
Scoring and Ranking	Institutional structures in the area Preferences and values of the local people in the context of the existing institutional structures Preferences and values of natural resources	Elderly men and women the villages, village heads, the councillor, traditional and modern institutional representatives
Wealth ranking	Resource groups in the study area Livelihood choices, needs and strategies	Men and women, village heads, youth representatives
Historical trend analysis	Changes in natural resource base over time Patterns of livelihood options	Men and women

Findings

Natural resource status

Exercises such as community resource mapping and historical trend analysis with community members in all the areas under Chiefs Nebiri, Negande, Mola and Msampakaruma revealed that Omay Communal Lands have a diversity of resources, which are generally abundant. These natural resources include forests, wildlife and land, among others. Water and wetlands are generally contested. However, in Chalala, land was not prioritised as one of the resources in their area because they do not use land in the same way as the communities under the 4 chieftaincies highlighted above. Chalala is considered to be peri-urban so it is not classified under communal area. No farming activity takes place in Chalala. In this way, Chalala presents a sharp contrast to the other 4 areas already highlighted. Other resources such as Ilala Palm, reeds, rangelands and fish were also mentioned as being part of the natural resource base for Omay communities. Prioritised resources common to all areas are land, water, forests and wildlife and the latter was last in the rankings by villagers from all the five

areas. However, areas close to the lake such as Mola and Chalala prioritised fish instead of wildlife and for Msampakaruma; participants prioritised Ilala Palm in place of wildlife. Msampakaruma is furthest from the lake.

Land

Villagers generally have abundant land that they have not been able to utilise up to the maximum capacity for various reasons including that they do not have draught power and adequate agricultural inputs. They rear livestock such as cattle and donkeys to a limited extent because of the infestation of Tsetse fly. It is also important to note that some of the land owned by chiefs has also been used for tributary fields (*zunde ramambo*) which are used to cultivate crops for the vulnerable such as the poor and orphans. Unlike in areas such as Nebiri and Msampakaruma, in Mola, land was never pegged and they have no problems with space for cultivation. They have adequate land that they can utilise during the wet season for cultivation. However, their major complaint regarding land is that the quality of their soils has gone down and they lack money to buy adequate agricultural inputs. In most seasons, land is left lying fallow..

In areas under Chiefs Nebiri and Msampakaruma, land was pegged in 1998 by Nyaminyami Rural District Council (NRDC) in collaboration with Agricultural Research and Extension (AREX) and each monogamous family was allocated 12 acres. Polygamous families were allocated more land with those with 2 to 4 wives getting 15 acres and those with 5 wives and above getting 17 acres. Most of the land in these pegged areas is infertile. Villagers have had to share land with their relatives and their young children also need to be allocated land once they marry. The land that is particularly contested is that for dambo cultivation which is very fertile. Only a few privileged families, especially in the area under Chief Negande have access to this land. Dambo irrigation is undertaken in swampy areas that are called *mabonzhe* (Tonga). This activity is done by a small fraction of the communities in both villages. The people who own these dambos are the same individuals who have owned them for years and have passed them down to their children.

Water

Water in the study area is generally abundant but differs in its distribution across wards and by area. Water availability in Mola is not critical as they find themselves with sufficient water, unless it is in drought years. They have access to water from the rivers when they have not dried up. The same applies to Msampakaruma. In Chief Nebiri's area, there is adequate water. The major set back in all the areas is that water points are not reliable and they therefore have problems with accessing safe water. In Nebiri, they receive water from taps. However, these have been vandalised and now function at a suboptimal level. They have resorted to fetching water from the local primary school, awaiting the repairs for the water system, which were taking long. For areas under Chief Negande, water for primary uses is harvested from a hot spring which is on top of one of the mountains that surround the area. This water moves down to the

community by the force of gravity through pipes that were installed by District Development Fund (DDF) and NRDC. However, these pipes are now old and are sometimes not functional, denying Negande communities clean water for periods of time. A dam was once built and was especially useful in an irrigation project that worked for Mabulwe communities. The dam has since been covered by soil.

The same is true of Chalala residents. They have plenty of water they fetch directly from the lake. Their problem is that they do not have safe drinking water points close to their homes. The pump that provides safe water for them had been out of order for a long time. Moreover, participants in Chalala only value water in as much as it is connected to fish but not as an important resource *per se*. They do not really value water as a separate resource because for them, being on the lakeshore only means that their important resource is fish.

Although over the years there have been boreholes installed by District Development Fund (DDF) and rehabilitated by Save the Children Fund (UK) for areas under the four chieftaincies, some of them now have very little water and sources are almost drying up. In addition, the water level decreases in the dry season just before the coming of the wet season. This has meant that some of them have to walk long distances to fetch clean water. Similarly, although there are boreholes that Msampakaruma communities fetch water from, they are not well distributed and most of them in Marova and Chiweshe villages fetch water from a long distance. These are communal boreholes that were installed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The water that they can fetch from close by is considered to be unsafe as it is not protected.

Forests

Forest resources play a critical role in Omay in supplementing livelihood. This is largely because agricultural production is low. Consumption and harvesting of these resources is basically at household level. This is because they get wild fruit and relish such as *manyenya* and *mutumburure* from the forest and also sell mushroom at Siakobvu. Mushroom is also contributing to relish for household consumption. In these forests, religious sacred groves exist where the chief and other key traditional and spiritual leaders (*svikiro*) go and appease their spirits. They conduct rain-making ceremonies (*mukwerera*) periodically, to ask for rain from their spirits and from God. These ceremonies are conducted in very private places in the area and villagers are obliged to respect these sacred areas and not misbehave when in the forest, for instance, by passing derogatory remarks on the state of trees and other products in the forest. Forests have become significantly less dense nearer homesteads although they are still quite dense as one moves away from the villages. However, villagers cannot go to these dense parts as they fear meeting dangerous game and run the risk of being attacked. For instance, in Negande, they are closer to the mountains called Mapongola which are wildlife infested, particularly by big game. As the Mola area is close to the lake, there are larger populations of wildlife and denser forests.

However, the major complaint is that the onset of CAMPFIRE saw the movement of people from their settled areas away from forests to make way for wildlife. Before this, there was a fence to mark the boundary with Matusadonha National Park but now wildlife roams to all the areas including those where people stay. This expanded forests for wildlife but made the areas that can be accessed by people smaller than before. The area of the forest that people access was reported to be fast depleting. For instance, fuel wood is now difficult to find as villagers now have to move long distances to find it and that usually means encroaching into the wildlife forest areas.

Wildlife

Wildlife is considered to be a notable resource in Nebiri and Negande areas only. These communities generally believe that the population of big game, particularly elephant, is going up. Wildlife is now more abundant than before; moving to the people, damaging crops and at times killing them, particularly in the wet season when crops are green. For Negande communities, their predicament is compounded by the fact that they live close to the hills, Mapongola, where large populations of big game dwell. Mola instead, noted fish and Msampakaruma Ilala palm. For Chalala residents, wildlife has not been 'their resource' since the area was declared peri-urban almost a decade earlier. They no longer received wildlife dividends like other areas such as Mola, Nebiri, Negande and Msampakaruma. These wildlife dividends are shares that are given to communities from the profits that accrue from wildlife through Safari Operators. Chalala is state land and no hunting is allowed. In addition, it is a non-CAMPFIRE area so they do not find any value in wildlife.

Fish

Fish is a very important resource for Mola and the most important resource in Chalala communities. In Mola, apart from the fish that they catch from rivers that are in their vicinity, they also appropriate the resource from Lake Kariba in fishing camps. Some of these fishing camps include Sibilobilo and Chalala. Most of the people who catch fish in these camps are from Mola. Apart from getting fish for relish, they have resorted to forming cooperatives in order to be able to register and form their own Kapenta Fishing companies. However, there are big Kapenta fishing companies where the majority of the residents of Chalala work.

Institutions, Policy and Legislation in the Local Context

In Omay, there are no headmen as stipulated by the Traditional Leaders Act and NRDC has not designed by-laws that can assist them in governing issues to do with natural resources and livelihoods. Their defence was that they did not have by-laws because they had drafted them 3 to 4 years prior to the interview and submitted them to the relevant local government authorities for them to be approved but up to this time they had not been approved.

Land

Land is generally allocated by traditional leaders such as village heads as stipulated by the Traditional Leaders Act. This is done in consultation with the councillor and chief. However, in most cases, village heads are not following this regulation as they simply allocate land to newcomers on their own. In addition, the general consensus by participants is that policy on land is silent. Policy implementers such as NRDC are distant on land issues. They only went as far as pegging land for families in some sections and then disappeared so much that sometimes village heads take advantage of this and allocate land without consulting the chief and councillor.

The stipulation that there should be no cultivation in stream banks has not been followed as there are a lot of people cultivating in these areas. There is generally no follow up on this rule by council and traditional leadership who have not been able to enforce this rule without assistance from council. In Maya village in Nebiri, this activity is on the increase in a bid to utilise land that is more productive other than their own allocated fields. Villagers in Negande and a few others from Mola sell green mealies that they cultivate in dambos (*mabonzhe*) and harvest in the dry season. This cultivation has continued unchecked and is leading to land degradation.

Water

NRDC does not have by-laws on the governance of water resources. Council officials dismissed that they have any role to play but that Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) are more powerful and guided by the ZINWA Act in as far as governance of water resources is concerned. There are however customary and ritual requirements that communities observe in the conservation of water resources. For instance, there are sacred springs (*masawi*) which are supposed to be revered. No black pots are allowed within the spring area and perfumed soap should not be used at the same point. These are myths surrounding desiccation of wells. Individuals who are caught going against these norms are taken to the traditional court (*dare*) where they are tried initially by the village head then by the chief if they do not reform. At the chief's court they are asked to pay a fine in the form of chicken or to work for him. The traditional belief is that if people do not follow these customs, springs may dry up.

Forests

There are no by-laws on forestry but rather, operations are governed by broader Acts such as the Communal Lands Forest Act (1928). There is a forest officer stationed at Siakobvu and who covers both Kariba Rural and Urban. The forest officer had been in the area for 3 years when the research was undertaken. Communities are not allowed to cut down trees, including hardwood, but still do. It is a great challenge for NRDC to control activities on forestry and they still have to overcome this, with the assistance of the forest officer. Traditional leaders have been empowered by the Communal Lands Forest Act to govern activities in harvesting of forest resources. Regulation of forest activities is a mammoth task

that is sometimes eased by game scouts who stumble upon culprits in the forests on their mission to trap game poachers. Complaints from traditional leaders were that there is no policing by council and the forest officer is invisible in the monitoring of resource use. However, customary policies also deter villagers from plundering forests as they are apprehended and taken to the chief where they are made to work in the *zunde ramambo* field as punishment. Policy in this case works against the livelihoods of the locals. Game scouts that patrol and monitor poaching have been accused of stopping people from utilising forest resources as they harass them if they find them in the forest, poaching. As a result, they fear utilising forest resources that could supplement their livelihood.

Wildlife

Most of the efforts of NRDC in policy implementation regarding natural resources have been towards wildlife management largely because this is where they get the largest share of their revenue from. Having been granted Appropriate Authority in 1989 to manage wildlife in communal areas, council has ever since been involved in the management of wildlife on behalf of the local communities. This gave birth to Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). Among the principles of CAMPFIRE are that communities should get not less than 50 % of the proceeds from wildlife management activities and that decision making should be devolved to the local people so that they view the resources as their own and therefore conserve them.

For a long period that ranges from 2 to 3 years, communities have not received their dividends in a consistent way and have not received communication regarding the state of their finances and how they have been used over this period of time. No meetings had been held in a long time as was custom in order to give feedback to communities. In addition, they no longer received meat from the Safari operator and that the latter had communicated with them that the meat was to be sold. NRDC was not making a follow up of whether CAMPFIRE dividends were being distributed or not. The funds that are sent out to the communities pass through the councillor who is chairperson of the CAMPFIRE committee. Council was therefore accused of not following up on these funds after disbursement. Furthermore, the destruction of their crops by wildlife such as elephant and buffalo made them develop more hostility towards wildlife especially as PAC and anti poaching by NRDC were no longer as effective as before. They could no longer place a high value on wildlife because they did not realise any benefits but costs instead.

Fish

Fishers are obliged to produce permits given by council for them to fish and later to sell the fish. As a result, most of these communities do not have fish as part of their protein as they fail to access the fish. Instead of applying for fishing permits, they poach and sell in the local villages privately. Historical trends indicate that before, they could catch fish and have relish, including earning income from the

sale of fish, but now this has decreased significantly. They were once involved in barter trade with fish for other goods such as food stuffs but now they do not get the fish to continue with the activity. The fact that many of these communities can no longer access fish has reportedly led to a great increase in poaching. This is because they now find it difficult to gain livelihood from fisheries, yet they could before.

Institutional Framework

In Omay, there are several institutions considered to be involved in natural resources management and livelihoods. These institutions in Omay have been categorised into two: government- related and other institutions. The former include District Development Fund (DDF), Agricultural Research and Extension (AREX), District AIDS Action Committee/Ward AIDS Action Committee (DAAC & WAAC), Village Development Committee (VIDCO) and the Rural District Council (RDC). The Department of Social Welfare and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) also fall under this category. The latter include SCFUK, CAMFED, Clinics, Schools and Safari operators. These institutions were evaluated against the extent to which they are involved in management of resources and provision of livelihoods for communities. Table 3 below presents a summary of the scoring and ranking from all the 5 areas.

Table 3 Institutions in Omay

Institution	Nebiri		Negande		Mola		Msampakaruma		Chalala	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
AREX	4	5	1	10	1	10	3	6	-	
DAAC & WAAC	3	7	5	3	2	7	3	6	3	5
VIDCO	1	10	0	11	0	11	0	10	-	
RDC	1	10	4	6	2	7	2	8	0	7
DDF	1	10	0	11	2	7	0	10		
Traditional leaders	8	1	5	3	5	4	10	1	-	
SCFUK	6	3	10	1	7	1	8	2	3	5
CAMFED	3	7	3	7	7	1	7	4	5	3
Clinics	7	2	8	2	5	4	8	2	9	1
Safari operators	3	7	3	7	-		-		-	

Government- related institutions

According to perceptions, government- related institutions are not very effective in assisting community management of resources and in facilitating for livelihoods. The study found that in most areas AREX officers did not play their role as expected, that is, in visiting communities to assist them during their cultivation period and in observing rules such as those to do with dambo cultivation. However, in other areas they are quite active and had helped them in a number of activities.

The VIDCO is considered to be a one man institution that is hardly recognised by communities who professed that they do not know of its existence and what its mandate is. The scores of 0 from 3 areas and 1 from Nebiri bear testimony to this. Chalala did not have a score for this institution because they do not have village structures. It further transpired that there was confusion on the part of RDC officials and DAAC & WAAC who were generally lowly ranked by most of the communities. There is not much impact in the operations of the AIDS and there are limited benefits accruing at village level. A few individuals receive assistance. In addition, assistance regarding the sick is only offered to full blown AIDS patients. DAAC and WAAC operations include assisting orphans and conducting training of village health workers in Home Based Care (HBC)

People in Omay communal lands are generally disgruntled with regards to the RDC as PAC is no longer being adequately conducted, leading to extensive damage of crops by elephants and people being trampled. Statistics indicate that a total of 45 people were attacked and killed by wild animals between 1997 and 2003. Moreover, they complain that they have not received ward dividends from CAMPFIRE proceeds for about 2 years now yet revenues have been raised.

According to perceptions, the highly prioritised institution under this category is traditional leadership that includes chiefs and village heads. Chiefs are considered to be very important in that they enforce law through village heads and keep criminal activities in check. Further justification for the high ranking was that they are warm and helpful to their subjects who feel free to consult at any given time. Chief Nebiri ferries the sick to the hospital in his car when the river is flooded. Chiefs and village heads also lead villagers in traditional rites such as rain-making ceremonies and appeasement of spirits (*bira*) that are a special traditional activity for the communities in Omay. In addition, traditional leaders are also revered by their people as they consult them periodically before they make any decisions regarding their resources. For instance, participants indicated that issues to do with wildlife dividends are brought to them by these leaders. Although they have not been receiving dividends, they were aware that traditional leaders were doing the best they can to take up their grievances to NRDC as they had lost all confidence in their councillors.

Other institutions

While the expectation is that other institutions such as Safari Operators are involved in the management of natural resources, only villagers under Chief Nebiri and one village under Chief Negande acknowledged the existence of Safari operators. Even then, they were generally lowly ranked. In addition, they also associated the Safari operators with failure of disbursement of dividends from their RDC and lack of PAC. On the whole, community perceptions tend to focus on the role played by other institutions in providing livelihoods as distinct from involvement in natural resource management, as indicated in Table 3 above.

Even though they are not directly involved in managing resources, Save the Children was highly valued by communities who receive significant assistance from the organisation in the form of food aid, agricultural inputs, school feeding, seed fairs, among other interventions. In the same respect, Cambridge Education for the Girl Child (CAMFED) was also quite highly ranked for the same reason that they provide well for the girl child in terms of school needs such as fees, uniforms and even shelter particularly in Mola. However, other communities in Msampakaruma, Chalala and Negande complained that they do not receive the same services from CAMFED that are rendered in Mola. According to them, the services that they are getting are at sub optimal level.

Clinics were listed as part of institutions in Omay and are highly ranked by communities who view them as being very important. Food aid for children under 5 was also said to be coming from Red Cross Society through the clinic. The major complaint was that there are limited drugs at the clinics and they are often told that they cannot be treated because of shortage of drugs.

Discussion

Current natural resources legislation in Zimbabwe is spelt out in a number of Acts. These acts include Communal Lands Act (1982), amended in 1985, the Communal Land Forest Produce Act (1928), amended in 1987, the Parks and Wildlife Act (1945), Tourism Act and The Forest Act (1948), among others. In addition, the Traditional Leaders Act (2002), the Rural District Councils' Act and the Environmental Management Act (2003) also relate to management of natural resources.

The Communal Lands Act assigns control over land to the President with administration by Rural District Councils. In the same context, by-laws enacted by RDCs may override any customary claims even though the act states that land allocation shall be done in accordance with customary law (Chitsike 2000). This is one glaring shortcoming as it has transpired that it is on this basis that RDCs have manipulated these stipulations to suit themselves even at the expense of communities. However, in the case of Omay, there are no by-laws on the use and management of land and other resources. The act further asserts that when a land use plan is approved by Council, a copy has to be sent to the chair of every VIDCO affected. The stipulation that there should be no cultivation in stream banks has not been observed as there are a lot of people cultivating in these areas. There is generally no follow up on this rule by council and traditional leadership. Activities in dambo cultivation have continued unchecked and were reportedly leading to land degradation. Village heads therefore sometimes take advantage of this and allocate land on their own as there is no clearly laid out procedure for them to follow, compounded by the silence by RDC in managing land. In this regard, scholars have observed that states rarely seem to act in the interests of the rural poor, and sometimes act to their detriment: for example in

policies that lead to increasing environmental degradation (Bernstein et al. (eds) 1992; Chambers 1997).

The Traditional Leaders' Act (2000) stipulates that there should be appointment of village heads who chair village assemblies. In the same context, the village head is chair for the VIDCO which is elected by members of the village assembly. The case is however different in the study area as the VIDCOs that were established around October 2006 are in such a way that they are distinct from the village assemblies and constitute a separate institution altogether. The chairpersons for these committees are not village heads as stipulated by the act, but rather, independent persons. This has made communities to view these VIDCOs with contempt and disregard any role that they might want to play. This confusion in the role played by VIDCOs in community management overshadows the critical role that they could play in conservation of resources. This compromises the potential for community management of resources inherent in communal areas who present an alternative mechanism to ensuring sustainable management of resources as local communities have continuously been viewed as custodians of resources and possible institutions for resource management (Murphree 1991).

NRDC does not have by-laws on the governance of water resources. This may be exacerbated by the fact that local institutions such as traditional leaders, village and ward development committees are not recognised by WRM legislation such as the Water Act and ZINWA Act. It disregards informal systems such as those found in communal areas and down plays the potential that these institutions have in management of resources (Manzungu 2001). Moreover, the acts do not empower local institutions for the management of water at local level. The same institutions highlighted above currently play an important role in the management of resources such as wildlife under Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) (Kujinga 2003) in planning and implementation of activities regarding resources, a factor which is missing in legislation regarding water. In addition, Nemarundwe and Kozanayi (2003) assert that little is known about institutional arrangements for water resources in communal areas. Notwithstanding, Omay communities have to a greater extent attempted to manage their water resources by observing customary and ritual requirements in conserving their water resources. Although explicit arrangements for the governance of water resources are almost non-existent, there are implicit regulatory arrangements which are understood by communities and which they also follow. Customary policies also deter villagers from plundering forests as they are apprehended and taken to the chief where they are made to work in the *zunde ramambo* field as punishment. In other words, a social contract is entered into informally.

The introduction of Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe was a milestone in promoting decentralization and devolution (Chitsike 2000). In the CAMPFIRE concept,

Appropriate Authority (AA) for wildlife management was awarded to Rural District Councils (RDCs) with legal status and the wards and villages operating under CAMPFIRE were subcommittees of RDCs. Unfortunately, the RDCs interpreted the legal provisions of AA literally and CAMPFIRE was firmly under the control of RDCs in terms of policy, general management and distribution of natural resources (Murombedzi 1992). A major disadvantage is that environmental legislation as contained in the Parks and Wildlife Act (1975) empowers the Minister to gazette any person or legal institution as an Appropriate Authority (AA). Wards and villages have no legal status and therefore cannot be conferred AA (Chitsike 2000). This legislation glosses over the fact that wards and villages may have the capacity to manage their resources in a sound manner with little interference, given capacity building training. Nyaminyami District was one of the first districts to be granted appropriate authority status. CAMPFIRE activities are based on a number of principles, among them, devolution of decision making to the locals and that 50 % of the proceeds must accrue to the relevant communities.

The NRDC official cited above revealed that Nyaminyami has about 90 % of its revenue coming from wildlife, yet communities revealed that they no longer viewed wildlife as their own. They had not received dividends for about 3 years when field work was undertaken. Council was accused of not following up on funds after disbursement. In addition, there was chaotic distribution of meat after an elephant or buffalo had been slaughtered and there was little communication on dates and procedures of meat distribution. It was reported that RDC officials were selling meat at Siakobvu Growth Point and keeping the money for their own use. It has also become difficult for communities to access fish as policy on fish has become so restrictive that access is limited to large scale fishers who have permits to fish. They also revealed that as a result, they resorted to poaching and shielding poachers in return for meat. They saw no point in conserving the resource. They therefore thought that by assisting external poachers they could get both meat and money and their fellow villagers did not report them to the authorities even when they knew the culprits. Furthermore, the destruction of their crops by wildlife such as elephant and buffalo made them develop more hostility towards wildlife especially as PAC and antipoaching by NRDC were no longer as effective as before. They could no longer place a high value on wildlife because they did not realise any benefits, but costs instead.

It is often the case that there is a strong disconnection between policy on paper and policy in practice. Livelihood changes occur for a myriad of reasons, many of which may have little, if anything, to do with policy (Brock and Harrison 2006). Brock and Harrison (2006) further cite factors such as economic status, age and gender which also influence the outcomes of managed processes of social change and the ways in which different people may be excluded from NRM processes. In a nutshell, livelihood outcomes can be unpredictable and may have very little to do with policy. However, interesting to note in the case of Omay is

that policy and legislation has a lot to do with livelihoods at local level. It is in this case policy that excludes communities from the processes of NRM where they are expected to play a central role. The Rural District Council Act reinforces the power of the council as the major force in local administration and governance. Apart from being empowered to conduct all planning and development functions, Councils raise levies and enter into contractual agreements. They further tender and engage in commercial activities for Council revenue. For instance, Safari contracts are signed by council and the Safari operator.

In the context of natural resources, Councils are empowered to make measures to conserve resources and to permit grazing, cultivation and marketing of resources, among other things. The marketing of produce is problematic as communities are required to have licences that they cannot afford and those are often acquired by the elite at the expense of the communities. The level at which communities were receiving livelihoods from wildlife management in general and CAMPFIRE in particular has gone down so much that communities stated that they did not get significant livelihood from the same. Marketing of wildlife is mainly done at council level and council indicated that this was on the decline particularly for non- consumptive tourism.

The success of NRM policy initiatives is to a large extent dependant on the relationship that exists between externally induced institutions and longer standing indigenous institutions (Brock and Harrison 2006). In CBNRM, post-independence governments in Southern Africa have adopted a 'discard approach' where traditional institutions have been replaced by modern institutions of governance (Mamimine and Mandivengerei 2001:1). Mamimine and Mandivengerei (2001), further postulate that this 'discard approach' is based on the governments' view that traditional institutions of governance are 'undemocratic and archaic' in a new political era which recognizes democratic governance as the hallmark of a modern dispensation. However, in Omay, institutions such as traditional leaders are highly esteemed by communities as they play a significant role in land allocation and also consult communities by meeting them regularly to discuss various issues concerning their development and management of resources yet, the RDC for instance, have been accused of taking over the role of the same communities to their own advantage.

Conclusions

Availability of resources in Omay cannot be questioned as the resources are fairly abundant although there is evidence to the fact that they are under pressure. However, people's access to these resources is, in some cases, problematic as certain policies have made it almost illegal for communities to access and let alone manage them. Where communities are not able to realise benefits from the resources that are considered to be theirs, they have no incentive to conserve them and end up utilising them in such a way that individuals try to maximise personal gains.

There is temporal variation in the perceptions of communities of institutions in their midst. Those institutions that facilitate livelihood for communities tend to be perceived with respect yet those that do not are viewed with hostility. Institutions such as traditional leaders and Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are highly esteemed by communities as the former play a significant role in land allocation and also consult communities by meeting them regularly to discuss various issues concerning their development and the latter provide food and other services that alleviate communities' problems. Institutions that contribute less and tamper with livelihoods such as the RDC are viewed with hostility by the communities. NRDC is reluctant to devolve authority to the communities for them to be more involved in decision making issues. In addition, minimal consultation with communities has also led to communities losing confidence in their authorities.

There is lack of congruence between policy on paper and what is on the ground in Omay regarding implementation. For instance, the VIDCO as stipulated by the Traditional Leaders Act should be chaired by the village head but in this case it is a one man committee with a no-village head chairperson having no committee members. Law enforcement is problematic and not systematic. This mismatch of policy as written down with policy in practice has affected regulation of activities in management of resources. The fact that there are no by-laws governing operations translates into a somewhat chaotic situation where policy is implemented in uncoordinated ways.

Furthermore, lack of communication between institutions such as NRDC and communities affects the way the latter relate to their institutions and the resource itself. There is no communication regarding the issue of dividends and why they are less than before. Where communities would expect to receive their dividends in the same way as before, there is no communication to highlight the issue of a decline in tourist activities and the problem of the distortions of the formal exchange rate which make the dividends far much less than they should be. Apart from the fact that markets have become unreliable due to the decline in tourist activities and the current economic hardships in the country, among others, policy regarding marketing of products requires permits that they do not have and which they consider to be very expensive. This has had negative implications on the livelihoods of the same communities.

Lessons

- There is need for coordinated activities in policy implementation. Institutional activities need to be coordinated in consultation with communities. As a result, government officials at lower levels may need support in building skills and capacities needed to make policy that addresses local problems rather than central narratives. Communities may also need skills and capacities to capitalize on opportunities that decentralization offers.

- Involvement of locals in decision making is central for them to appreciate their resources and utilize them in such a way that they do not continue to deplete them. This also has a bearing on their livelihoods.
- Communication between institutions and communities is needed to make the latter aware of current challenges and opportunities and make them be reliably informed about activities and plans regarding resource use, policy implementation and livelihood potential.
- There is need to strengthen existing institutions that communities prefer to identify with so that the same institutions can capitalize on communities' responses to enhance livelihoods.
- There is need to widen and facilitate marketing strategies to build a strong asset base for communities

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