

CASS / PLAAS Inaugural Meeting On  
"Community Based Natural Resource Management in Southern Africa:  
A Regional Programme of Analysis and Communication"  
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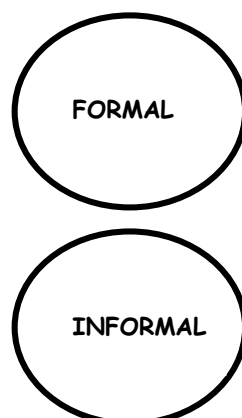
**Presentation By  
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**CBNRM AND OTHER ACRONYMS:  
AN OVERVIEW AND CHALLENGES IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN  
REGION**

**1. What is this thing called CBNRM?**

- i) The Ways In Which People Use Resources, (WIWPUR), make up an almost unlimited set of activities, ranging from collection of wild caterpillars in communal woodland to commercial farming of genetically modified maize on private land.
- ii) In general, it can be said that there has been a historical trend in WIWPUR from Informal Resource Use, (IRU), to Formal Resource Use, (FRU). The informal sector is based on rules, laws and policies that are unwritten and flexible; resource tenure is often characterised by communal access. The formal sector, by contrast, is based on written laws and policies that are modified through formal institutions such as parliaments; resource tenure tends to emphasise individual, (private), access.
- iii) The trend towards formal systems has progressed more rapidly in the northern, developed, countries than in the southern African region. Our region was, until about 120 years ago, largely dominated by the informal sector and by Informal Resource Use systems. It was the colonial experience, initiated at about that time, that has created the present juxtaposition of formal and informal sectors in many developing countries:
- iv) The informal sector is referred to by members of the informal sector as being regulated by "the laws of the spirits", *mitemo ya midzimo* in Chindau, *malamulo wa mizimu* in Chichewa, and *molao wa badimu* in Setswana. The formal sector is referred to as being regulated by "the laws of the government", respectively *mitemo ya gurumente*, *malamulo wa boma* and *molao wa hurumente*.

**THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTORS**



- v) A basic problem confronting WIWPUR is that the laws of the formal sector do not correspond or link with the laws, rules or practice of the informal sector. It results in a high proportion of IRU being illegal in terms of the laws of the formal sector, in the destruction or neglect of informal sector resource management practices and in socially constructed stalemates, (see below), between actors in the formal and informal sectors.
- vi) The term “Community Based Natural Resource Management”, (CBNRM), as it is commonly used by formal sector practitioners, is a very narrow subset of WIWPUR. To be recognised as CBNRM by these practitioners, a resource use system must be based on the intent to satisfy the following criteria:
  - It must include a significant element of communal, as opposed to private, resource use;
  - It must be sustainable, in terms of ecosystem and biodiversity conservation, of economic viability, of skills and capacity, and of socio-political viability;
  - Benefits derived from resource use must be distributed equitably through the community;
  - The institutions controlling the resource use system must be to at least some degree democratic.
- vii) Systems in which these criteria are satisfied are judged to be “successful”; those in which they are not satisfied are “unsuccessful”.
- viii) It is worth noting that the concept of CBNRM differs from those described by the other acronyms in that, while the other acronyms are purely descriptive and not value-loaded, CBNRM is highly value loaded, being an agenda promoted by its formal sector advocates.
- ix) It is important to recognise that CBNRM as defined here is an artefact of the co-existence of the informal and formal sectors of society in our region. In the developed countries, for example, the informal sector has largely disappeared, through the evolution of resource management systems towards the formal sector, dominated by private and state management systems. By contrast, the situation 120 years ago in southern Africa was dominated by the informal sector; informal resource management systems were the norm and did not require a label. They were WIWPUR. Many of these WIWPUR did not comply with the criteria for “successful” CBNRM; many situations were unsustainable, non-egalitarian and undemocratic. The question is debated of whether resource management systems complying with the criteria for successful CBNRM existed prior to the colonial era. The example of resource management in the Barotse floodplain has been held up as one possible example.
- x) To conclude: CBNRM as the term is now commonly used, is a bundle of concepts of a very specialised and political nature. This bundle of concepts exists in the polarised institutional environment, (polarised between formal and informal sectors), created by the colonial experience in the region. CBNRM is largely a construct of the formal sector, which tends to impose its conservationist and socialist agenda on the informal sector.

## **2. The origins of CBNRM in the southern African region**

- i) Prior to the start of the colonial era, resource management was largely carried out in the informal sector through WIWPUR. These resource management systems were sustainable in the sense that they had survived to, let us say, 1900 AD. This does not necessarily imply that the management systems incorporated any conscious negative feedback loops to prevent collapse, nor does it exclude this possibility. (The role of negative feedback as a necessary feature of sustainable systems will be discussed below). Moreover, it is possible, even probable, that consciously controlled sustainable management systems were extinguished in

the course of the collapse of the Late Iron Age societies of the region between about 1600 and 1900 AD, (see for example, Bell in prep.).

- ii) It also seems clear that the revival during this century of informal sustainable resource management systems was prevented by the development of formal government resource management controls, put in place with increasing rigour through the first seven decades of this century. Control of resource use, previously largely the domain of the traditional leadership, was progressively alienated to government. By the 1970s, for example, legal access by rural communities to wildlife had become virtually impossible. However, by the 1970s and 1980s, the ability of governments to enforce sustainable use of resources began to erode as a result of constraints of capacity and resources. This led to the progressive withdrawal of government from the control of resource use, in turn leaving a vacuum of authority resulting in conditions of open access to resources. This situation is generally recognised as a sufficient condition for unsustainable resource use. It is also a condition for highly inequitable access to resources because of the breakdown of state limitations on resource monopolisation by elites. Examples are the alienation of customary land to estates in Malawi, or the monopolisation of safari hunting and tourism by a few large concession holders in Botswana.
- iii) CBNRM developed out of two main strands in the southern African region:
  - The conservation strand: this strand, to which I belong, owed its origin to the realisation that government control of wildlife and other biological resources was not working. The particular stimulus was the wave of illegal off-take of elephant, rhino and other valuable species that rolled down through Africa in the 1970s and early 1980s. The intensified efforts of law enforcement by conventional conservation agencies were failing. It was recognised that the alienation of access by rural communities provided no incentive for community participation in law enforcement; quite the opposite. This strand of CBNRM, then, developed as an attempt to re-create a set economic and social incentives that would motivate rural communities living with wildlife to participate in preventing illegal off-take.
  - The social equity strand: this is the strand to which most participants in this workshop belong; the primary motivation was to redress the problems of rural poverty and inequitable access to resources. A major stimulus to this agenda was provided by the collapse of the earning power of legitimate earnings in many countries of the region in the 1970s and 1980s, exaggerating the problem of rural poverty. A specific stimulus was provided by the relatively late attainment of majority rule in Zimbabwe and South Africa, with the issue of inequitable access to resources being thrown into sharp relief.
- iv) As far as I am aware, the earliest programme that would now be described as CBNRM as defined in this paper is the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Northern Tanzania. This programme, which was initiated in the late 1950s by the colonial government of pre-independence Tanganyika, is often omitted from discussions of CBNRM, perhaps because its origins predate the current mainstream CBNRM movement. Nonetheless, it provides interesting lessons in the evolution of a co-management system of long standing. It would be useful for the southern African CBNRM establishment to review the history of this project and evaluate its performance in the light of more recent experience.
- v) The mainstream conservation-related CBNRM strand was initiated in the mid-1980s with the development of the LIRD and ADMARE programmes in Zambia and the CAMPFIRE programme in Zimbabwe. Since then, related programmes have been initiated in most of the countries in the region. Since I have no doubt that CASS and PLAAS are well informed about

most of the better-known programmes, I will not go into detail. I will, however, bring to your attention a number of recent initiatives which you may not be aware of.

- vi) Firstly I will mention a number of recent CBNRM activities in Malawi. As will be emphasised below, Malawi initially presents very unpromising prospects for CBNRM in view of its exceptionally high human population densities and high ratios of people to resources. However, a number of very interesting developments have occurred in the last few years:
- Malawi is one of the few countries in the region that has permitted consumptive use of wildlife within its National Parks. This was initiated in the early 1990s with the legalisation of the collection of leaf-eating caterpillars, (*matondo*), through which small scale farm families adjacent to Kasungu National Park could more than double their incomes, (Munthali and Mughogho, 1973). Further, the management plan for Kasungu National Park developed by Bell, Banda, Mukwinda and Nothale, (1993), and approved by government, authorised a range of community uses of the National Park including safari hunting. (However, much of this plan has not yet been put into practice).
  - In 1993, Malawi initiated a programme of community management of its lake fisheries, starting in lakes Malombe, Chilwa and Chiuta, (Bell and Donda, 1993). This programme, which has been operated by the Department of Fisheries with support from GTZ is now being extended to Lake Malawi. The programme has recently been reviewed, (ie by ULG, 1999 and by Donda, unpublished), and some adjustments recommended. One of these is that access to the fishery in particular sectors of the lake should be limited to specified fishing villages, that is, that the concept of community tenure of resources as opposed to open access, should be extended to the lakes.
  - Recently a strategic plan for the Nankumba Peninsula at the southern end of Lake Malawi has been developed by ULG Consultants Ltd., (1999), on behalf of the GEF Lake Malawi Biodiversity Conservation Project. The principal thrust of this plan is that land and resource management should be delegated to village trusts. This would include tourist sites within the National Park being allocated to trusts representing the villages that formerly occupied the National Park.
  - A recent study, (Evans, Banda and Seymour, 1999), analysing “success stories” in Malawi’s smallholder farming sector, indicated that the collapse of rural credit and access to fertiliser in the early 1990s, led to a crisis in smallholder farming. An increasing minority, now estimated at about 10% of farm families country-wide, has adopted improved agro-forestry methods, resulting in improved crop production without inorganic fertiliser and stabilisation of soils. This process appears to have been community-driven, although assisted by extension networks and donor projects.
- vii) A recent initiative in the Chimanimani area of Mozambique is of interest. This programme, funded by Ford Foundation and the World Bank GEF Trans-Frontier Conservation Area Project, intends to facilitate the development of a community-managed Biosphere Reserve. The institutional structure, now being developed, (Bell, Hatton and Mkanda, in prep), is specifically intended to overcome the problem of sustainable and equitable resource management in a highly diversified group of communities.

### 3. Problems and challenges confronting CBNRM in the region

#### i) Ratios of populations to resources:

An issue of great importance to CBNRM is the ratio of people to resources. The southern African Region presents a wide range of population: resource ratios. Some of these are summarised in Figure 1 (See Appendix), summarised from ULG, (1996). These ratios suggest a fruitful research agenda. A number of questions immediately suggest themselves:

- Are sustainable resource use systems more or less likely in conditions of high ratios of people to resources?
- Do common resources make a greater or lesser contribution to livelihoods in conditions of high ratios of people to resources?
- Will resource management systems evolve more rapidly towards private ownership in conditions of high ratios of people to resources?
- Which suites of resources will make the greatest contribution to livelihoods in conditions of different people : resource ratios? Farming in Malawi as opposed to livestock or wildlife in Botswana?

#### ii) Human nature: Most of the other problems and challenges to CBNRM in the region, (as elsewhere), stem more or less directly from human nature, the tendency of individuals or groups to pursue their own shorter term interests at the expense, both of their longer term interests and the interests of other people or groups. This tendency manifests itself in a number of patterns:

- *Murphree's Law*: Murphree's Law states that: *All societies are stratified. Each stratum strives to wrest control of decisions and money from levels above and resists devolution of control to levels below.* The operation of Murphree's Law results in the characteristic *aborted devolution of authority* that has been identified by Murphree, (1998), as the commonest constraint to the successful implementation of CBNRM. Typically, Murphree's Law can be seen in the unwillingness of government authorities to devolve control of resource management to the community level. Examples are too numerous to list. Good recent specimens can be found in the story of the evolution of the Khwai Community Trust in northern Botswana, (see Bolaane, unpublished), and the uninterrupted series of conflicts between the local community and the Provincial Service of Forestry and Wildlife over CBNRM of the Moribane Forest in Sussundenga District, Mozambique, (see de Sousa unpublished reports). The operation of Murphree's Law may be seen as the effect of human nature operating in a vertical sense, between levels of society.
- *Socially constructed stalemates*: This term, coined originally by Lee, (199x), has been used tellingly by Murphree, (for example in ULG 1999). This term refers to situations in which interest groups working in parallel block the achievement of the objectives of each other. An example would be a situation in which a conservation agency attempts to conserve wildlife in a protected area and to generate revenue through tourism by leasing concessions to tour operators. Meanwhile, the principal economic opportunity of adjacent communities is hunting, (currently illegal). The conservation agency tries but is unable to effectively enforce the law. The tour operators are unwilling to contribute to the local economy and the communities have no option but

to continue hunting, (illegally and therefore inefficiently), which reduces the conservation status of the wildlife and reduces the value of the tourist assets. This is a *socially constructed stalemate*, a lose-lose situation. It results from the capacity of each party being sufficiently balanced to allow each to veto the agenda of the others. It is important to realise that rural communities, while holding very limited formal authority or capacity, hold major powers of veto over the formal sector because of their overwhelming numbers, presence on the ground and local knowledge. The way to escape the stalemate is for each party to compromise sufficiently to give to each party enough of what its members want in order for them to withdraw their veto.

- *Corruption*: Corruption is frequently cited as one of the major stumbling blocks facing CBNRM. The argument here is that certain individuals or interest groups will eventually capture a disproportionate share of benefits from the resource management system. By so doing, the majority are discriminated against, causing them to re-assert their veto. My personal view of this issue is that the concept of corruption as used in this context by formal sector practitioners needs to be carefully examined. Could it be that the dread with which the prospect of corruption in the CBNRM context is faced is largely a product of the egalitarian political agenda?

#### **4. Conclusion**

- i) The stated objective of the CASS / PLAAS CBNRM research programme is to advise interested agencies on means through which to establish successful CBNRM programmes.
- ii) My principal conclusion here is that the programme managers should examine very carefully their objectives. Is the primary objective conservation of resources or improved and equitable livelihoods or some other objective? It is the definition of objectives or agenda that defines “success” for CBNRM. Therefore the design of the system will in turn depend on the objective.
- iii) In my view, it would be important to include in the investigation a wider range of WIWPUR and to analyse what makes examples of WIWPUR either sustainable or equitable or both.

# FIGURE 1: RATIOS OF POPULATION TO RESOURCES

