

# Compromised Co-management, Compromised Outcomes: Experiences from a Zimbabwean Forest

By

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*'Please' said one chief with a sad twisted smile*

*'your hacking is stretching for over a mile.*

*These forests provide us with edible sap, and cow berry fruits;*

*not to mention the spirits that live in their roots.'*

*'Never fear,' barked McGee, 'our work does no harm.*

*Its your very own cutting that's cause for alarm.'*

*'Why cutting in chaos for your houses and fuel*

*wastes fine wood we could sell in ol' Liverpool.*

*If you keep using forests for your insatiable needs*

*how will we ever supply Europe with thneeds?'* (Ribot 1997)

## Abstract

Zimbabwe embarked on decentralization of forestry resources after the “success” of devolved management of wildlife through the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). This paper looks at the outcomes of the introduction of co-management in the Mafungautsi Forest in Zimbabwe. Decentralization through co-management introduced new institutional arrangements, which have resulted in a shift of the power loci and relationships. Co-management in the Mafungautsi has not devolved meaningful powers to the new institutions. This has meant that the new institutions are upwardly accountable to the forestry department than they are towards their constituencies - whose interests they

are supposed to advance. In the Mafungautsi, this has resulted in negative environmental, social, economic and ecological outcomes. Having realized that co-management was not meeting their needs, the local actors resolved to use the various weapons at their disposal to counter the powers of the forest department. These tools in the Mafungautsi have included arson, increased poaching and the starting of fires in the forest area. The results from the Mafungautsi case study in Zimbabwe demonstrate that decentralization, which establishes institutions that are upwardly accountable to the centre, is more likely to result in negative environmental outcomes.

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## INTRODUCTION

The citation above highlights the challenges faced by local communities due to the activities of the extractive commercial timber interests. The forestry industry tends to view “non-commercial” use of forests by local farmers as destructive. This paper seeks to argue that initiatives to devolve power to the local communities in Mafungautsi, through co-management arrangements, have further re-affirmed the relevance of this citation. The central thesis is that once you have a compromised form of devolution of power, the outcomes are more likely to be compromised as well. This paper is a reflection on an attempt to devolve forestry management in Zimbabwe, which was intended to result in the yielding of positive environmental, social, economic and ecological outcomes. The local forestry authority, with the financial backing of international development agencies, embarked on a co-management initiative, which was thought to improve the sustainability of the Mafungautsi forest. Both the Forestry Commission Zimbabwe (FCZ) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) viewed this initiative within the sustainable development approach echoed at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit<sup>1</sup>. Firstly, the Rio Summit approach points out that sustainable development and economic development do not have to be mutually exclusive<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, it argues that western values of conservation have been wrongly imposed on developing countries and that hard-line ‘fortress conservation’<sup>3</sup> has resulted in more failures than successes’ (New Scientist 2003; Brockington 2002; Hulme and Murphree 2001; Beinhart 1984, 1989). This is a move away from the ‘greens’ position adopted by protectionist advocates such as Grzimek (Grzimek 1960). It is important to note that the so called ‘impending ecological disaster’ due to the declining natural resources such as forestry may be traced back to the time of Plato. Plato in 5 BC pointed out that trees were disappearing in his native country of Greece (Williams 2003)<sup>4</sup>. Soil erosion has also, some argue, been cited as one of the causes for the decay of the Roman Empire<sup>5</sup> (see Williams 2003).

The predominance of the developed world over the developing countries, within the environmental sector, has often been premised on ‘faulty science’ and knowledge, which in most instances have been embraced as the only true facts (Forsyth 2003;

Leach and Mearns 1996; Fairhead and Leach 1995, 1996; Beinart 1984, 1989; Scoones 2003; Cousins 1990). Co-management seems to have been promoted in a similar manner and the FCZ accepted the funding opportunity at a time its financial resources were dwindling. With the aid of foreign funds from CIDA the forestry department in Zimbabwe embarked on a co-management arrangement in the Mafungautsi area. The following section now looks at ‘fortress conservation’ and its rationale.

#### ‘FOREST CONSERVATION AND ITS RATIONALE

‘Fortress Conservation’ is the use of force backed by legislation that seeks to conserve forest resources through the exclusion of people from gazetted areas. The gazetted forest reserves are a common scenario in a number of countries and they might be called by different names in different contexts. In Zimbabwe these are areas set aside in terms of the Forest Act of 1996 mainly for ecological reasons. They are also referred to as protected forests. Within the wildlife sector in Zimbabwe, such reserved areas are called national parks in terms of the National Parks and Wildlife Act of 1975 (as amended in 1982).

Gazetting of forest reserves and parks was justified due to the need to protect ecosystems for various reasons including biodiversity. The tragedy of the commons rationale (Hardin 1968) was later used to reinforce the need to reserve communally owned natural resources (Feeny et al. 1990). The tragedy of the Commons first advanced by Hardin in 1968 stated that resources that are owned by a group would quickly be depleted as each individual pursues his own personal interest resulting in the destruction of the resource. This further reinforced the idea that rules and management had to be externally enforced, in the interest of the local community. Justification for the designation of forest reserves is based on technical expertise aimed at arresting degradation of forests and catchment areas. The Southern African region has an average of 15 per cent of its land area under protection. Botswana even has a higher percentage of 39 per cent (Resource Africa website). In some cases decisions were based on the rule of the thumb. For instance the United National Independence Party (UNIP) in Zambia in its 1959 Manifesto called for the setting aside of 15 per cent of all land as reserved forest (Akapelwa 1996) with social and

tenure issues not being perceived as relevant variables in solving the resource sustainability equation.

Reality has awakened states as they continue to experience rapid degradation to the ‘protected’ or ‘reserved’ forests. It has become a clear fact to the Zimbabwean government that they cannot stop the ‘tragedy of the state property.’<sup>6</sup> Financial and human resource outlay associated with ‘reserved forests’ have proved too prohibitive for the already cash strapped developing country governments<sup>7</sup> (Pullan 1988).

In Zimbabwe the Communal Areas Programme for Indigenous Resources (Campfire) has made government realise that, in certain instances, communal farmers are capable of sustainably managing their resources (Hulme and Murphree 2001). It only needs the government to entrust management of rural resources to local farmers. One has also to note that the Campfire programme has not managed to empower communities in all instances and in some cases it failed to decentralise powers to the local level institutions (Murombedzi 1994; Mandondo 2000; Alexander and McGregor 1996, 2000 – see also Bazaara 2004, this Volume).

The Tragedy of the Commons school of thought has been rejected by some academics (Bromley and Cernea 1989; Repetto and Holmes 1984; Ostrom 1990; Feeny et al. 1990; Murphree 1990, 1991; Runge 1992). Communal land was wrongly perceived as open access instead of common property. With the failure of state management of natural resources, academics are now exploring the possibility of community management of natural resources. The gazetting of common property forests, as ‘reserved forests’ has not helped reduce the rate of forest degradation. Communal farmers alienated from ‘their’ resources tend to destroy the resource under contention. This has led to a change in the conservation paradigm as outlined in the next section.

## CONSERVATION PARADIGM SHIFT

But the truth is they are beginning to think that banning hunting and fishing, erecting fences round forests to keep out poachers, and outlawing trade in endangered species are about the least effective ways of saving threatened species. Sometimes the best way forward is to dismantle existing protection laws and start again (New Scientist 21 June 2003: 41).

There has been a shift in the conservation paradigms in Africa in the past ten years. Hulme and Murphree (2001) regard this as the 'new conservation', which has moved away from 'fortress conservation' to community based natural resource management (CBNRM) (Nhira et al. 1998; Jones 2001; Kangwana and Mako 2001; Sibanda 2001; Matose 2002; Brockington 2002). Hulme and Murphree (2001) further point out that this new approach is not a panacea for all conservation problems in Africa, but it will provide a framework for conservation policies and institutions. In Zimbabwe, Campfire is such an effort and a move towards community participation in natural resource management. In Namibia, the Kunene community-based wildlife management similarly used pragmatic approaches to resolve competing interests over land-based resources (Jones 2001).

Although the new conservation is a welcome development, it has come up with its own dynamics. Forests have sadly become battlegrounds in which the state interests wrestle the indigenous or local interests. The history of the study area of Mafungautsi state forest and its environs is characterised by a history of conflict between FCZ, a state agency, and the surrounding community. This violence against local people and their property, which at times involved the use of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), are reminiscent of the experiences elsewhere in Lake Mburo National Park in Uganda (Hulme and Infield 2001) and Tarangire National Park in Tanzania (Kangwana and Mako 2001). As in the cases above, the ultimate victim of the conflict has been the forest. Whilst it is true that some aerial images from Mafungautsi Forest show that the reserved forest area has more vegetation cover than the communal areas (Mapedza, Wright and Fawcett 2003) it is still arguable that it is possible to come up with a management regime that further enhances the benefits of both the ecosystem and the human population than is currently the case under co-management. The current achievements entail the use of a significant amount of resources towards enforcing the gazetted forest boundaries. Some states, within the framework of the new paradigm shift, have embarked on resource sharing or co-management as a mechanism of correcting the past conservation injustices (Hulme and Murphree 2001). Such initiatives claim to devolve ownership and management of natural resources.

This new paradigm has seen an increase in the advocacy for community participation in forestry. It is now important that management of ecosystems has to be carried out by those immediately dependent on the resource. Despite efforts by forestry departments and states to implement participatory forestry management it is ultimately the balance of power<sup>8</sup> which will determine whether co-management will succeed or not. Many decentralised forestry management arrangements have resulted in increased responsibility for local people, without a corresponding increase in their rights and privileges (Penelon 1997). This renders some participatory forestry projects a burden to the local people and such initiatives are refused or passively accepted. In some instances the ‘donor community,’ including CIDA in Zimbabwe, have acted as the main driving force towards change in forestry departments. The FCZ or district forestry departments have half-heartedly implemented the ‘devolved’ management without meaningfully shifting the power loci to local communities.

Some initiatives are being implemented in the ‘project mode’ with the view that this is a passing phase in which donor funds can be accessed<sup>9</sup>. According to Penelon (1997) participation has been accepted as long as it does not disturb existing power structures. Often this means its restriction to project frameworks, which have a limited life span (Penelon 1997: ii). Such ‘development’ activities might result in the entrenchment of government power as was the case in the Thaba Tseka Project in Lesotho (Ferguson 1990). The next section looks at why co-management was introduced in Mafungautsi.

#### WHY CO-MANAGEMENT IN MAFUNGAUTSI?

Reasons for the introduction of co-management range from the political to the economic as well as ecological. However a reading of FCZ documents and interviews with senior staff shows that the following reasons are given for the establishment of a co-management regime:

1. The differences in perception of the forest between the FCZ and local communities as discussed above, have led to conflict over its control and utilisation. Hence there has been a dire need to resolve the conflict between the FCZ and the local communities. ‘The state control is being contested by the local communities on the grounds of legitimacy in terms of the history of

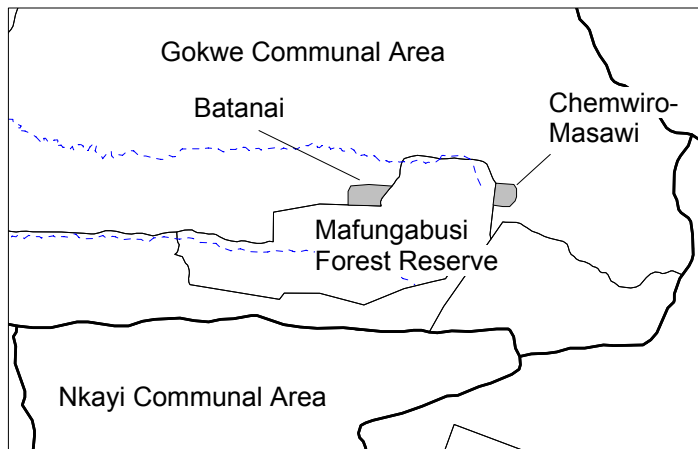
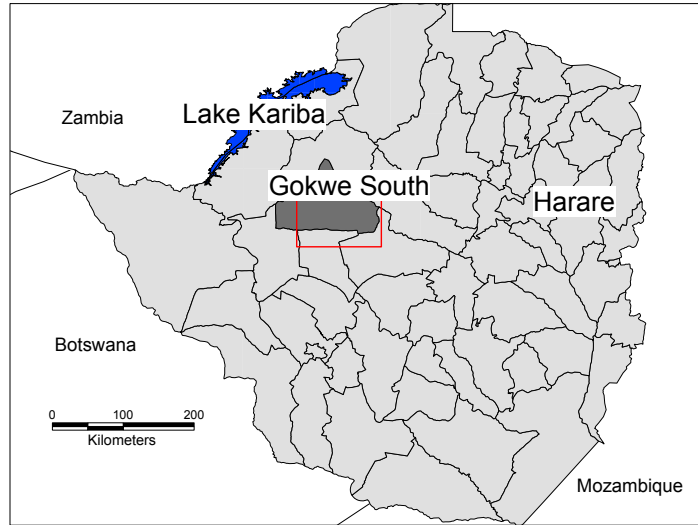
- land occupation as well as on the basis of the communities need for the forest products for their livelihoods' (Baker 1997: 21).
2. Sustainable management of the forest cannot be accomplished in the face of conflicting management principles and regimes (This meant that co-management would be used as a conflict resolution mechanism between the FCZ and the local resource users).
  3. Forestry development dynamics in many parts of the world have indicated resource sharing or co-management strategies as viable options for the management of indigenous State Forests subjected to high resource demands by local communities. This point could be questioned in that the fact that similar arrangements have worked elsewhere does not entail that they would work in Zimbabwe, as there are differences in the socio-economic and political settings. This further illustrates the role of donor funding, which embarks on 'development' projects from one country to another without critically assessing its suitability in a given context. The language of local participation and empowerment used by the FCZ appealed to the donor community. One could argue that such use of language and discourses helped to secure funding – despite not being operationalised within co-management as CIDA'S mid-term evaluation showed (Roper and Maramba 2000).
  4. Zimbabwe enunciated a multiple use policy for indigenous forests in 1985 and since then, there has been a thrust to implement the policy. The Mafungautsi Forest area has provided an opportunity for pilot implementation of the policy (Baker in FCZ 1997).

The following section gives an overview of the research area.

#### BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH AREA

The research was conducted in the Mafungautsi area of Gokwe, which falls under the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. The fieldwork for this research was carried out from 1999 to 2001. The research site is shown in Map 1. The research was carried out in the two Resource Management Committee (RMC) areas of Batanai and Chemwiro-Masawi as shown in Map 1.





- Tributaries of the Sengwa-Mbumbusi river system
- District boundaries
- Communal area / reserve boundaries

Mafungautsi is in an area with deep Kalahari sands. The soils are good for farming soon after the initial years of opening up the land. They then quickly decline in fertility. This means that more and more fertilisers and manure need to be added in subsequent years. This has meant that people end up opening up large tracts of land as fertility declines in the old fields (*makura*) (Manyame pers. comm.; GRSMP 1994). In view of the escalating costs of artificial fertilisers, this has left the local farmers with limited choice as they can hardly afford the high cost of the artificial fertilisers. Currently inflation is said to be at 583.74 per cent (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe website).

## DEVOLVING FORESTRY THROUGH CO-MANAGEMENT

Co-management involves the creation of environmental or resource regimes featuring partnerships between local communities or resource users and agencies of (sub) national governments. These state agencies normally possess the legal mandate for environmental protection, for example department of national parks or natural resources boards (Guillet 2002; Young 2002; *cf.* Jentoft 1989; Pinkerton 1989; Berkes 2002). This management strategy connects local level management with government level management institutions in areas such as fisheries, wildlife, protected areas, forests and other resources (Poffenberger and McGean 1996; Berkes 2002).

### What is co-management?

Co-management can also be defined as a situation in which two or more social actors negotiate, define and guarantee amongst themselves a fair sharing of the management functions, entitlements and responsibilities for a given territory, area or a set of natural resources (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2000; Hobley 1996). Ideally, the state should share responsibilities in decision making in a co-management arrangement - not a milder version of state management (Guillet 2002).

In the Zimbabwean context the term resource sharing or shared forest management have also been used. The devolved forestry management was to be implemented through the FCZ, which is a government agency responsible for forestry in Zimbabwe. Recently the activities of the FCZ have been streamlined in a bid to improve its financial position in the face of declining central government revenue allocation. Policy was made at head office level with the implementation-taking place at field level – in the Mafungautsi. The co-management initiative saw the creation of RMCs, which were to be the locally elected representatives who would pass on the grievances from local level in a bottom up approach. The section below explains the process of RMC formation.

### Establishment of resource management committees

Resource Management Committees in both Batanai and Chemwiro-Masawi were established in 1997. This entailed the FCZ organising the meetings where the local RMCs were elected. Seven RMC members were elected and these were namely the

chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer, secretary and three committee members. These committees were to be the link between FCZ and the local people in their 'co-management' venture. Co-management was also viewed as a way of democratising forestry management. The electoral processes for the RMC were heavily influenced by the FCZ. Both RMCs were to get revenue from the selling of thatching grass, broom grass and reeds. Under the new devolved forestry management the local communities were to get proceeds from grass and reeds collection. Firewood was to be collected with the assistance of the FPU. Although there is no commercial logging going on within the Mafungautsi Forest at the moment, proceeds of commercial timber logging were not part of the devolved forestry management package. CIDA provided the resources for the devolution process amounting to over Z\$12 million. Most of the resources were channelled to the state forestry department with communities benefiting indirectly through initiatives such as the training of some of the RMC members. Most of the resources from CIDA helped to strengthen the FCZ as it saw the acquisition of new vehicles, improved the FPU camp at Lutope in Mafungautsi. The resources also helped in the acquisition of camping equipment for the FCZ. The way the devolution of resource management was set up right from the beginning was tilted in favour of the FPU. The following section looks at the detailed research findings.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

In both Batanai and Chemwiro-Masawi RMCs the formation process was clearly driven by the FCZ. The electoral process for the RMCs were carefully manipulated in both RMCs. In the case of Chemwiro-Masawi it involved the nullification of a vote of no confidence passed by the community on the pretext that there was a need to retain the trained RMC members, even given their inefficiency. In Batanai, the FCZ approved a committee with political *heavy weights* who later misused the RMC funds. Later they were to manipulate the electoral process in order to sideline a female considered *counter productive*. This involved manipulating the number of votes that she got. These two were both created at the beginning of the implementation process. In both instances it was the FCZ which had the power to set up the rules of co-management. In the face of the FCZ and its upwardly accountable RMC, the people felt they would contest their case through defying and undermining co-management's neat bureaucracy. Chemwiro-Masawi even tried to challenge the FCZ's choice of the

RMC through the passing of a 'vote of no confidence' in their RMC. This was subsequently overruled thereby further entrenching the RMC's upwardly accountability.

#### Constitution making process

In both RMCs the constitution was adopted without any amendments. This was also true of all the RMCs in the co-management project. The operational framework was the same as they were all governed by the FCZ. Rules were beyond the comprehension of both RMCs as they were all written in English in an area with some of the lowest literacy levels in Zimbabwe (CSO 1994; GSRMP 1994). The constitution did not result in any serious changes in the mandate of the FCZ towards its management of reserved forests.

#### Commercial timber logging

Chemwiro-Masawi was unique in the sense that there was commercial timber logging going on in the communal area. This gave an opportunity for contestation between the local people, the FCZ and Gokwe South Rural District Council (RDC). Commercial timber logging by Mockdale Company gave an opportunity to the local community to claim proceeds from timber. In terms of the Communal Lands Forest Produce Act of 1987, the proceeds are supposed to go to the RDC with FCZ getting a supervisory fee. The community was further confused in that they felt that co-management, which was joint management and ownership, was supposed to make them equal partners in deriving benefits from timber rather than being restricted to some peripheral benefits such as thatch and broom grass. The argument and debate between the RDC and the community, represented by the traditional village head, not the RMC, saw debt collectors being directed to the RDC so that payment of the amount owed for the school furniture was to be paid by the RDC. This forced the RDC to accept to pay some proceeds but without any serious commitment as to when and how it was going to be done. This further exposed the RDC's double standards in that the same RDC that was engaged in Campfire on one hand disputed the fact that Campfire was about all the natural resources - not wildlife only. The machinations of the Chemwiro-Masawi Community could partly be attributed to the machination of one of the village heads who was also the secretary to the late Chief Njelele. The same village head was also a member of the Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU)'s provincial committee. He

also boasted of having visited Sweden as part of a group of farmers who wanted to assess the operations of farmers' organisations in other countries. He was a former teacher who lost his job when the government retrenched untrained teachers. The need for benefiting from commercial timber logging was also raised in Ngomeni and Muyambi Wards during the 1993 Ward Workshops. The people pointed out that the Arusha Timber Company, another concessionary company that operated in Gokwe earlier on, should not have benefited alone from the concessions, as the community felt it was entitled to the benefits.

#### Bee-keeping within Mafungautsi

Chemwiro-Masawi was in a unique position in that they were allowed to set up a bee-keeping project at the edge of the Mafungautsi Forest. The project, however, seem to have been hijacked by the elite, most of whom were not resident in either Chemwiro or Masawi. This group of ten business people had co-opted the RMC chairperson as the eleventh member. The people saw his co-operation with the business community as a betrayal of their interest. This is probably one of the reasons why a vote of no confidence in the RMC was passed. The vote of no confidence was however overruled by the FCZ. The group of business persons further had a vision of starting a dairy project within the Mafungautsi Forest. However, the community did not want to buy out the business people as they felt they could use their money better, elsewhere. Beekeeping was the FCZ's favoured option as it was seen as being environmentally benign and it was largely promoted outside the gazetted forest so it was not likely going to negatively impact on the forestry resources

#### Access to firewood

Whilst the issue of firewood was important for both areas, the Batanai area was in a more desperate situation as compared to the Chemwiro-Masawi area which was closer to the Small Scale Commercial Farming (SSCF) area, which was also reasonably endowed with trees. This meant that the people had a further choice of getting firewood from the small scale farming areas. There was much more vegetation cover within Chemwiro-Masawi RMC than Batanai RMC area (Mapedza, Wright and Fawcett 2003). This can be explained by the fact that a number of people were moved from the Mafungautsi Forest and forced into a small part of the Batanai area, which resulted in more people occupying small pieces of land. However, Chemwiro-Masawi

did not have such a history and the influx of people has not been to the same degree as in Batanai. Batanai is close to Nyaradza, which used to house former political detainees. This was an area where the former political detainees were kept, in a remote area far away from the rest of the people whom they were not supposed to contaminate with their radical political ideas. This was mainly in the 1960s. The firewood shortages are therefore more pronounced in the Batanai area than Chemwiro-Masawi area. In both instances people continued to collect firewood 'illegally' as the co-management arrangement was strategically designed to keep firewood collection to the minimum. It did not dovetail well into the labour demands for households in both RMCs. Faced with such a scenario; even RMC members were allegedly involved in the 'illegal' or 'unsupervised' firewood collection.

#### Financial resources

The Chemwiro-Masawi RMC was the first to question why there was no provision for RMC funds from money from CIDA. The RMC, mainly through the traditional village leader, was of the opinion that project funds should benefit the community in Chemwiro-Masawi RMC. The communities were supposed to benefit directly from the funds rather than have all the funds going towards the acquisition of FCZ vehicles and equipment. Such echoes came more from Chemwiro-Masawi than from Batanai RMC. The Mafungautsi Project spent a budget of Z\$8 246 422 on operational costs. Capital costs amounted to Z\$4 606 243. This totalled Z\$12 852 665 of which most of it directly benefited the FCZ alone. The RMCs directly received less than one percent of the total co-management budget. This meant that co-management benefited the FCZ more than the local community. The FCZ got vehicles, office equipment, FPU houses at Lutope, lodges and equipment for use by the FPU.

#### Powers to hold meetings

Both RMCs seem to rely on the FCZ coming and organising meetings. The FCZ would take the official minutes at these meetings. The issue of conducting meetings was outlined in the constitutions. The fact that this was not a negotiated constitution meant that many RMCs did not understand what was written in it. This then made the communities dependent on the FCZ even on issues, which were clearly stipulated in their constitutions. The constitutions seem not to have been user friendly as they were written in English, a language that alienated most of the people in both Batanai and

Chemwiro-Masawi. In the event that they held meetings on their own, such meetings would not decide on any forestry decision without the FCZ's endorsement.

#### CO-MANAGING PARTNERS OR TOP-DOWN APPROACH?

The co-management initiative according to the FCZ was to be seen from the perspectives of ecological conservation. Foyo (pers. comm.) pointed that the objective of co-management was to conserve trees and natural resources in the forest. Dzinoreva (pers. comm.) pointed out that the people were accepting the 'gospel' that they were preaching. A respondent in Chemwiro-Masawi RMC area seem to have summed up the RMC business when he said: *'RMCs are dying a natural death because the power was given to the RMCs and not the ordinary community people'* (Mpofu pers. comm.). Right from the conception of the co-management it looks like the FCZ was moving into co-management only as a way of resolving conflicts. At the beginning of the implementation of the project the first field officer to implement co-management said:

The Forestry Commission controls the forest area and will continue doing so after the implementation of the project. It will maintain the role designated to them by the government. ...co-management is meant to minimise conflicts between the Commission and the communities, which normally lead to the destruction of natural resources (Nhira's Field Notes).

From this statement one notes that the co-management of forestry resources in Mafungautsi was not a negotiated arrangement but only had conservation objectives without the need to take on board the values and beliefs of the local partners in co-management. What is outstanding about the approach in Mafungautsi is how the social considerations for the local actors in the Mafungautsi area were often seen as what Hobart calls the *'obstacles to rational progress'* (Hobart 1993). The FCZ tried to convince the people that destroying natural resources was illegal by citing sections of the Forest Act Chapter 19:05 of 1996, Communal Lands Forest Produce Act of 1987 and the Natural Resources Act 20:13 of 1996. Their explanations, using English terms, were probably not understood as the post - meeting interviews showed (15 March 2001).

The FCZ argued that this was a resource sharing scheme NOT a co-management scheme. There was no management role for the communities. Management of the forest, it was argued, was still a preserve of the FCZ. The rural communities were compared to children in a household who were said to have no say in how the head of the household runs it - and probably one could add or *mis-runs it* (Interview of 13 February 2001). One of the traditional leaders in Chemwiro-Masawi questioned why the donor funds were being used to acquire tractors and vehicles, which did not directly benefit the communities but FCZ (Focus Group Discussion of 15 January 1998).

The underlying challenge, which comes out in both RMCs, is the issue of land. Most people feel that the FCZ stole their land (Headman Ndhlalambi pers. comm.). He further pointed out that seven of his villageheads were chased out of Mafungautsi Forest. The eviction of people from the forest also saw the Batanai people, who were originally under Chief Njelele, being moved to the other side to be under the Nemangwe Chieftainship. Co-management was perceived as raising hopes of moving back to their 'old homes' in Mafungautsi. A delegation sent to the minister by Headman Ndhlalambi was told that moving back into the gazetted area was not possible. They were advised to register under the government's resettlement programme.<sup>10</sup>

The Chemwiro-Masawi RMC Chairman, said that there was a need for a few people to be allowed to settle in the forest so that they will be monitoring illegal activities from within the forest (Moyo pers. comm.). He argued that there were very productive pockets of soil within the forest area. All such moves were an attempt to address the land issue. Natural resource issues are interlinked with the availability of land. By August 2001, 49 households had settled in Mafungautsi Forest with a total of 180 households said to have 'registered' with the new Mafungautsi village head. This also coincided with the government's controversial land invasions (Moyo 2000; Marongwe 2002). This sounded like the death sentence for co-management in Mafungautsi.



## POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE ISSUE

Devolved forestry management in Mafungautsi seems to be a serious challenge due to its mismatch with practice on the ground. The ambiguous roles of the FCZ as player, referee and coach in the Mafungautsi co-management arrangement contradicts its supposed co-equal partnership status, sending signals that make co-management unsustainable. The presumption of a co-equality status on the part of the participating communities is also fundamentally contradicted by the equivocal nature of certain FCZ roles and training (Palit 1993, 1994; Schug 2000; Sundar 2000, for the Indian case). An example from the Chemwiro-Masawi area portrays them not as partners, but as villains helping bolster the extractive legitimacy of the Gokwe South RDC. The RDC had, in line with the provisions of the Communal Lands Forest Produce Act of 1987, awarded concessions for the commercial extraction of hardwood timber from the communal farmers' fields. Under the same act communal farmers are not entitled to the benefits of commercial use of forest resources available in their areas. FCZ employees played a supervisory role during the operation. This compartmentalist approach does not augur well with the Mafungautsi people, as their lives are not compartmentalised, as the cutting of timber in their fields will have consequences on their participation in the co-management (Sundar 2000).

For any co-management attempt to succeed there has to be a downwardly accountable institution, which will transform the interest of the people into reality. As demonstrated earlier in both Batanai and Chemwiro-Masawi RMCs, RMCs are more upwardly accountable to the FCZ than they are to their constituency. The issue of upwardly accountability is clearly illustrated in the Chemwiro-Masawi RMC where the people's attempt to hold the RMC to account through passing a vote of no confidence was reversed by the FCZ.

### Local communities should benefit from co-management

Before the establishment of RMCs one of the main activities that used a significant amount of resources was the chartering of a plane to fly leaders from Mafungautsi over the gazetted forest and communal areas so that they could appreciate the differences in land cover between the two resource regimes. From the community's point of view, these were resources, which could have been put to better use. People on the ground could easily tell that there is more tree cover in the gazetted forests than

the communal areas as demonstrated by the participatory mapping exercises in Batanai and Chemwiro-Masawi RMCs. The fact that traditional and RDC leaders were flown over Mafungautsi was seen as a mechanism to bribe them into the co-management rather than serve any useful purpose.

Murphree (1990) argues that it is through the demonstration of benefits that communities are willing to incur management costs. These costs have to be clearly linked to the benefits. This does not seem to be the case in Mafungautsi. Unfortunately, the socio-economic benefits to the participating communities are not central to the Project's goal and objective (Roper and Maramba 2000). In Mafungautsi,

it is still questionable whether there are enough potential economic benefits to attract the communities to assume the responsibilities of co-managing the resource. Where forests have limited economic potential, there is the need for economic diversification to lessen dependence on the stressed forest resource (Roper 2000).

Community-based forest management embraces the notion that forests should serve people and that the rural population should have a formal role to play in forest management (Roper and Maramba 2000).

The team is of the opinion that the term 'shared forest management' as used by Commission staff is actually "shared forest access" because, as will be discussed later in this report, there has been really no shared management to date (Roper and Maramba 2000; Palit 1994; Shah 1995; Banerjee 1996).

In the co-management initiatives in Gokwe South RDC, there seemed to be negative environmental outcomes as demonstrated in both Batanai and Chemwiro-Masawi RMCs. Poaching for both trees and wildlife seemed to be on the increase. Stealing from the forest was condoned even by traditional leaders who felt that people were stealing from 'Mugabe's Forest'. This meant that the forest reserve boundary also acted as a boundary for the end of traditional conservation norms and practices. The use of snares was often blamed as a dangerous strategy as it harmed livestock, but not

that the practice was unacceptable. Forest fires increased despite co-management. The ‘invasions’ into the reserved forest, with 49 households staying in the forest by August 2001, introduced a new level of local level response in line with the ‘land invasions’ enunciated at national level. About 180 households had registered to return to their old homelands (*matongo*) within Mafungautsi. This is probably going to accelerate the extraction of forest products as fields for farming are opened up. Interviews with the people who had moved into Mafungautsi demonstrated their tenure insecurity, as they were still aware of the previous waves of evictions from Mafungautsi forest. Most of them pointed that they were previously evicted from the forest hence the need to go back to ‘their old homes’. The land issue in Zimbabwe is a more complex issue, which is arguably beyond the remit of FCZ alone.

#### Revisiting the ‘Forest Reserve’ concept

The co-management of forestry resources was a measure meant to deflate the pressure and demand for the gazetted land from the local communities in the Mafungautsi area. Resource governance at a local level, it was reasoned, would perform a legitimating role for the state property regime without making concessions on the control and ownership of the forest. This approach seems to have failed, as the local communities kept on demanding to settle in the forest area. The ongoing land invasion process exacerbated the whole issue. At the end of the field research a number of people, including some neighbouring RMC members, had moved into the forest area to reclaim their stolen land. One important lesson is to review the whole approach of reserved or gazetted forest. Most of these forests were set up using rule of the thumb and ‘faulty science’, which overlooked the needs of the local communities whose livelihoods heavily depended on the forests. This then calls for innovative approaches in the management of forestry resources. These approaches must be based on genuine negotiations and willingness to accommodate the demands and the experiences of the local communities whose livelihoods depend on forestry resources and land.

#### Co-management enabling legal framework

Zimbabwe embarked on the decentralisation of governance that can be traced back to the Prime Minister’s Directive of 1984. The decentralisation attempts in Zimbabwe seem to have been normative only without really benefits trickling down to the lowest tier of governance, which is the village level. Decentralisation has only been carried

out up to the RDC level. Even at this level it has only been decentralisation of burdens in view of the austerity measures that the international financiers were putting on the Zimbabwean government (Wekwete and de Valk 1990; Makumbe 1998; Conyers 1990, 2001, 2003). There is a need to recognise the lower tiers as legal entities amongst other things. This would empower them to make more democratic decisions and might even promote downwards accountability. This is one of the dilemmas faced by RMCs as they were not legal entities and their standing was subject to the existence of RMC constitutions – which could be overruled by the FCZ.

#### The reconfiguration of forestry knowledge and science

Within the forestry institutions there tends to be a bias towards the ‘western science and knowledge’. Some of this bias seems to be commercially driven at the expense of the espoused values such as biodiversity. In the Mafungautsi there was an initiative to stump indigenous trees within the gazetted forests and replace them with eucalyptus species. Biodiversity in indigenous forests in the case of Mafungautsi are encouraged due to their importance of avoiding monocultures, which exposes the whole forest to disease outbreaks (Shiva 1993). This then raises questions on the premises of the knowledge, which is claimed to be for the good of the forests. The local communities – the very people who are said to attach little or no importance to trees and forests, have surprisingly resisted further actions by the RDCs, with the full knowledge of the FCZ, to hack down trees in the communal areas. In Gokwe the concessionaires were poorly monitored and in most instances admitted to cutting well above their quotas due to poor monitoring by the RDCs and FCZ. Forestry seems to provide a perverse incentive for the financially starved RDCs – as the more trees they cut the more revenue they are likely to get. The logic and arguments used against local communities seem to be coming true for the RDCs - who are supposed to be ‘more enlightened’ on the need to protect forests and natural resources in general.

#### CONCLUSION

This research further confirms findings by other researchers (Ribot 1999, 2001), which observe that downwardly accountable institutions at local level make a strong contribution towards positive social, ecological and environmental outcomes. Co-management which results in an upwardly accountable institution will not likely result in a sustainable management regime for natural resources such as forests as

demonstrated in this research which looked at the Mafungautsi area of Zimbabwe. Upwardly accountable institutions do not build trust and may not resolve conflicts between the state and the local communities (Singleton 1998; Berkes 2002). Defective and compromised co-management efforts, which intend to offer marginal changes whilst largely maintaining the status quo, are more likely to result in compromised outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the issue of sustainable development is a controversial issue

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with various researchers defining it in a manner which is convenient for their purposes (WECD 1987; Hanley and Atkinson 2003; Beckerman 1995).

<sup>2</sup> This thinking was further reinforced at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002.

<sup>3</sup> This approximates what Livingstone (2003) calls 'reverence' in his environmental thinking and metaphors.

<sup>4</sup> Williams (2003) further cites Cicero's essay of 43 BC as further evidence of the negative human impact on the environment.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that the causes of the decay of the Roman Empire were multifaceted and soil erosion has been cited as one of the multiple causes. Its significance is also widely contested.

<sup>6</sup> The term, which I feel, seems to be an appropriate description of the flip side of the tragedy of the commons.

<sup>7</sup> In the 2002/3 national Budget in Zimbabwe the ministry of Environment and Tourism, under which

FCZ falls, got the second least budget allocation of Z\$2.494 billion out of a total budget of Z\$782.41 billion. The official exchange rate is 1US\$=Z\$55 or 1£=Z\$85. However, due to the shortage of foreign currency, rates which are twenty times the official rate, have been said to be operational on the parallel market (The Financial Gazette, 27 February 2003 on line [www.fingaz.co.zw](http://www.fingaz.co.zw)).

<sup>8</sup> Power is a key aspect in the study of natural resource management as it helps shape the relations of production (Moore 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Murphree 2004 argues that a 'project' approach towards natural resource management is not conducive for sustainable resource management.

<sup>10</sup> This was the time the government was still involved in its first phase of re-settlement – not the current fast track land resettlement programme.