
**Community-based natural resource management
in southern Africa: a regional programme
of analysis and communication**

Report of the inaugural programme workshop

Kadoma Ranch Motel, Zimbabwe

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1. Background

Community based natural resource management (CBNRM) is the indigenous framework for rural production in southern Africa. The colonial experience and modern development trends mean that in some countries of the region, CBNRM is now less widespread than individual ownership and management and uncontrolled situations of open access. Many countries' policy is either unclear about how CBNRM can be reinforced as a sustainable framework for rural development, or uncertain as to whether community based systems have any future in national development.

Even a cursory investigation shows that CBNRM still has important potential for supporting sustainable rural production and development, and that the disintegration of such systems spells impoverishment and degradation for large populations and areas in southern Africa. But there is far too little analysis of the condition and prospects of CBNRM in different parts of the region, and far too little communication within the region about the issues and options arising in this sector. A programme to undertake systematic comparative analysis of southern African CBNRM and to stimulate the communication and debate of ideas and information about the sector in this region could make a major contribution to policy and to livelihoods.

The Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) at the University of Zimbabwe and the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape are committed to understanding CBNRM and to supporting policy and practice that will enhance the livelihoods of those who depend on it. They have started a three year programme of analysis and communication to build beyond their existing, mostly national activities into an integrated regional commitment to the CBNRM sector.

This report summarises the proceedings of the inaugural workshop that was held to launch the programme.

2. Workshop objectives, design and process

The objectives of this workshop were to:

- initiate and enhance widespread regional participation;
- assist CASS and PLAAS to design the programme activities;
- assist in the identification of priority research areas for the initial phase of the programme;
- provide guidance on how to set up and administer the research fund and make it operational;
- provide guidance on how the networking, publication and communications activities should operate.

The workshop was divided into five parts:

1. The first part was devoted to giving participants an outline of the programme and an overview presentation of the challenges to CBNRM in the region. This helped to highlight the need for the programme and to identify tangible benefits that might accrue from it.
2. The second part of the workshop consisted of presentations on key CBNRM themes that the programme could consider for further research and analysis.
3. On the basis of the thematic presentations and the discussions that followed, the third part of the workshop consisted of sectoral responses to these thematic issues. This was intended to inform the thematic discussion with commentary based on practical experience in the different natural resource sectors in the region. It was hoped that the programme's research work could thus be targeted on real gaps in the field, instead of just addressing interesting academic questions.

4. The next part of the workshop was devoted to setting priorities for the programme's research work on the basis of the previous presentations and discussions.
5. Finally, the workshop discussed the operation of the programme's various components. Linked to this last part of the programme was an inaugural meeting of the programme's steering committee.

3. The programme and the challenges to CBNRM

3.1. The programme

The general objective of this three year regional programme is to contribute to the sustainable enhancement of rural livelihoods in southern Africa by promoting a broader and deeper understanding of how natural resources can be used and managed sustainably through group based institutions and decision making.

In order to achieve its general objective, the programme aims to:

- enhance regional understanding of the opportunities and constraints of CBNRM through in depth analysis, comparison, synthesis, theoretical development and operational recommendations;
- draw out lessons for CBNRM policy and practice through the analysis of cross-regional and cross-sectoral commonalities and differences;
- contribute to improvements in the practice of CBNRM;
- make a range of actors and agencies in southern Africa more aware of CBNRM concepts, activities, methods, opportunities and constraints by stimulating debate and by communicating ideas and information;
- contribute to the regional validation of group based systems of resource tenure and management as viable modern frameworks for sustainable development and as economically, environmentally and socially legitimate alternatives to individualised, freehold based systems.

The programme has **two components**:

- **comparative analysis** of CBNRM issues in southern Africa will be undertaken by programme staff and by recipients of programme research grants. A number of key regional CBNRM themes have been identified. A selection of these themes, as well as those that arise in the course of further study and debate, will be subjected to rigorous investigation by the programme. The programme will review secondary data rather than undertake primary data collection in the field, as a number of other field research and development programmes can supply comparative empirical material for review. CASS and PLAAS are themselves involved in several such field activities, with other funding. Other regional researchers not directly funded by the programme will also be encouraged to link their work into the programme's networks;
- **communications** activities by the programme will disseminate information and analysis and stimulate debate on CBNRM through an open and a moderated Internet forum; and through the publication of short guideline papers on policy and practice, research papers, and newsletters. Annual regional meetings will be held to review the overall progress of the programme and the state of the CBNRM sector in southern Africa as a whole. CASS and PLAAS thus intend to develop an active network of CBNRM analysis and concern across the region.

The users and beneficiaries of the programme will be policy and decision makers at all levels of governance in southern African society; those actually responsible for the group management of natural resources at the local level; NGOs and CBOs involved in the CBNRM sector; and the regional applied research community.

The principal output of the programme will be an enhanced operational understanding of how CBNRM functions in southern Africa; the constraints and opportunities that pertain to it; and how CBNRM can be built effectively into sustainable rural development strategies for the region.

While there was general agreement about the overall concept and framework of the programme, there were some concerns among participants regarding the regionality of the programme. It was recommended that the coordinators ensure that the programme be truly regional and not biased towards South Africa and Zimbabwe, its two host countries. Facilities offered by the programme should also be accessed regionally. As a means of attracting and encouraging regional participation, the programme should be designed and implemented in such a way that it produces quality products with which regional applied researchers would be proud to be associated. In pursuit of this goal, it would be advisable for CASS and PLAAS to seek the inputs of other regional institutions in the design and execution of the programme. This inaugural workshop was acknowledged as an important step in the right direction.

However, there was some concern about the short duration of the programme (only three years) vis a vis the long term nature of some of the issues that it will tackle. There were fears that the quality of programme work might suffer with such a short implementation period. It was suggested that programme goals and expectations be kept realistic.

3.2. Challenges to CBNRM in southern Africa

Richard Bell, a CBNRM specialist based in Botswana, presented this first paper to the workshop. He outlined the origins and current character of the 'CBNRM' concept in southern Africa. Differentiating between the 'formal' and the 'informal' spheres in the region, he suggested that 'CBNRM' is part of the former's 'development' agenda towards the latter. He noted that current interpretations of CBNRM, typically conceived within a project framework, emphasise economic, environmental and other forms of sustainability; the equitable distribution of benefits; and 'democratic' institutions. He urged all involved in the sector to look beyond these conventional definitions and frameworks in their approach to CBNRM. Challenges to CBNRM in southern Africa include the frequently aborted devolution of authority to local resource users and managers; and the 'socially constructed stalemates' that arise when two or more parties in CBNRM and its policy frameworks have an effective veto over what happens on the ground.

4. Thematic issues

Four papers were presented in this part of the workshop. They led to lively and useful discussion. Only summary details of these papers are provided here, as they will be made available separately by the programme.

Prof. Marshall Murphree (Chair of the CASS Trust) presented a paper on **governance and community capacity** in southern African CBNRM. Paraphrasing Allan Kaplan's argument that 'development is about facilitating resourcefulness', he argued that in promoting CBNRM, we should be enabling people to participate in the governance of their own lives. He therefore proposed a change of mindset among those who support and analyse CBNRM. He said that it is unrealistic to propose success in CBNRM as 'a linear progression towards a predetermined set of fixed goals'. So much can change over a few years in so many of the complex structures, conditions and interactions underpinning CBNRM that 'our predetermination of [CBNRM] goals can never be more than partial and indeterminate'. Instead, he argued, we should 'see process as an end as well as a means, and... accept that the core objective of CBNRM is communal capacity for dynamic and adaptive governance in the arena of natural resource use'.

Prof. Bruce Campbell (Director, Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Zimbabwe) gave a paper on **rural livelihoods, poverty issues and CBNRM**. He argued that much current livelihood analysis is very superficial, and that much CBNRM work lacks adequate reference to theory. He called for this programme's

work to be based in a proper review of theory and of other pertinent research. The programme, he said, could make a useful contribution by guarding scholarship; using cutting edge research techniques; undertaking a critique of the sustainable livelihoods paradigm and its relationship to CBNRM; analysing and understanding evolving household livelihood strategies and their links to CBNRM; and investigating the differentiation in these strategies and the way it affects CBNRM.

In his paper on **social differentiation issues**, Prof. Ben Cousins (Director, PLAAS) offered a 'practical political economy approach' to CBNRM. He outlined some of the many pertinent dimensions of social differentiation in southern Africa, and went on to discuss the meanings, strengths and weaknesses of the much abused concept of 'community'. He concluded that the notion of 'community' may sometimes be a weapon in the political struggles surrounding CBNRM, but that there often is a genuine element of oneness in southern African communities. The question is whether there is potential for this oneness to evolve and grow, and whether CBNRM can support this process. He outlined a number of steps that can be taken in working from analysis to intervention in the CBNRM sector: stakeholder analysis; political feasibility analysis; the integrated analysis of CBNRM incentives; analysis of the 'hidden' dimensions of power; and analysis of the institutionalised frameworks of power within which CBNRM must occur. He concluded by suggesting that the programme undertake comparative research on the impact of differentiation in CBNRM programmes and contexts; and that it assess the intervention strategies of various actors in the CBNRM sector.

Dr Dale Doré presented a paper on **resource tenure issues** in which he offered to 'deconstruct CBNRM'. Posing 12 generally critical questions about the assumptions and paradigms that guide the current enthusiasm for CBNRM, he argued that typically, very few of Ostrom's conditions for successful common property resource management are in place. He warned that it is risky to advocate CBNRM when we have so little evidence that it actually works. He suggested research by the programme on the concept of exclusivity in CBNRM, and on the transformation of institutions (especially traditional institutions) that often arises in CBNRM contexts.

5. Sectoral responses

Seven short inputs summarised reactions to the thematic issues from the perspectives of different natural resource management sectors. The intention was to develop a matrix of issues, concerns and commentary that related general CBNRM themes to the specifics of different types of resource use and management in southern Africa.

Dr Patrick Mamimine (CASS) presented comments from the perspective of **land tenure and management**. This led to discussion of the problem of alienation of land from community tenure to outside interests. Corruption and political interference in the rural land sector are a real concern in parts of the region. It was pointed out that land is in fact another cross-cutting, thematic issue and that land is back on many national agendas at present. Some participants suggested that land tenure issues and their relationship to CBNRM could be a useful research theme for the programme.

Mr Excellent Hachikela (IUCN) responded with reference to **range management**. He argued that not enough is understood about how applicable CBNRM experience in the wildlife sector is when it is applied to other resource sectors. In discussion, it was suggested that this programme's research might stimulate further debate on the applicability of the Behnke and Scoones model of range resource use and sustainability.

Dr Godwin Kowero (CIFOR) presented comments with regard to **woodland management**. He urged CBNRM analysts to recognise the diversity of resources and of resource uses and levels of dependence on resources. Woodland resources, he argued, needed to be assessed in an integrated way: both those in forests and those on farms. He noted many current social trends that are not conducive to group management of woodland resources. He suggested that key issues include stakeholder interaction; the coherence of resource management entities; the sharing of responsibilities, costs and benefits in CBNRM; an evaluation of the roles

and significance of woodlands and trees on farms in rural livelihoods; and the process of local institutional transformations as they affect CBNRM.

Mr Isaac Malasha (CASS) and Dr Ragnhilde Overa (Christian Michelsen Institute) presented a response from the **fisheries** sector. They noted that this is a sector where co-management can be particularly important. Like other commentators, they focused on divergent institutional strategies as a key cross-cutting issue, and stressed the need to understand how livelihood priorities are reflected in natural resource use and management.

Dr Stanley Khaila (University of Malawi) provided commentary from the perspective of the **water** sector. Population pressures and water scarcity problems vary across southern Africa. A range of water policy reforms and issues are currently being addressed in several countries of the region. These include multiple water uses; the relationship between land and water rights; conflicts and conflict management; inter-sectoral policy conflicts, e.g. on stream side cultivation; interactions between sectors, e.g. in catchment management; and the sharing of water resources at regional level. For him, the most important issue is the capacity of resource management institutions.

Mr Excellent Hachikela (IUCN) returned with a further commentary that referred to **wetlands**. He pointed out that wetlands are an ecosystem rather than a sector; that various resources within wetlands can have different tenure systems; and that tenure issues are currently a key concern in wetlands management. A number of countries are developing wetlands policies that recognise the important ecological functions of these areas. Discussion arose about the relationship between resource value and the intensity of management input, which led to a suggestion that programme research could compare resource management and livelihoods across the ecosystem spectrum of resource values – for example, from wetlands to semi-arid areas.

Dr Patrick Mamimine (CASS) also made a second input, commenting from the perspective of the **wildlife** sector. He noted some of the issues arising in this sector: resource access; benefit distribution and the capacity for veto by those less closely involved in the process (the ‘socially constructed stalemates’ referred to earlier); the sustainability of resource use; the availability of land for the sector; problem animal control; the costs and benefits of community-based wildlife management; and the differentials between decentralisation and devolution that have been demonstrated in the region’s experience with this sector.

6. Research priorities

Following the thematic presentations and sectoral responses, workshop participants debated potential research priorities for the programme. **Criteria** that were taken into account included:

- relevance to the context of this programme;
- preferably to have a regional dimension;
- preferably to take a multidisciplinary approach;
- tackling cross-sectoral issues;
- realistic in scope;
- targeted at gaps in currently available information and analysis;
- capable of achieving focused, readable and useable outputs;
- of key importance to CBNRM in southern Africa as a whole.

Participants were also reminded of the modest research resources that the programme would be able to deploy over its three year time frame. These are 40% of the time of each of two staff members (one at CASS and one at PLAAS), together with six person months of research per year by recipients of programme applied research grants.

A number of **potential research themes** were identified in the debate. These included:

- co-management;
- conflict resolution;
- technical resource monitoring, resource management decision making and indigenous technical knowledge;
- business and financial management issues;
- negotiation and relationships between community resource management structures and outside agencies, neighbours, clients and authorities;
- resource and revenue sharing;
- strategic planning and adaptive management in CBNRM;
- social authority in CBNRM;
- assuring environmental security and environmental justice.

Further discussion led to this set of themes being distilled into two **potential focus areas**. One would address **livelihoods** issues. The other would focus on **governance** concerns. There were also suggestions that the debate on criteria for successful CBNRM in southern Africa needed to be taken further. Within the **governance** field, several key issues were identified:

- the devolution of authority;
- how shocks and stresses have affected and shaped social capital;
- how and why groups develop the institutional capacity to manage natural resources;
- how to develop group management constitutions that work.

After further debate, participants concluded that the governance questions identified during the workshop would be the best initial focus for the programme's research. It was argued that governance provides a framework for livelihoods, and that initial research by the programme on governance could provide a useful platform for later work on the relationships between rural livelihoods and CBNRM. It was also pointed out that the programme's research is meant to be comparative and synthetic, drawing mainly on primary data generated by other investigations. The programme does not have the resources to undertake detailed field investigations of its own. Such field work would need to be a leading feature of livelihoods research. This was another reason why governance analysis was a preferable focus for the programme.

7. Programme operations

7.1. Applied research fund

Ms B. Sithole (CASS) briefed participants on the proposed arrangements for the programme's applied research fund. Arrangements for quality assurance and peer review of research work were discussed. It was

agreed that grants from the fund should be made on a standard, lump sum basis. The size of the standard grant would be determined by the programme Steering Committee. Normally, 30% of the grant would be made in advance, and 70% would be paid on completion of satisfactory research output. It was emphasised that these grants are meant to be available to all interested and capable people. CBNRM practitioners should be encouraged to apply for them, and not just scholars. Researchers should be encouraged to highlight the implications of their findings for CBNRM policy and practice. The policy and practice papers that the programme intends to produce might be produced 'in house' by CASS and PLAAS programme staff, or might be assigned to recipients of research grants.

Research reports would be reviewed by three reviewers. They would be published on the programme's web site, and on paper as joint publications of CASS and PLAAS. Copyright would be held by CASS and PLAAS. Research reports might later be incorporated into other programme publications.

7.2. Networking and publications

Ms Najma Mohamed (PLAAS) gave a briefing on the grants that the programme will provide for regional networking visits. She also outlined the arrangements for the proposed web site and its intended content, as well as indicating the types of publication that the programme aimed to produce. It was agreed that the electronic discussion forum to be hosted by the programme (and linked to its web site) should have the governance issues identified by this workshop as its first theme. The second edition of the programme newsletter should also aim to focus on governance issues.

It was agreed that those who had attended this inaugural workshop should serve as the initial national contact points for the programme.

7.3. Programme Steering Committee

The Steering Committee comprises two representatives from each of the programme's two partner universities, together with two senior SADC CBNRM practitioners selected by the inaugural workshop. The two representatives who were chosen are Dr Lovemore Simwanda (Zambia National Farmers' Union) and Ms Letla Mosenene (Helvetas, Lesotho). Following closure of this inaugural workshop, the Steering Committee held its first meeting.

Annex 1. List of participants

NAME	INSTITUTION	COUNTRY
Richard Bell	Environmental Consultant	Botswana
Maitseo Boolaane	University of Botswana	Botswana
Bruce Campbell	Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Ben Cousins	PLAAS, School of Government, University of the Western Cape	South Africa
Kasbeth Chigwitana	Action Magazine	Zimbabwe
Dale Doré	Consultant	Zimbabwe
Excellent Hachileka	IUCN-ROSA (World Conservation Union, Regional Office of Southern Africa)	Zimbabwe
Stanley Khaila	Centre for Social Research	Malawi
Godwin Kowero	Center for International Forestry	Zimbabwe
Wardie Leppan	International Development Research Centre	South Africa
Isaac Malasha	CASS, University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Patrick Mamimine	CASS, University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Joe Matowanyika	Food and Agriculture Organisation	Zimbabwe
Funekile Mduli	Ministry of Agriculture	Swaziland
Najma Mohamed	PLAAS, School of Government, University of the Western Cape	South Africa
Letla Mosenene	Helvetas	Lesotho
Phanuel Mugabe	CASS, University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Bevelyn Sithole	CASS, University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Jay Naidoo	Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Ragnhild Overå	Christian Michelsen Institute, Development Studies and Human Rights	Norway
Ravi Prabhu	Center for International Forestry	Zimbabwe
Marshall Murphree	CASS, University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Lovemore Simwanda	Zambia National Farmer's Union	Zambia
Stephen Turner	PLAAS, School of Government, University of the Western Cape	South Africa