Legitimacy of Local Institutions for Natural Resource Management

The case of M'Punga, Mozambique

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Protected areas represent approximately 11 per cent of the area of Mozambique, of which 6,600 square kilometers are forest reserves. Three of the country's 13 forest reserves are located in Manica province, covering a total area of about 164 km^2, all of them in Sussundenga District. Those three forest reserves, created in 1950 by the colonial government, were established to conserve the forest, regulate and protect the watersheds, conserve soil, and protect scientifically and economically valuable tree species (Sousa, 1968:8).

During the colonial period, the government controlled these areas. For instance in Moribane Forest Reserve, where fieldwork for the present study was done, a forest guard lived within the reserve. This guard's role was to control and to supervise the community's activities inside and around the reserve, such as the cutting of trees to clear land for agriculture. The guard had the power to restrict the expansion of farms within the reserve area, forbid more people from living in the reserve, control hunting, and punish those setting uncontrolled fires. According to Dutton and Dutton (1973: 129), although they did not give an indication of specific numbers, there was a community of people under chief M'Punga living on the west side of the road from Sussundenga to Dombe within the reserve area.

After independence, as happened in most of the country's protected areas, the government abandoned the reserve, although legally it still belonged to, and was managed by the government. During the war the closed forest in the reserve was used as a hiding place for most of the residents of M'Punga chieftaincy, and also as a refuge for some people displaced from the surrounding areas. It was also used as a military base both by government troops and the RENAMO[1] army. When the war ended in 1992, some people remained in the dense forest and began to cut down the forest to clear land for farming. At the same time, a drought occurred which motivated people to open the closed forest and riverbanks for cultivation. This also created conditions that facilitated the spread of uncontrolled fires.

In 1992, the government, in order to control logging and poaching, focused forest policy on the state management of the protected areas (Anstey, forthcoming:135). However, later, in 1997, a new Forest policy was approved favouring the new approach of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) that had first been introduced to Mozambique in 1994[2]. This approach emphasizes the participation of other partners, such as the private sector and local communities in forest and wildlife management (BR, 1997:5). As Anstey commented, 'the poachers had become participants…' (Anstey, ibid). In 1999, a new Forestry and Wildlife Law was approved in which communities were now legally recognized as collaborators and partners in forest and wildlife management (Art. 31.3 and 33).

This change of approach was influenced by a number of factors including weak government capacity to control and promote the use of natural resources in a sustainable way (GEF, 1996:3, FAO, 1995:11), experiences in neighbouring countries, the prominence of Agenda 21 (BR, 1997:1), the influence of donors, and the new socio-political circumstances of the country. Community-Based Natural Resource Management became a dominant discourse of politicians, academics and donors. The argument is that the community has proved its ability to successfully manage natural resources in the past (Mussanhane and Nhamuco, 2000:90). As a result, their involvement is viewed as a solution to the problem of environmental degradation (Virtanen, 2000:116), as well as a way of promoting development in rural areas and reducing the government's own management costs (Madope, 1999:219).

In most of the areas in Mozambique where there are CBNRM projects, new local institutions, in the form of committees or councils are being created, under the influence of government institutions, NGO's, and other external facilitators. One argument for the creation of these committees or councils is to secure the participation of local communities in natural resources management, through the strengthening of community organizations (Mansur and Nhantumbo, 1998:7). Local committees are also viewed as a way to solve or minimize conflict, and address the authority 'vacuum' created between traditional and state-party authorities (Kloeck-Jenson, 1998:8).

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[1] RENAMO was a rebel movement that fought against government in the civil war (1977-1992). Currently, it is the biggest opposition political party in Mozambique.

[2] See also Ribeiro, A.M.M. (2001): Natural resource management policy in Mozambique: an overwiew, MARENA Working Paper, no 8.

The mode of selection of community representatives in these committees or councils may be based on different criteria[3], but the conventional way of electing committee members is through a community meeting (Cuamba, 1998:2; Dinis, 1998:3; Lopes, 1998:1). Thus, often the members of committees are elected by and from those who attend a specific meeting (Mansur and Nhantumbo, 1998:7). In all the cases reviewed as part of this project, facilitators or implementers of CBNRM projects in Mozambique have tended to come to local areas with some kind of 'prescription' concerning numbers, gender equity, and also definitions of who must be excluded. For instance, in some projects, implementers have advised the exclusion of people who have a political post (Mansur and Nhantumbo, 1998:7). In other words the top-down approach is still dominant (Serra, 2001:9, Nhantumbo, 2000:14).

In so far as local committees are created to oversee community-based projects, a number of questions arise. For example, are these committees representative of all community interests? Do these committees ensure the effective participation of the community in decision-making about natural resources? Are these committees a guarantee of effective management of natural resources? And will these committees survive when the facilitators or implementers leave the project area?

In contrast, in most rural areas in Mozambique, traditional leaders still command a lot of influence. In practice, traditional leaders allocate land to farmers at a local level, resolve conflicts, and guarantee relative social harmony through enforcement of customary rules (Blom 2000:8, Virtanen, 2000:130, Carrilho, 1994:68). Most recently, the government, through the Council of Ministers, approved a decree which recognizes the role of traditional authorities and established legal mechanisms for collaboration between them and the state[4]. Even before this decree, local governments in Manica province, particularly in Sussundenga and Gondola districts, where this work was carried out, were already working in collaboration with traditional leaders in community mobilization and most recently in tax collection[5].

These traditional authorities which survived colonialism and the post independence authoritarian regime, were re-established during the civil war and are still surviving the post-war challenges. However, the changing socio-political situation in Mozambique has prompted some questions regarding their legitimacy (Carrilho, 1994:69). For example, the colonial government manipulated and used traditional authorities for their own purposes, whilst after independence in 1975, the new government tried to abolish them. Subsequently, during the war RENAMO re-imposed traditional authorities, and more recently the government has moved to recognize their role. As a result, FRELIMO[6] and RENAMO are now almost competing to recognize and support traditional authorities, in order to build up their political influence and have control over people.

Traditional authorities represent an alternative route through which to mobilize local communities to participate in NRM projects. However, the use of traditional authorities further raises a number of questions. For example, to what extent are these traditional authorities the legitimate representatives of communities? Can they guarantee community participation in a way that local committees cannot? And to what extent can traditional institutions, in reality, secure effective management of natural resources?

Underlying these questions are a number of issues. For example, what is a local community? And what motivation does the community have in general to manage natural resources? Not all of these questions can be answered in full, but this paper undertakes a historical analysis of the various institutions and organizations existing in the area known as M'Punga, in the Moribane Forest Reserve, to understand which institutions are perceived to be more legitimate than others in representing the community, and how local communities manage natural resources.

It is argued that legitimate institutions at the local level, with a clear definition of their roles and rules, are key to the success of CBNRM projects. As Barrow and Murphree (forthcoming: 49) have argued, legitimacy defines the way in which people organize themselves for their effective participation in natural resource management. A legitimated institution or authority is more able to enforce rules through consensus rather than by fear; it is also likely to be more stable and longer-lasting (Heywood, 1999:150). In other words, the level of recognition given to these

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[3] See some examples in the MARENA Working Paper no 2
[4] Boletim da Republica [Republic Bulletin] 24, 2000
[5] See MARENA Working Paper no 2, 2001, and also MARENA Briefing MZ 11 01

[6] Created in 1992 as liberation movement (Mozambique Front of Liberation) and ruler party since 1975.

institutions, both informally by local people and formally by government and other institutions through the law is crucial to secure sustainable natural resources management.

1.1 Description of the area

The area of the chieftaincy of M'punga is located in Manica Province, Sussundenga District, in the Administrative Post of Dombe. The chieftaincy lies about 80 km from Chimoio, the capital of the province (see map 1) and covers an area of approximately 120 km². Within the area of M'punga is the Moribane Forest Reserve, which was established in 1950 by Portaria number 8.459 of July 1950 (Boletim da Republica nº 29, 1950). The forest reserve covers an area of approximately 53 km².

According to a survey carried out as part of this research, it is estimated that the total number of households in M'punga is 321, of which 231 (72%) are originally from the area (M'punga) and the remaining 90 (28%) are newcomers. From this total number of households, around 76% have a man as head of the household and 24% are headed by a woman (including co-wives, widowed, and divorced). According to this survey, the total population is around 1,900 inhabitants, of whom 55% are women. The average household size is approximately 6 people. Some 60% (193) of the households are living within the boundaries of the forest reserve, most of them in the more mountainous area.

During the war, just 21% of the original households reported being displaced to other areas, with the remainder staying in the mountains and closed forest in the area 'protected' by the RENAMO army. Out of those that are not originally from M'Punga, 28% came before the war, 21% came as soldiers or looking for protection and the remaining 44% came after the war. The majority of the latter group were looking for productive land close to the road. Linguistically the people from M'Punga speak Chindau, a dialect of Shona which is widely spoken in neighbouring Zimbabwe.

The maximum altitude is 653 m above sea level with an annual average rainfall of about 1,100mm concentrated in the months of January and February. The predominant soil types in M'punga are red-clays with very steep slopes and large watersheds.

The natural woodland in M'Punga is a mosaic characterized by:

- rain forest in the top of the mountains called by Sousa (1968), *mufomote forest* with an average height of 20-30m;
- forest galleries along the rivers dominated by *Millettia sthulmannii* (panga-panga) and *Khaya nyasica* (umbaua); and
- mixed tree species on the slopes with a predominance of panga-panga, *Milicia excelsa* (tule), umbaua, *Erythrophleum suaveolens* (missanda) and *Albizia spp.* (mugerenge).

Social infrastructure in the area includes the EN 216 road, which links the EN 6 in Chimoio town and EN 1 at Buzi River passing through Sussundenga and Dombe villages. There is also a primary school, a grinding mill and some shops providing some basic commodities within M'punga. However, there is no hospital or clinic, so people must travel about 30 km to the nearest clinic at Dombe village.

2 Research Methodology

The data for this study were collected from May to August 2000 using a combination of social survey methods. Initially, a global positioning system (GPS) was used to mark the geographic points (co-ordinates) of the study area and later assessed the population and natural resource distribution in the area. At the same time, the total of 321 households were interviewed in order to establish household composition (number of people and gender), their place of origin, their main economic activities, and the process of land and other natural resource acquisition.

Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted among 30 households selected randomly in order to gain more detailed information than that previously obtained through the previous interviews. The chief, two *sagutas* [village headman] and eight members of local committees were also interviewed to understand the history of the area and the institutions behind natural resource management, their functions and activities/roles, and their relationship with the community and other institutions.

Members of natural resource user groups such as fishermen, beekeepers, and traditional healers totalling 11 were also interviewed to ascertain how they

acquire rights to use natural resources for specific purposes, their organisation, motivations and their relationships with other groups and institutions. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of the SPFFB and CEF as well as administrative staff at local level in order to understand the government's point of view and the way that different government institutions represented in M'Punga operate.

3 CEF and the Community Natural Resource Management Project

Within the Moribane Forest Reserve, the Centro de Experimentação Florestal (CEF) - a specialist research service branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development - has been working on an action research programme on natural resources management since 1996. The general goals of this programme were primarily to develop strategies on community involvement in natural resources management and to inform policy-makers accordingly. In addition, it was hoped to develop staff capacity in related subject areas such as social sciences, participatory methodologies, ecology and extension in order to strengthen CEF in the area of community-based natural resources management. The present research has built on work carried out under this initial action research programme.

According to CEF, the expected outputs from the programme included:

- to evolve a sustainable development approach where local communities could manage their natural resource base and enhance their well-being;
- to learn and understand local knowledge and people; and
- to enable CEF to formulate proposals that would assist in updating policies, laws and regulations related to community land tenure and access to natural resources (CEF: 1994: 8-9).

The programme began in 1995 with the identification of the study area in Sussundenga according to the following criteria: easy access, high potential of forest resources, rich ecological diversity, apparent community organization and community willingness to get involved. According to Serra and Claver (1997), the area selected was located between Rotanda and Dombe where communities and government officials were highly receptive to the idea. Government and community contacts made in

Rotanda and Dombe led to a further selection of the M'Punga community in Moribane Forest Reserve for future work. According to Ribeiro (1998) three main reasons were behind this selection:

- Ecological

The Moribane forest is one of the few patches of rain forest that exist in Mozambique. After the war, the area was subjected to human pressure for agricultural land and uncontrolled fires. There was a need to protect the mountain slopes and micro-watersheds in the area. The area also serves as a buffer zone for the Chimanimani Transfrontier Conservation Areas Project. The reserve forms part of the same ecosystem.

- Economic:

The area is rich in natural resources and has high potential for income-generating activities such as timber, medicinal plants, mushrooms, beekeeping, and ecotourism. The area is also close to the Sussundenga Forest Research Station (and so fits within the CEF strategy to concentrate efforts and few resources available such as staff, financial and logistical).

- Social

Through repeated contacts with the community, Ribeiro argued that CEF had established strong relationships and trust in the area - although the discussion below reveals some of the limitations of this trust in practice. As was highlighted earlier, M'Punga community has a strong dependence on the forest resources for their subsistence. There are also sacred areas in the forest of great cultural and spiritual value to the community.

Although there was no commitment from the community at the beginning, this has been established as a result of mutual trust between the community and CEF built over a period of time. At the beginning, when the community was under RENAMO control, members were suspicious of any government initiative in the area. Their experiences with previous policies such as communal villages (see below) made it difficult for them to accept any new government programmes. After the first democratic elections, the traditional leaders demanded to know from the RENAMO Party leadership the true results of the elections. They did not believe news on the radio that RENAMO had lost the elections since they believed the news media were controlled by the government. The presence of police in the area

complicated the situation as they were construed as FRELIMO police. They were also expecting official recognition from the elected government, in particular, of their benefits and responsibilities enjoyed under the previous (colonial) government. On the other hand, they saw the CEF project as an economic opportunity for their community but also recognized that the success of the project depended on satisfying both their political and social aspirations. However, they understood that the project was new, with a new approach and without a past background.

In order to build trust and involve people in the project, later in 1996, a preliminary social and ecological survey was carried out in the area in order to identify the main problems. CEF believed that the solution of some basic problems would motivate people to be involved in natural resources management. The lack of a grinding mill, school and health clinic, the presence of landmines, and the absence of a market for agricultural crops were some of the problems identified by the local community during the initial research exercises conducted by CEF (Serra and Claver, 1997:4-5). Contacts were made with NGOs, government institutions and donors in order to address some of these community needs. In particular, a grinding mill was provided, and other alternative income generation activities such as beekeeping, fish farming, and horticulture were identified and established in collaboration with the Ford Foundation and other NGOs such as AMRU and ORAM.

In order to produce immediate benefits, validate the role of CEF, strengthen mutual relationships and build trust between CEF staff and members of the local community, a grinding mill was purchased for the community.

CEF began to play the role of a link between the community and other governmental and non-governmental agencies in identifying viable income-generating activities and in mediating disputes with such agencies. CEF also began to work with other research institutions in order to produce more data that could be used in drawing up realistic action plans. A Participatory Rural Appraisal was conducted in late 1997 followed by a planning workshop in January 1998, to identify development goals and develop a framework for the program activities. The workshop also highlighted strategies for involving all major stakeholders and mechanisms for protecting the natural resource base.

4 Local institutions

4.1 History of traditional institutions

Traditional leaders, known locally as *mambos* or *regulos*, represent the main traditional institution in the M´Punga area. The latter is a Portuguese term for the most senior local chiefs. According to the division of chieftaincies made by the colonial administration, from 1933, M'Punga was considered a *chefe de grupo de Povoações*, or 'Chief of a Group of Villages' below *regulo* in the hierarchy.

The succession to the throne of M'Punga, as in most parts of Africa, is hereditary within the family lineage and based on traditional norms. The succession is from father to the eldest son of the principal wife. The heir to the throne is formally designated, trained and inaugurated as traditional leader (*mambo*) by a Council of Elders. This council communicates to the whole community who will be successor to the throne and people from the region contribute products such as sorghum for the beer to be drunk during the inauguration ceremony.

To assist the *mambo* in his activities, the Council of Elders works as advisers and a group of auxiliaries as messengers. The Council of Elders comprises elders with influence within the community; they could be relatives or friends of the *mambo*. At village level, the *mambo* is represented by *sagutas*, similar to chefe de povoaçao 'chief of village' in the Portuguese hierarchy. The *saguta* is appointed by the *mambo* after consultations with the Council of Elders. The successor to the *Saguta* is normally from the same lineage as the previous *saguta* but can also be a community member at large. However, the choice of *saguta* depends on his behaviour and social relationships, his knowledge of the area and of people who live in that area. For instance, *saguta* Sutcha was appointed because during the war he was active in mobilising his community and in raising logistical and political support for RENAMO.

S*agutas* are the representatives of the *mambo*, and act as his 'eyes' and 'ears' in the community. They have to ensure social harmony (conflict resolution, and organisation of ceremonies and other social events) and control use of natural resources (land and resource allocation). Normally, social conflicts are resolved locally by *sagutas*. Where this is not possible, such cases are referred to the *mambo*. The M'punga

area comprises four villages, three of which are under the control of *sagutas* Mukwawaia, Sutcha and Shangadeia. The fourth is under Mambo M'Punga himself.

According to the elders, the first *mambo* of M'Punga was appointed by Ngungunyana, the Emperor of Gaza, for his audacity and courage during the expansion of the Gaza Empire from 1884 to 1895[7]. When Mahuruca M'punga, the first *mambo*, died he was succeeded by his son Quichira M'Punga. When Quichira died in 1953, his sons were not in the area at the time. Therefore, his youngest brother named Seda M'punga succeeded him. In late 1974 the *mambo* died (Seda M'punga). This coincided with the advent of Mozambique's independence when traditional authorities were abolished as traditional leaders were suspected and accused of having collaborated with the colonial administration.

In place of these traditional leaders, new institutions were created, known as '*grupos dinamizadores* - literally, 'dynamising groups'. Although 'elected' in community meetings, the members of these *grupos dinamizadores* were members of the FRELIMO party, whose role was to mobilise people to support the new government. In other words, they were responsible for spreading government propaganda and performing other administrative functions. Immediately after their establishment in M'punga in 1977, they sought to mobilise people to join *aldeias comunais* (communal villages), which were introduced at the same time. There are many reports of resistance to joining these *aldeias comunais*, and according to some respondents, many people built houses in communal villages to satisfy the government and avoid reprisals but still maintained their original houses elsewhere. Leaders of the *grupos dinamizadores* were also appointed as judges of popular tribunals.

However, very soon, the *aldeas comunais* in the area of M'Punga were destroyed, even before their construction finished, as war began in 1977-78. First, according to people interviewed, the Rhodesian air force bombarded the area and later the RENAMO army came in. As mentioned above, people resisted moving to the *aldeias comunais* because this meant

moving from their original lands, and changing their living habits. For some, *aldeias Comunais,* where large numbers of people were living together, represented a source of human and animal disease, robbery and land conflict. However, others suggested that the problem was jealousy. As one respondent said, 'People here like to live in isolated places to protect their wives from adulterers. Even to talk with a woman here in the absence of her husband is problematic…'. In other words people had socio-cultural reasons to resist *aldeias comunais*. This, and the fact that most of the members of the *grupos dinamizadores* were opposed by certain members of the community, was used by RENAMO to gain community support when they occupied the area.

In 1987, RENAMO re-established the traditional leadership and re-appointed a chief in order to gain community support. However, as there was no surviving *mambo* in M'Punga, they were forced to appoint a new chief, Nhanganbire M'punga, who was the second son of former chief Quichira M'punga who died in 1953. The main roles of the traditional leaders during the civil war were to provide logistical and military support to the RENAMO army and to resolve some conflicts within the community - most of them related to robbery and adultery.

When the war finished in 1992, traditional leaders continued to play an important role in community mobilisation and as a guarantee of social harmony in the area with a strong political support of RENAMO. For instance, in 1994, traditional leaders worked with the government through RENAMO in mobilising local communities for the electoral census and election process. From 1996, the traditional leaders in the area began to work with CEF as part of its research mandate.

The relationship between the chief and CEF was initially very difficult. Several times he refused to meet CEF staff to discuss the project and used different arguments such as consultation of the spirits to avoid implementation of the project. This attitude was viewed by project staff as reflecting resistance to all initiatives from any governmental institutions on the part of the chief. However, at the same time, the CEF project was almost certainly seen by locals as an attempt by FRELIMO to gain influence and political support of local people. In other words, government/state staff were seen as members of FRELIMO rather than as civil servants. In this sense, the resistance of the chief was also a reflection of

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[7] According to Newitt (1995: 387), until 1895 there was an agreement between The Moçambique Company and Ngungunhane king to a join authority of the Manica and Sofala area, adjudicated to Moçambique Company by the Portuguese colonial government.

community perceptions. They were suspicious and afraid that CEF was trying to re-impose the forest guard system as in the olden days of colonialism, and expropriate their land in favour of white farmers from South Africa and Zimbabwe, as was seen to be happening in other districts of Manica Province. According to some community members, the role of forest guards at the time was to restrict access to natural resources in the forest reserve, reinforce the law and punish those breaking the law. Although the M'Punga community had never experienced land expropriation in favour of outsiders, members were concerned that it could happen to them. For instance, they knew and heard of stories that in certain parts of Manica Province, some outsiders, supported by government documentation such as land concession licenses, were expropriating land from local people and displacing them.

Moreover, there was also the belief that CEF came in to protect the forest for timber exploitation. This could be attributed to the use by some staff of the term 'conservation' of certain timber species. For instance, the expression 'It is forbidden to cut *Umbila and Panga-Panga*, these timber species have high commercial value" is commonly used by forest officers. Cutting of those tree species is legally forbidden even in areas set aside for agriculture. The political situation and memories of past experience exacerbated this general distrust.

The introduction and implementation of the new initiatives introduced by the project were problematic and conflicting. For instance the grinding mill, which was bought in 1997, was installed only in the middle of 1998 as described below.

Box 1 Establishment of a grinding mill in M'punga

Once CEF acquired the grind mill the chief was asked to consult with the community to choose and prepare the place where the mill would be installed. Later the chief informed the project that the place had been selected. However, no one from the community was willing to build the structure to house the mill. A meeting with the community was organized to overcome this impasse. Community members suggested giving the grinding mill to a private individual to manage it. They also refused to constitute the committee suggested by the project and the District Administrator present at the meeting .

CEF felt that this could thwart community participation in favour of private sector development in the area and thus decided to wait until the local community had had more time to think over their priorities. This CEF position reinforced the need for the community to accept the outside idea to create a community committee responsible for the grinding mill operations.

Later, reasons for this distrust started to become apparent. First was the location of the grinding mill. The chief did not ask the other members of the community. He decided to locate it near his house. This caused different interpretations - such as that the project was buying off the chief with a grinding mill. As it was located near the chief's house, it was feared that every woman who went to the grinding mill would lose time in traditional formalities (i.e. paying compliments to chief), and this was also viewed with some distrust by some men. In addition, the constitution of the committee was viewed as being similar to the cooperatives created after independence and which had been seen as a failure.

However, after successive meetings and community consultation the committee was constituted and a new place was chosen for the grinding mill. A structure was built, although the distrust still remained. For instance some people said the place housing the mill was actually a prison for those who burned or cut the forest, so it was built using fragile material in order to allow them to escape more easily.

Another example of conflict arose when AMRU[8], a national women NGO, tried to introduce beekeeping as an alternative income-generating activity. As in the other areas where it had worked, AMRU asked for

women volunteers to be involved in the programme. The idea was immediately refused by men, who argued (with some basis in reality) that beekeeping is a male activity. Later, they began a men's beekeeping group. Part of the community that lives within the boundaries of the reserve refused to be involved in the project, alleging that there were higher priorities - notably an emerging elephant problem (see below).

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[8] Associacao Mocambicana da mulher rural [Mozambican rural women association]

They also viewed the project as a way to gain trust in the community, as a precursor to removing them from the area. However some people from the area of one of the *sagutas* including the *sagutas's* son did volunteer to be part of the group. This was not without problems because this *saguta* was accused of disobeying the chief and trying to polarize project progress. Curiously, most of the members of the group were newcomers to the area, along with original inhabitants who had moved to the town during the war. Some of them also became involved in other income-generating activities introduced by the project.

According to some of those who are involved in project activities, the chief is forced by those who do not want development to take a conservative line and refuse initiatives that would improve community life - especially those living within the reserve boundaries. The chief is also suspected of being more concerned with his personal benefits rather than those for the whole community. As one of the respondents said, 'now the chief is active in collecting tax, he visits the villages and *sagutas* to make sure that tax is collected because he has benefits from this. In contrast he never consults with members of the community before deciding about other programmes, from which he has no easy and direct benefit.'

For many of those who are living inside the reserve boundaries, these programmes are seen as a strategy to win trust from people prior to removing them from the reserve. As one respondent said, 'this looks like when you go to ask to marry a woman. You have to look like a good person to convince her parents, even if you are not good. But after you are married, you show your true face…'.

The most critical situation arose when, at the end of 1997 and the beginning of 1998, elephants started to destroy some of the banana and maize crop fields in the north-west of M'punga area. This conflict between the community and elephants highlighted contradictions between the community and the chief and increased the community's distrust of the real aims of the project, as described in Box 2 below.

Box 2. Elephant conflict [9]

According to older residents, M'punga has long been a corridor for elephants. They crossed the area from the lowlands in Machote to the Mahate plateau and vice-versa. However, no serious conflicts involving elephants were reported in the area before the war. This could be because at that time the elephant population was low in the corridor and probably because during colonial times, the Forest Service controlled the situation effectively. For instance, one of the oldest residents in the area remembered that in 1950-51, a group of forest guards had 'come and shot two elephants' as a culling measure. Traditional ceremonies organized during the colonial time were also believed to protect people against elephants and other harmful animals.

During the civil war the elephant population moved from the area, running away from shooting to, it is believed, Zimbabwe and the Mahate plateau. At the same time people looking for protection and a hiding place came from different parts of M'punga and from the neighbouring chiefdoms to the closed forest. When the war ended most of these people stayed, many of them in the elephant corridor. The forest around the settlements was cut down to plant bananas, maize, and yam, which are palatable crops to elephants. When in 1997, the elephants - which are believed to have a keen ability to follow old migratory patterns - returned, the conflict began. The elephants destroyed farms in 1997 and 1998. In response, the community asked for government intervention, with the first proposal being that the government should shoot at least one elephant. Government staff viewed this proposal as undesirable. Two groups of forest guards were sent to keep the elephants away but with no success. Some community members viewed this as reflecting the government's incapacity to protect them. For others the problem was seen as only being solvable through traditional ceremonies. As the chief said, 'this is happening because the spirit is angry with those who had settled in the affected area without my permission and to solve that a ceremony has to be done to apologize to the spirits…'.

However the ceremony never happened because the woman supposed to organise it had married and left the area. Traditionally, a woman was chosen by the chief at a young age to conduct these ceremonies. Considered the forest's spirit guardian, this woman, according to tradition, became the wife of the ancestral spirit and was forbidden from getting married. She would live in her parents' house, and her children were considered to belong to the spirits also.

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[9] See also in MARENA Briefing MZ 03 00

However the last woman to be chosen in this way had married and left her parent's house. Although some time ago, being selected as spirit guardian was an honour for the woman's parents, currently no women had been chosen to take up this role because, according to the chief, most parents do not accept the selection. Instead, they prefer to see their daughters married because 'they get benefits from *lobolo*[10].

The chief's inability to solve the elephant problem by conducting a traditional ceremony was interpreted by some residents as indicating that he was no longer recognized by the spirits. Some said this was because he is not the rightful successor to the chieftaincy according to traditional rules.

In the end, farmers started to move out of the area to other areas either within M'Punga or in neighbouring chiefdoms, after realizing that neither the government nor the chief had a solution. Those who were affected by the elephants and who moved to other areas within M'Punga, represent currently around 11% (34 households) of the total households. From those, only 7 households were living in the affected area before the war. This suggests that population growth, and a consequent increase in the number of fields in the area, could have contributed to the problem.

On the other hand, some of those who were living in the corridor area were suspicious because people hoarding caches of RENAMO weapons were believed to be living in the area. For some people from the lowlands, and for project staff, the resistance of some people to move from the affected area was related to the existence of a hiding place for guns remaining from the war. For instance, five households remained in the affected area, arguing that they preferred to 'fight' with elephants than leave their 'fertile' land. Curiously, a month after the police destroyed an arms cache in the area - in the last week of this field work - those remaining five households voluntarily moved out of the area.

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[10] *Lobolo* is the compensation (goods or cash) given by the parents of a man who wants to get married to the women's parents. This compensation symbolizes a new kinship based on the marriage of two people. It is a culture of patrilinear lineage of the central and south of Mozambique.

When members of the community started to question the legitimacy of the chief, he, according to CEF staff, became more cooperative with the project. Once community support for the chief was weak he saw it as important to have support from the project. On the other hand, within the scope of a Decree Law 15/2000[11] the M'punga chief, as other traditional chiefs, has now been asked to collect tax and 'control' his people. Yet this formal recognition of the chief, rather than leading to calm, gave rise to other kinds of conflicts. For example, chief M'punga is now trying to extend his area into that of the neighbouring chief (Sanguene) arguing that the boundaries of M'punga chieftaincy area include part of Sanguene area. The chief is also requesting more people to move into his area. This is because a larger area and more people represents a higher amount of tax to be collected - which in turn translates into more prestige and money for the chief. In other words the priority of the chief is to re-empower himself and to maximise personal benefits rather than to ensure sustainable management and use of natural resources.

4.2 Creating a local Committee

Initially, CEF expected to work with existing local institutions in the implementation of a sustainable forest development programme. According to CBNRM philosophy, the creation of local committees and/or other local institutions as part of local development should be a consequence of community decision. However, the process in M'Punga shows how this strategy was changed and again the outsiders imposed their idealized model of 'community' development.

Due to the resistance of the chief to collaborate with the project, the CEF local team and the Sussundenga District Administrator suggested the creation of a community committee to facilitate contacts between project staff and local leaders and the community and also to operate the grinding mill. This was seen as the most effective way to disseminate the ideas of the project among community members and to create a community body that would be responsible for operating the grinding mill that had not been operational for some time.

For some community members, the community committee was perceived as a tactic by CEF to recruit young people, both boys and girls, to compulsory military service with the government[12].

When it was finally created, community leaders refused the criteria for representation on the committee that the project first suggested. The criteria were that the members of the committee should be elected in a general meeting, and that some women should be appointed to the committee to have some gender representation.

Instead, the local resource management committee was initially constituted of 10 people appointed by local people in their own *sagutas*. Two people were to be appointed from each *saguta* area. One of the first requirements – proposed by CEF - was that those appointed should be able to speak Portuguese. In practice, and perhaps because of this Portuguese language requirement, they were also all quite young. It appeared that the leaders too valued more the ability to communicate than the capacity to make decisions. In the end, only one man was appointed from each of the *saguta* areas. This committee became very passive, mostly playing the role of messenger between *mambo*, *sagutas* and project staff, participating in some fire control programmes, serving as local guides and translators for visiting researchers, and managing the grinding mill - rather than managing natural resources. One reason is that the committee members are generally subordinate to, and take instructions from the *mambo*, *sagutas* and other local elders. In general meetings, the committee members do not play an active role, mostly remaining quiet. The committee has no terms of reference, and in practice, it refers every important decision to the Chief, or to the project's technical staff.

The committee is also seen by most of the community members as solely responsible for controlling and punishing people who cut and burn down the forest and thus contravening government rules. They are also seen as grinding mill employees rather than representing the community[13].

4.3 "Traditional" natural resource use and management in M'Punga

Local communities are currently viewed by many academics as the best natural resource managers (Madzudzo, 1998:1). This view is based on belief that these communities have conserved their environment

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[11] See details of Decree Law 15/2000 in MARENA Briefing MZ 12 01

[12] See also Lucas, 1999: 14 and MARENA Briefing MZ 09 00
[13] See also in MARENA Briefing MZ 09 00

successfully over time. Since they live in the area, they are likely to take care of the forests surrounding them and upon which they depend for their livelihoods. Examples are seen to include the preservation of sacred forest areas, animal and plant species through 'traditional' institutions, contributing to the maintenance of biodiversity (Tyynela and Mudavanhu, 2000:63; Mussamhane et al., 2000:111; Dava, 2000:7; Mucussete,1996:30-31). In Mozambique, the sizes of sacred forests vary from less than one hectare to 250 hectares (Ylhaisi, 2000:200). Even a single tree could be conserved because it is considered sacred (Hughes, 2000:14).

In M'Punga, as in most African rural areas, the main natural resource is land. This land, although formally belonging to the state, is in practice governed by traditional leaders through customary law. In other words, the traditional leaders allocate land for to rural people who request it. The normal process of land request and allocation proceeds from the lower level headman (*sagutas*) to the chief (*mambo*) but it is not inflexible, and requests can be made at any level. However it is the *mambo* who decides the final land allocation and defines boundaries, as well as explaining to the users about community rules, such as prohibitions on the use of material from cemeteries, or the cutting of trees at the source of rivers. For land allocation, the chief usually requests a payment of between 15,000.00-20,000.00Mt (around $1.50), or the equivalent in goods in kind - normally one hen.

Once the land is allocated, the farmer gains the right to cut the forest for farming. Under local rules, it is expected that after the first harvest, the farmer will organise a traditional ceremony in order to thank the spirits and to formalise his or her presence on the land. In other words, this ceremony gives the newcomer the status as a member of the community. The ceremony consists of making traditional beer from the first sorghum harvest and inviting traditional leaders and neighbours.

Once he or she becomes a member of the community, it is possible to extend or move the field to another part of the forest without a further request, so long as that area is not occupied. However when a farmer wishes to move from one *saguta*'s area to another, he must inform both *sagutas*. It is common for those who live and farm in upland fields to change the location of their fields, every two or three years, in order to cope with the declines in the productivity of the land.

These rules over land use are also applicable to relatives who inherit the land. Apart from the payment required to newcomers, there is no evidence of differentiation in the allocation of rights to land between original inhabitants and newcomers or between men and women. For example, a newly arrived household from Zomba headed by a widow reported acquiring land through the same procedures as other new households. The permission to clear the forest in order to farm in the M'Punga area is also extended to those who live in neighbouring chiefdoms.

The main economic activity in M'Punga is agriculture, based on the cultivation of maize, sorghum, bananas and yam. Most households have fields on upland slopes, where they produce maize and sorghum mainly for subsistence, as well as along river valleys, where they produce bananas, yam, vegetables and sugar cane mainly for sale and/or to pay for services. Banana represents the most important source of income for the majority of households in M'Punga.

'Traditional' leaders also have the responsibility, at local level, to resolve or mediate conflicts over land. According to one respondent, there are not many conflicts over land because as one of the *sagutas* said, 'there is plenty of land…'. However demand for land along the rivers has caused some conflicts between neighbours, as shown in Box 3.

Case 3. Conflict over land along the rivers

Most of the households, both in lowland and mountain areas, have their settlements and fields near the rivers or streams. This creates a demand for land along the rivers, which has its origins both in the lower productivity of upland farms, and in a desire to guarantee or secure yields in times of drought as experienced in the early 1990s. Interest in farming along riverbanks has also grown significantly since 1995, as there has been a rapid rise in the cultivation of bananas and yam in M'punga. These two crops represent the main sources of income source for many households in the area.

Conflicts have arisen, however, when farmers living on one side of the river, in order to maximize their production, have cultivated both sides - preventing the farmer(s) living on the opposite side from cultivating the riverbank. To resolve or minimize such conflicts, traditional leaders (chiefs and councilors) in M'Punga decided to restrict everyone to cultivating only the side of the river where they live. As a result, In some cases one side of the river is cleared, whereas the other side remains forested. The existence of areas along riverbanks that remain forested, when nearby areas are cleared demonstrates the potential for traditional leaders to promote forest conservation and protection. However, it is clear that such areas are still likely to be cleared when a different farmer asks permission to do so.

As mentioned above, community members are allowed to cut down the forest in order to extend their cropland. However, as in most rural areas, the forest in M'Punga also provides a number of basic goods and services which rural people depend on to satisfy a number of necessities. The basic goods are firewood, building material, wild foods, medicinal plants, and raw materials for crafts. Community members are allowed to harvest forest products by custom for their own consumption or for sale. Fauna such as antelopes, wild pigs and rodents provide an important source of protein for the community and have been an important source of income for some households. For instance, apart from the crafts and medicinal plants, the meat from wild animals constitutes one of the few products from the forest that is sold. According to some respondents, immediately after the end of the war there were a great number of local hunters selling game meat. However, during the last two years, this trend has significantly diminished, at least as an open activity. It seems that this may be the result of conservation messages from CEF staff and traditional leaders that have discouraged or forbidden hunting.

The forest also has cultural and spiritual significance for the M'Punga community. In some forest areas, there are mountains, lakes, and rivers where harvest and access is forbidden or restricted. These are the sacred areas. There are nine sacred forests in M'Punga whose size, although not measured, varies from a very small parcel of land to 10 hectares with an average of about 1-2 hectares. These areas represent cemeteries, ceremonial places, and the homes of spirits, which are believed to be the guardians of both the community and their territory. It is forbidden to cut the forests around the sources of rivers as these are believed to be guarded by spirits represented by a large snake.

There are also wild animal species such as elephant and leopard, which are considered to represent spirits. The hunting of these animals is also forbidden. The hunting of crocodiles must be done with the knowledge of the chiefs and the rest of the community, because it is believed that its brain contains poison. Its destruction has to be watched by community members in order to guarantee that the poison will not be used against another person. Certain species of plant such as *Millettia stulmannii (panga-panga)* are also protected due to their use in rituals and *Annona senegalensis (maroro)* and *Brackenridgea zanguebarica* are said or believed to bring bad luck.

Another local rule about hunting that emanates from the past is that, according to elders and traditional leaders, authorization to hunt wild animals is required. Without this authorization, the hunter could get lost in the forest or come back without success.

The guardian of sacred areas is a spirit who is believed to punish violation of the rules. The punishment could be getting lost in the forest, or to meet the white monkey or leopard. According to respondents, in some cases the violation of sacred areas could bring bad luck for the family or for all the community, through drought, flood, and the arrival of pests such as insects or baboons. Traditional ceremonies presided over by traditional leaders would have to be conducted to solve such problems. These ceremonies consist of offering traditional beer to the spirits, as a way of asking for forgiveness.

Although in general all members of M'Punga community - even newcomers - are aware of the sacred areas around their settlement, currently many of these rules which govern sacred areas and protect some species are not obeyed. For instance, the sacred forest that should not be burned or tree species that should not be used as firewood or building material are in fact burnt and used. Much of the natural vegetation around river sources close to settlements has been cut to plant banana and/or other crops and hunters no longer ask for permission to hunt wild animals.

For some elders the violation of the rules is a practice of the young and of newcomers who do not respect the local culture. Many of the traditional leaders and

elders interviewed for this research suggested the war as the main reason why the normal channel of cultural transmission from one generation to another has been disturbed. Another reason was seen as the external influence brought by newcomers and those who were living in towns. For instance, newcomers use *panga-panga* to build houses, because according to some of them it is more resistant. One newcomer commented: 'I know that people here in M'punga use *panga-panga* only when it is dry, but I used it in my homeland without any problem'. On the other hand, some young people said they believed the consequences of breaking the rules - such as getting lost in the forest when traditional leaders did not authorize hunting - applied only to old people.

Meanwhile, despite these local management institutions, much of the uncultivated forests outside sacred areas can be used by anyone in the community without any specific control rule from traditional leaders. As Otsuka and Place (2001: 289) said, '… the responsibilities of the village chief are generally to approve the clearance of forests…so as to avoid possible land disputes…'. In this sense, much forest land could be described as an open-access resource. Moreover, apart from fruit trees planted around people's houses, the community in M'Punga has never planted native trees. According to some respondents native trees were 'planted by god' for human use, rather than planted by humans.

In order to motivate the community to become more involved in natural resource management, some alternative activities such as beekeeping, horticulture, soil protection and fish farming have been introduced. The main objective of these activities is to create alternative sources of income so that local farmers will have less need to cut forests and hunt wild animals, as well as to promote the participation of the community in the management of their resources. However, the experience in M'Punga shows that people only get involved when they are sure that they will have some benefit from the activity. Before that, they are reluctant to participate at all. For instance, when the fisheries[14] program was introduced, only one household agreed to be involved. It was only after the positive results of this experience were seen that more households became involved and the number increased. This activity originated a discussion within the community about deforestation along the rivers between those who have started fish farming, and those who have banana

farms. This debate has been viewed by project staff as a positive start to community participation.

5 Conclusions

As William (1995:1) has argued, sustainable use of forests and other natural resources is conditioned by the strength of local institutions to involve the user of that resource in its rational management. In M'punga, local institutions such as traditional authorities and the local committee are weak and currently have only limited legitimacy to secure management of natural resources contributing to unsustainable use of these resources.

According to Heywood (1999:141), legitimacy represents 'the quality, which transforms naked power into rightful authority', which is an important guarantee for the longevity of any leader once their representative role is accepted. On the other hand, legitimacy could be seen as a process of the relationship created between the rulers and community (Nilson, 1995:130) and this relationship is based on mutual acceptance of the rules and interests (Zungu, 1996). While the legitimacy of the chief in M'punga is formally recognized through the Decree 15/2000, his authority is still questioned by a number of community members.

In his study about traditional authority in Mozambique, Nilson (1995) identified two sources or bases of legitimization during colonial government: the legal recognition of institutions by colonial law, and recognition by the community. The second source of legitimacy was dependent on the extent to which traditional leaders could guarantee community survival and welfare. This meant that both physical and spiritual protection were fundamental to social harmony and development.

The lack of legitimacy in M'Punga is linked to a climate of distrust between community and government, community and the chief and between the chief and the government. In general, this climate of distrust constitutes the principal constraint to community involvement and participation in the CBNRM project. This distrust is based on different events and socio-political factors such as those described below.

i)   *Past experiences*: The community was excluded from the management of resources over a long period of time and they find it difficult

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[14] See MARENA Briefing MZ 08 01 for details.

now to understand that external agents wish them to participate in decision-making. On the other hand, after independence the obligation to move to *aldeias comunais* and the creation of *grupos dinamizadores* also contributed to a community image of the government which was rather negative. This has contributed to community resistance in participating in government initiatives;

ii) *Community representation*: The chief is contested by the community, and accused by some of being incapable of protecting his people. This is said to demonstrate that he is not the rightful successor and hence not representative of the ancestors. He is also accused of accepting bribes from the project and obstructing the development of the area and maximizing personal rather than benefits for all the community. On the other hand, the members of the committee, unable to constitute alternative natural resource management strategies, are viewed by the community as project workers. They are perceived as 'forbidding' fire and tree cutting rather than representing the community. Created by traditional leaders to satisfy the project demand, committee members were selected without community participation[15]. This committee is in fact used by the project in community mobilization campaigns, to act as guides and translators, and also to justify community participation. In other words, this is what Chambers (1994:2) described as 'co-opting practice' in which the community or part of it is used by a project to reduce operational costs rather than to be part of the project.

iii) *Unfulfilled promises*: Immediately after the war the government, according to some respondents, asked the community to build a school and promised to bring a teacher. The school was built, but the school never operated because the government never allocated a teacher. Another recent example is the beekeeping project. AMRU promised to supply all necessary materials and equipment to all members of the group, and

also guaranteed to buy all the honey produced by them. However, more than one year since implementation began, some members of the group remained with incomplete material, whilst those who produced honey either had no market to sell to, or AMRU took the honey but failed to pay the producer. This has contributed significantly to a lack of participation by the community in other projects, and has reinforced community distrust;

iv) *Political interference*: There is a tendency for political parties to use chiefs and other community leaders and institutions for their own proposes. For instance, RENAMO and FRELIMO are arguably more preoccupied with establishing control over people than with providing opportunities and the motivation for community members to participate in the process of rural development.

Apart from these factors, there are others that influence the current unsustainable use of natural resources in M'punga. For instance apart from controls over sacred areas and tree and animal species, there is no other evidence of local systems for the sustainable management of natural resources. Although these areas and species that are traditionally protected have a very important cultural significance, the global impact on conservation and sustainable use of resources is limited. Also, some of the rules and institutions over these areas and species are not efficient once people have no incentive or motivation to obey them.

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[15] Participation here is defined as " an empowering process which enables local people to do their own analysis, to take command, to gain in confidence, and to make their own decisions" (Chambers, 1994:2).

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