

Presentation by the Bawa Community of Mozambique on Tchuma Tchato
for the IASCP Conference in Berkeley iVoices from the Commonsî

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It is an honour for the four of us to represent the village of Bawa in Tete Province of Mozambique. Bawa is a beautiful village at the junction of the Luangwa and the Zambezi, just above where it flows into the Cahora Bassa dam. We have abundant natural resources, and we have a new way of owning and managing them called iTchuma Tchatoî (our wealth). We have come here to tell you about it.

But first: what are our resources and our land? We must tell you that to even to say with confidence that we are Mozambicans with our own country is something new. Our country, and especially our province, was at war for thirty years. We only got peace in 1992. Bawa lies on the border with Zimbabwe and Zambia, and for most of our lives we have been moving back and forth to those countries, or living in exile with all the pain and separation this involves. We fled our land because of fighting, but we also left in search of work, money, shops or services because even though our home was rich in resources, war and politics prevented any development. We here - we Mozambicans - know many places in Zambia and Zimbabwe, but most of us only got to know our own provincial capital, Tete, because of going to get our passports to come here to America. Only a few of us community leaders had any paper or document to say we were Mozambicans, let alone to say that the land at Bawa was our land and home.

When peace came we started thinking of making the land of Bawa our home again. But this was difficult, mainly because people - especially outsiders - were using it however they liked. And there was still no basic economic development.

Now let us tell you about our land. The Zambezi valley is very dry and very hot. People can only live there because of the great Zambezi river which ever flows, sustaining people and wildlife alike, a strip of blue with lush green banks where we can farm all year round by studying the floods. Other villages are found on the banks of the rivers that flow into the Zambezi, such as the Panhame, but these rivers stop flowing in the dry season.

Even though we feel that people have been returning home in big numbers, the population is still small. The Chinthopo administrative area that we are part of has only 5,000 people but it has an area of 2,500 square kilometres. Most of the land is dense bush, occupied by wild animals. The river is full of fish.

What did we find when Mozambique achieved peace? Why did we say that we faced problems?

First, we had the problem that soldiers and former soldiers, and government officials and police were surviving on their terrible salaries by hunting and other ways of using our resources. And they did not see anything wrong with that. Second, because our own people could find no other ways to get meat or to earn money they also intensified their hunting. And we know how to hunt: we can make very good guns and we know how to track and kill all kinds of animals. We also know how to fish. And third, our colleagues in neighbouring countries, especially from Zambia, who had been looking after us all those years of conflict, were looking hungrily at our resources and also thinking how much they could sell our fish and meat in Lusaka and the Copper Belt. So they began to come to Mozambique in big numbers, and we had nothing to say. All they had to do was to pay some of the officials a few things to take whatever they wanted.

But there was a much bigger problem. We found that our land had been given by high officials who never visited Bawa to a foreign company to hunt wild animals. This company had hunted even during the war, but now there was peace they became more active and were very worried because they thought that if we came back we would interfere with their hunting. Therefore they tried to tell us where we could live and farm, where we could go, which paths we could use and so on. But most of all they tried to stop us hunting. So we began another war with them and it was hot. Many of us were badly hurt, because this company had a kind of private army and our government could not see for a long time what was happening to us.

For nearly two years after peace we remained in doubt that we had a home, that we had land of our own in Bawa. Many of us stayed in exile, and those who did come home did not build good houses. Why should we? They were just places for the family to stay whilst men searched up and down for some way to get money. And since everybody was using resources any how most of us who stayed around Bawa also did the same. Our spirit mediums were powerless to control all the hunting, although the ancestors did stop the safari hunters killing buffalo until they came to apologise for ignoring the medium and made a contribution. But fine words from the company about doing some developments in Bawa always came to nothing.

Things changed in Bawa in 1994 when we started to be visited by some of the people you see here with us today asking us if we were satisfied with having a safari company and all this hunting going on. They asked us if we wanted to do something like CAMPFIRE which they have in Zimbabwe. To tell you the truth we did not really believe they would change anything for us in Mozambique, but we knew a lot about CAMPFIRE and similar things in Zambia like ADMADE because of our time in those countries. Anyway we told them how angry we were that outsiders were hunting our wealth, iTchuma Tchatoî, without paying anything to us, or treating us like the owners of the land.

Our former Provincial Governor heard of our suffering with the company and spoke to our President, Joaquim Chissano. The President therefore ordered an Inquiry into the behaviour of this Company. This Inquiry opened the door for the wildlife department officials, because it was concluded that the company should only be allowed to continue if it started working together with the community and contributing to local development.

Eng. Luis and other members of his team then came to Bawa, with money from the Ford Foundation. After consulting us and our spirit mediums they created with us a camp on a hill next to the Zambezi near the village. This camp is called *ìZunungukeì* because it is here that the red waters of the Luangwa and the black waters of the Zambezi go round and round and mix together. They explained to local officials and village leaders how the government was prepared to make the safari company pay us for their hunting in our area. They told us that from now on the resources of Bawa would indeed be *ìour wealthì*, and so we called the program *ìTchuma Tchatoì*.

If the safari company was to sell our animals for high fees to clients there needed to be many of these animals. Therefore, the community agreed that from now on all hunting would have to be controlled for the benefit of all of us. Luis then organised scouts. All the scouts were from the community, plus one demobilised soldier sent from Tete. Our wealth had to be protected. Some of these scouts were the famous hunters in our area. They were happy to become scouts to protect and manage wildlife because they were only killing the animals because there was no other way to make a living. And those scouts, some of whom have ancestral spirits who give them talents in the bush, know everything about wildlife, about surviving in the wilderness and about the secrets of poaching. Luis trained the scouts in their role as servants of the community and protectors of nature. This training was necessary because it is normal in our society that when a person becomes a policeman or a guard his job is to become harsh to people, whilst secretly doing criminal things himself or taking bribes, claiming his powers from the *ìbig peopleì* who appoint him. When they were told that they were working for the community, we were pleased and surprised by how well the scouts undertook their duties.

But what surprised us most was that Eng. Luis and his scouts, as well as some members of the community, were brave enough to arrest the military police, the immigration officials and the local government officials who were hunting our wildlife. This was when they had no guns and lived rough in tents, and there was nothing famous about this project. In fact it was through those arrests that our scouts got their weapons, and won our respect. We were also amazed that Luis and scouts could challenge the safari company and make them hunt according to what was agreed and then to list the animals killed so that we could get our money.

We know that our former governor and our new Governor, who has visited us twice and helped us come here to California, as well as some other senior officials, were backing us when we stood up for our rights to manage and benefit from our wildlife. But we also know that in Mozambique it is only being brave enough to fight for your rights that can make a real difference.

Because of all the work that we did to start this program it became well known all over Tete and Mozambique. Communities hundreds of kilometres away started to arrest ivory hunters and foreigners cutting and stealing our forest hardwoods. President Chissano even came to visit us to see what we were doing. This was the first time since independence that anyone important has ever come to visit our area. And when the President came with his ministers they saw that this program was really ours, and that this would develop the country. Since that time he has been telling other communities, other officials and other companies that if they want to see real development, and the sustainable use of resources they should do what we are doing in iTchuma Tchato.

We worked so hard that even after one year the animals increased a lot in numbers, and also became less afraid of people. We were extremely happy about this, but at the same time began to face problems with elephants, which learnt very quickly that we would no longer harm them. The elephants therefore came into our fields and destroyed them, and even came right into the villages. This was a crisis for us the wildlife council and for Eng. Luis. Our people needed defence against the costs of living with wildlife. The scouts began to work full time defending our fields at night. But it was not enough, peoplesí banana groves were being destroyed night after night. Finally the money arrived for the building of a solar powered electric fence around our village and land. After we put up that fence and learnt how to maintain it we really celebrated!

Last year we had a terrible crisis. The money that we had been waiting for from the safari company never came. We were told that this was because the legal document signed by the Ministers of Agriculture, Local Government, Finances and Justice had taken too long to prepare in Maputo, so the company had not been given advance warning of the extra fees. We were bitterly disappointed. Why was the Ministry of Finances getting all the benefit from our hard work? Was someone somewhere taking our money? Because of this problem the community tried to fight even harder for our money. And also we found that we had to argue a lot with members of the community who said that we were being fooled by this project, and that our money would never really come.

One thing that helped a lot in solving this crisis was an exchange visit with the community from Masoka in Zimbabwe. When they came to Bawa they convinced people that these outsiders really could help us get money from our resources, and it was possible to make a lot of money through hard work and dedication to develop the area. The members of our committee saw this when

they went to Masoka, where all kinds of development are going on. Today you have heard from the chairman of that very community, Gift Zirota, who welcomed and shared their knowledge with us. More recently the whole community has been seeing films of Masoka. This has encouraged us a lot. We are now working with a Mozambican film company to make our own film on our own experience so that this can be shown to other communities in Mozambique who want to start this kind of program.

So this year we are awaiting the US\$70,000 that the company has agreed to pay for hunting their quota. Now we are more optimistic. But we shall see how and when the money comes, and what the local government will do with their half of it, which is supposed to be used for developments like schools. One thing worries us a lot. The Mozambique government decided in 1990 during the war that all elephant hunting should be banned in Mozambique because there were no controls. In our area elephants are now too many. The Zimbabwean safari hunters are shooting our elephants when they cross the border into the Dande. Each elephant they kill the community in Zimbabwe gets \$20,000 and we get nothing. This is not fair. On our side we have to kill a few elephants that become a danger to our lives, but we cannot sell these to clients. If we could have some sport hunting of elephants we would make much more money, and also feel happy about living with this wonderful but dangerous animal.

We have also started to make small amounts of money from charging a few tourists who come to our area for bird watching and fishing. In the future we want to develop this kind of activity a lot, by providing the right kinds of simple facilities, and having people from the community trained to help people enjoy the natural beauty of our land. We think tourists will be happy to come to a place where local people are the owners of the land and their hosts. Even that safari company that did not want to know about us before is now quite happy with the program. Although they have to pay a lot more money the numbers of animals have also increased and the clients say that they are happy to know that we are receiving benefits and that we want them to visit our area.

When this program really started to work we found a lot of problems in concluding who it belonged to. The Project Manager, Eng. Luis always told us that it was not his program, but instead our program. Meanwhile, other local government officials did not understand how you could have a development which belonged to the people and reduced their power. Within us members of the Renamo opposition party were saying that this project had only come because of their fight for democracy and rights, and because Renamo had persuaded Frelimo to work with traditional authorities. Meanwhile, Frelimo leaders said that this was a government program and since Frelimo had won the elections this meant that they were the owners of the program. Anyway, after a long struggle everyone now accepts that this was a program for the whole community and its environment. People also now accept that the project is managed by an elected committee, the Wildlife Council which includes both men

and women and people of different backgrounds in our community. Democracy is new for us. We already voted out most of the people on the first council when they did not satisfy the community. It is how we use money that worries people most, and we still have not received big amounts! We have a lot to learn.

This project has already had a big impact on the relationship between us and our land and natural resources. Above all it has enabled us to gain in confidence about our future as a community and about our ownership of our home. If you come to our village today you will be surprised to see how many people have come home from exile and are building nice houses because they know they will live there. You can see the difference if you cross the Zambezi river to the villages our cousins and in-laws where they continue the same life of hopelessness about development.

The feeling that the land and wildlife really are ours in terms of law and money is good to combine with our belief in the land as belonging to the ancestors. Our spirit mediums - one man and one woman - have been involved at every stage of the project, especially when we make decisions like putting up electric fences that divide us from the bush and the wildlife, and so interfere with the movement of the spirits. The ancestors accept these things because we explain to them why we need to change how we live with nature so that we can look after it in the long term, whilst improving our lives today.

For us the idea that we should be hunting or killing for commercial benefits is not something new that is against our traditions of subsistence use. We have long believed in commercially using wildlife. Nor are we people for whom the idea of loving nature is alien. We are Nhungwe, or Chikunda, a tribe created from ivory hunters and warriors. One of our ancestral land guardian spirits is iKanyembaî, or Jose do Rosario Andrade to use his official name, an Afro-Indian adventurer, ivory trader and slaver, a man who according to legend butchered short people who he despised so that the birds of prey he loved could feast upon them. What we are beginning to do with this program, however, is something new. Nowadays wildlife are not being killed for the benefit of the individual or outsiders, but for the benefit of the community as a whole. Furthermore, in the past we did not have effective ways of controlling how many animals were killed, or for looking after the animals when they were alive. Now we are developing a culture and system of doing this. Finally, we are learning that it is possible to now find other ways to make money from our environment through tourists who wish to walk, to fish or to watch birds. We hope some of you listening here today will come to visit us!

All these changes are happening in one especially new context. We are now citizens who own or at least have control over our land and the benefits that come from using it. Government is becoming a partner in our development, and the officials in our area are starting to feel that they should work for our benefit. The company that hunts in our area is also becoming our partner. And all this

means that in the eyes of our neighbours in Zimbabwe and Zambia we are no longer refugees, poor cousins whose land is no-man's land where anyone can do whatever they want. We are also now people in our own right.

Thank you for listening to our story. We look forward to answering your questions.