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CAMPFIRE Project in Mbazhe Community, Nkayi District, Zimbabwe: A Conflict of Interests

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of CAMPFIRE projects by the Zimbabwean government in the 1980s-1990s was received with mixed feelings especially in Matabeleland provinces as many people were displaced in preference for wildlife. The government viewed CAMPFIRE projects as an antidote to the colonial legacy of technocratic and authoritarian development which undermined people's control over their environment and criminalised their use of game. This paper seeks to explore why such a potentially positive project was met with mixed feelings by the Mbazhe community in Nkayi District. The deeper conflict between the Mbazhe community and the government in the implementation of the Mbazhe CAMPFIRE project needs careful examination and analysis. The study adopted a qualitative approach as a suitable method of understanding the problem, and complex processes that involved multiple participants in the implementation of this project. Consistent with Lewis Anthony Dexter's elite interviewing and key informants' techniques, the study conducted interviews with the 20 villagers and 10 CAMPFIRE project committee members (Dexter 1970). The study concluded that the historical government forces formed the attitudes towards the implementation of the project, by side-lining of local views. The study also revealed that the CAMPFIRE project in the Mbazhe community was further shaped by the legacies of the colonial rule, which was done purely following the authoritarian rule of the white settlers. Consequently, these factors shaped deep suspicion of the CAMPFIRE project and resulted in serious conflicts between the implementers and the affected communities. The study recommended that CAMPFIRE project implementers were/or should consider the inputs of the local people when implementing such projects in their local areas. Also, devolution of power should be promoted among all districts of Zimbabwe so that all districts can benefit from their local resources. Finally, the study recommended that the government should adopt people centred approaches when dealing with people at grassroot level.

Key words: Campfire, Communities, community resource, environment, development, projects.

INTRODUCTION

CAMPFIRE is a Community-Based Natural Resource Management Programme (CBNRMP) premised on the assumption that involving local people in the economic benefit and management of wildlife resources ensures the long-term sustainability of resource and its habitat. It was a deliberate government planned programme that sought to ensure and enhance rural livelihoods and rural development (Mashinya, 2009 and Harrison, 2015). The establishment of CAMPFIRE projects was based on the devolution of rights to manage, use, dispose of, and benefit from wildlife resources (Krause and Zambonino, 2013). In concurring with Krause and Zambonino, Bond (2007) posits that the CAMPFIRE project was developed largely around the concept of managing wildlife and wildlife habitat in the communal lands of Zimbabwe for the benefit of local people living in those areas.

According to Martin (1986) cited in Bond (2007), details of CAMPFIRE projects were first elaborated in 1986, though its foundations were established in the 1960s when the commercial possibilities of wildlife production in the country were being explored (Dassman, 1964). At that time, wildlife was state property, managed by the state and only able to be used commercially under a rarely granted licence. As a result, farmers of both commercial and communal land treated wild animals as state property. The government realised that wildlife was threatened by the ongoing widespread transformation of natural habitats to agricultural land and the future of substantial numbers of wildlife outside demarcated conservation areas was becoming bleak (Bond, 2007), hence the need to reserve those species in the uncontrolled areas under the auspices of CAMPFIRE programme.

The establishment of CAMPFIRE project in Mbazhe Community, Ngomambi South, Nkayi-North, in Zimbabwe was received by the local people with mixed feelings. Some people in the area perceived the CAMPFIRE project as political inclined government notion, others thought, they were robbed of their grazing land and some were of the view that the area belonged to their forefathers. The CAMPFIRE project lasted only for one year, thus July 1994 to July 1995 (Nkayi Rural District Council's Report, 2018). All these issues raised above needed to be unpacked by a study of this magnitude. Previously, many practitioners and scholars encouraged rural people's participation and their benefits from various forms of nature conservation and management (Hulme and Murphree, 2001). Therefore, the study sought to explore the mixed feelings of the Mbazhe community towards the introduction of the CAMPFIRE project in that area.

Overview of CAMPFIRE Projects in Zimbabwe

In the late 1980s, the government of Zimbabwe instituted a national programme combining wildlife conservation and rural development known as Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) (Metcalfe 1994 in Mashinya, 2008). The CAMPFIRE project was centred on the use of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) to generate revenue for the country's underdeveloped rural districts through sustainable use of wildlife and habitat in these outlying areas. CAMPFIRE's aim was that, once income from sustainable use of wildlife flows to the communities, residents were to have the incentives to support rather than undermine conservation efforts and local districts were to have a reliable source of funds for community development (Hulme & Murphree, 2001 in Mashinya, 2008).

Additionally, CAMPFIRE was introduced to defuse conflicts and redress the grievances by providing the opportunity for locals to benefit from wildlife. This was a response to injustices that occurred prior to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 (Mashinya, 2008). Mashinya further revealed that during the colonial era, land set aside as game reserve was often expropriated from the traditional territory of local communities. Adding on the woes of the local people, the colonial regime assumed ownership of all wildlife, both inside and outside protected areas. Thus, community members were forbidden to hunt either in the newly established game reserves or in the resettlement areas (Mashinya, 2008).

Furthermore, CAMPFIRE projects were supposed to bring several economic and social benefits to the local people as asserted by previous researchers. One of the claims from the CAMPFIRE Association of Zimbabwe report in (2017), averred that CAMPFIRE projects enabled local communities, especially those residing in areas where the level of human and elephant conflict is high, benefitted from wildlife through sport hunting. The report further revealed that CAMPFIRE enhanced hunting which generated approximately 90% of CAMPFIRE income, with elephant hunting contributing up to 70% of annual income and American hunters made up 60% of the clients in CAMPFIRE areas in Zimbabwe.

In addition, CAMPFIRE Association of Zimbabwe report in (2019) pointed out that CAMPFIRE project had benefited 2.4 million beneficiaries, made up of 200,000 households that were directly involved in the programme, and 600,000 households benefitted indirectly from social services and infrastructure supported by wildlife related income in Zimbabwe. The Association further claims that the size of wards that make up CAMPFIRE is approximately 50,000 km2 or 12.7% of the country, which is roughly equivalent to the size of the National Parks estate in Zimbabwe. Under CAMPFIRE, based on voluntary interests in participation by local communities, wildlife is found also on land outside Zimbabwean national parks. By choice, these communities and their Rural District Councils (RDCs) maintain varying sizes of land free from subsistence and commercial agriculture, or other economic activities such as gold panning and mining that negatively impact on wildlife management and the conservation of natural resources.

Consequently, CAMPFIRE has made significant contributions to the protection of between 2 and 3 million hectares of land in Zimbabwe (CAZ, 2017). Reports by Safari Operators under CAMPFIRE show that the suspension by United States of America of elephant trophy imports in 2014 resulted in the cancellation of 108 out of 189 (57%) elephant hunting booked by US citizens (CAZ, 2019). This impacted negatively in wildlife income in Zimbabwe.

Regardless of the convincing economic and social benefits of CAMPFIRE projects in Zimbabwe, several researchers revealed that outcomes of CAMPFIRE on the ground were very disappointing (Alexander & McGregor, 2000; Murombedzi, 2001; Newsham, 2002). Several scholars criticised the CAMPFIRE programme for its lack of complete devolution (Murombedzi, 1992 and Murphree, 2004). Participation was elaborated as another challenge affecting CAMPFIRE projects (Dzingirai 2003) as many local communities did not take part in the implementation of the programme.

Furthermore, Jones and Murphree (2001: 46) in Mashinya (2008) posit that the initial intention to give communities tenure of the land on which they managed wildlife was frustrated by the entrenched interests of the Rural District Councils, which created the major weaknesses of the

CAMPFIRE programme. It was shown that under CAMPFIRE's enabling statutes, authority for resource management passed to the rural district councils (RDCs) rather than to the communities, which held land in common and therefore lacked legal property tenure. Therefore, this compromised the functionality and operations of the programme.

In a study conducted by Dzingirai (2003), the revenue generated by rural people's resource management and ecotourism efforts were received by the RDCs, which had considerable prudence as to how much money would be passed to the local level. In this regard, the fortunes of CAMPFIRE projects were tactically compromised and reduced the programme's effectiveness. Dzingirai further argues that, far from empowering and enriching the rural poor, the community-based programme exploited and marginalised the rural poor, as they were never consulted when the idea was mooted.

Additionally, Dzingirai lamented that politics played a major role in the failure of community-based programmes like CAMPFIRE. The author maintains that CBNRM programmes like CAMPFIRE were successfully manipulated by the state and its private sector allies to suppress the economic, institutional, and social interests of the rural communities. Therefore, those who were not aligned to the government during the CAMPFIRE project's implementation, did not perceive it as a good idea.

In a similar view with Dzingai, Ian Parker (1993) wrote briefly on why CAMPFIRE projects failed in his views. He found CAMPFIRE's fatal flaw to be the discrimination in ownership status of communal farmers which the Programme had accepted in its strategic compromises. The author concluded that the dichotomy in policy was going to be transient, and a steppingstone to conceding the benefits of full ownership. Yet if it sticks halfway-as at present-the CAMPFIRE programmes will stress the owners what they are missing-not what they are getting and for this reason the project will fail (Parker, 1993: 3).

The Implementation Matrix of Mbazhe CAMPFIRE Project

In the Mbazhe community, the CAMPFIRE project was named the bird sanctuary because of the vast species of birds that were present in the dam. The project was established as a nature reserve for the breeding space for the ducks and birds, home of crocodiles and fish, a rest camp for the then District Commissioner and his visitors (Nkayi Rural District Council, 2013). The rural district council had 75% share of the local community projects while the local people had 25% (Nkayi Rural District Council, 2013). The programme started in July 1994 and ended in July 1995. The CAMPFIRE area covered almost 13km^2. The CAMPFIRE project was situated at the Mbazhe dam in Gezekhaya Village, Ngomambi South Ward 5 which is approximately 42 km north-west of Nkayi Growth Point.

From its inception, the local people did not accept the programme as many resisted to be evicted from their original birth homes and fields. The governing authorities-initiated plans to remove the habitants within the designated areas and settle them elsewhere. Community members who were linked to the CAMPFIRE project or those who were part of the CAMPFIRE committee, had their fields taken by the nearby kraal head and shared it amongst those who were anti-CAMPFIRE project. The situation became tense to the point that some committee members were beaten, and their homesteads burnt.

The response towards CAMPFIRE project further worsened when the locals took all matters to their own hands. The local people destroyed and took the fence of the CAMPFIRE project, closed the access road, and opened the dam wall or catchment area. This made it difficult for the implementers to continue developing the project. In response to those found on the wrong side of the project, the government together with Rural District Council arrested the nearby villagers and detained them. Additionally, their cattle, goats and donkeys were taken as compensation for the destroyed components of the project. All the Mbazhe villagers who lost their livestock to the government took all the land that was fenced for the CAMPFIRE and shared it amongst themselves.

Therefore, the above discussion is a clear indication why the Mbazhe CAMPFIRE project did not last long due to compounding political forces. The programme which had, started in July 1994, and ended in July 1995 did not go further than that. Consequently, a study of this magnitude was mooted to find out why the CAMPFIRE project in Mbazhe Community was received by the local people with mixed reactions?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the economic and social benefits that come along with the implementation of CAMPFIRE projects, the CAMPFIRE project in Mbazhe area was received with mixed reactions as the community did not perceive it beneficial to them. It is however claimed by several researchers that the implementation of the programme on the ground was very disappointing, pointing fingers to many reasons escalating from politics, programme ownership and lack of community consultation by the implementers. More than two decades from the time the CAMPFIRE project was implemented, its negative effects are still being experienced by the Mbazhe community. Recently, villagers were involved in the ownership wrangle of the area which was reserved for the programme. Many of the villagers were taken to local courts over the ownership of the land in the area which was planned for CAMPFIRE. The local people were relocated to other far places to give way for the implementation of the project. The people of Mbazhe thought they were short-changed by the government and less valued in preference for wildlife management. It is from this premise that the study sought to find out why the Mbazhe CAMPFIRE project was resisted by the local people resulting on its failure.

Research Objectives

Robert Cambers once observed a vast array of issues which in his opinion hinder development of rural areas. The challenges range from elitist biases, the invisibility of the poor and lack of consultation to the general population to be affected by a planned programme.

a) To find out the economic and social benefits of CAMPFIRE project in the Mbazhe community.
b) To assess problems associated with the implementation of the CAMPFIRE project.
c) To establish the impact of politics and other external factors on the Mbazhe CAMPFIRE project.
d) To make recommendations in dealing with the implementation of the project and how it can be revived.

Economic and Social Benefits of CAMPFIRE Programmes

The elite, academics and researchers are at times warned on how they deal and handle the rural folk (Chambers, 1983). This could be through areas of indigenous knowledge systems where the rural folks are perceived as having a reservoir of knowledge on issues obtaining on their localities. In general, the CAMPFIRE project was a government initiative that was designed to stimulate long-term development, management, and sustainable use of natural resources in Zimbabwe's communal areas (Martin 1986). Communal areas in Zimbabwe were divided into administrative units of villages. Six or seven villages made a ward or community (Madzudzo, 1997). The philosophy of CAMPFIRE initiative was that local communities needed to realize commercial benefits of the CAMPFIRE project to sustainably manage local natural resources in their midst (Mapedza, 2009).

On its inception, the focus of the CAMPFIRE programme was to promote conservation and development in marginal rural areas where wildlife management represented an opportunity for revenue production and in areas where game populations were threatened. Commenting on CAMPFIRE programmes, Murphree (2001) pointed out that the future of wildlife could only be guaranteed in a policy context where wildlife constituted an economically competitive form of land use. Following the principles of CBNRM, the programme's key underlying assumption was providing local communities with economic benefits, and involving them in wild life management, to promote the long-term sustainability of wildlife and habitat as communities would have vested interest in the conservation of their resources (Child 1996; Hasler 1999; Mugabe 2004).

Furthermore, Child et al (1997), Hasler (1999) and Murombedzi (2001) aver that CAMPFIRE had the beneficial social effect of restoring some aspects of historical and customary rights to wildlife that were expropriated during colonial rule and to provide new sources of revenue for the underfunded RDCs (Muir-Leresche et al. 2003). In designing the CAMPFIRE programme, the founding organisations established a set of principles considered central to the successful wildlife management on communal lands of Zimbabwe. The principles addressed issues of costs, benefits, incentives, rules and sanctions (Murphree 1995). Murphree and others maintains that effectual management of natural resources can best be achieved by recognition of the locals as best custodians and entry points of those resources. This implies that local people can manage their environment sustainably when benefits of such management accrue to them and are perceived to exceed costs.

Several aid agencies supported CAMPFIRE programmes during their implementation. From 1989 to 2000, aid agencies from the European Union, Netherlands, and United States of America provided substantial funding for CAMPFIRE projects in Zimbabwe. According to Muir-Leresche et al (2003), USAID awarded grants totalling approximately US$28 million towards the implementation and management of CAMPFIRE programmes in Zimbabwe. Researchers posit that external funding was channelled through the CAMPFIRE Association and various other NGOs for use during the outreach, project development, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation. Over the same period, revenue realised from the Zimbabwean CAMPFIRE projects nationwide generated a cumulative total of approximately US$20 million, of which about half directly benefited participating communities (Muir-Leresche et al. 2003). The remainder of the income was withheld to fund activities of governmental agencies, including the RDCs, the implementing NGOs and the CAMPFIRE Association. The programme absorbed more revenue than it generated

over its first 10 years, an indication to illustrate the obstacles to economic viability in many district projects.

Several researchers have asserted that CAMPFIRE programmes bring a lot of economic and social benefits to the local people, for example Mapedza and Bond (2006). The authors underscored that CAMPFIRE concept was developed largely in response to the realization that unless people living adjacent to or within wildlife habitat can realize value from wildlife, other forms of land use will eventually replace it, as has happened in most parts of the world and Zimbabwe. For people to live with elephants, buffalos, lions, leopards, crocodiles, and other species, they should be prepared on the threats to life and property posed by them. However, when the ideology was mooted, the purpose was not to cause harm to the communities, but for them to realise profits accruing to the programme. Giving back to people substantial proprietorship over wildlife was also seen to be an important step in re-empowering them to take greater control over the mode and tempo of their development, and to build the necessary institutional arrangements and structures to serve this.

Suffice to say that, between 1989 and 2001, RDCs in Zimbabwe earned a total of US$ 20.29 million from wildlife-based activities (Bond, 1999). Of this total, 89% was from leases with private sector safari operators, about 6% from the sale of hides and ivory, with the balance from tourism that is; photographic safaris which was over 2% and other miscellaneous activities. Of the revenue earned from safari hunting, at least 60% were attributed to hunting elephant, both through trophy fees and the daily rate paid by hunters when in the field (Bond, 1999). The development of photographic tourism within the communal lands was constrained by the fragmented nature of most of the wildlife habitat relative to the protected areas of Zimbabwe and low wildlife population densities.

The total benefits of CAMPFIRE projects are more than just the direct economic benefits. Indirect economic benefits were building a school, a clinic and a grinding mill, however, the most common community projects undertaken using CAMPFIRE revenues were difficult to assess and quantify (Mapedza and Bond, 2006). These indirect economic benefits were also much more intricately tied to the general health and prosperity of the national economy and the level of benefit they produce changes over time, depending on the degree to which such assets were maintained and invested in. For example, community projects were often associated with the adding of incremental value to existing structures or systems and so, to use education as an example, building additional school blocks on government funded schools initially helped the expansion of local governmental institutions like education. It was revealed that indirect economic benefits from CAMPFIRE were mostly affected by the national economic crisis and the associated depletion of national infrastructure such as the health and education systems in recent years (Mapedza and Bond 2006).

Another study conducted by Hasler (1999) at Kanyemba district in Zimbabwe showed that CAMPFIRE household dividends and community projects had regularly occurred since 1992 and institutional formation and capacity building at local level had strengthened. Much infrastructural improvement in the area was noted through development of schools, clinics, business centre roads and much of this was associated with the development of the CAMPFIRE programme.

Preceding studies reported that success of community-based natural resources management programmes, such as CAMPFIRE, would be associated with reduced conflicts of interests such that the devolution of wildlife management to local people is imminent and the high education and environmental awareness of local people on minimization of risks or damage from wild animals (Woodroffe et al. 2005, Mapedza and Bond 2006). Authors suggest that CAMPFIRE programmes increase the population of animals within a stipulated area. In a study conducted by Anon (1996), the elephant population in Zimbabwe increased from 46,000 in 1980 to 67,000 in 1995. The study showed an increase in the Matabeleland and mid-Zambezi valley populations, a small increase in the Sebungwe population and relative stability in the south east lowveld population. The 1997 annual off take of 250 elephants under the CAMPFIRE project, through safari hunting, had no impact on population trends during that time (Royal Netherlands Embassy 1998). In fact, hunting quotas in CAMPFIRE areas were conservative.

A review of the results of aerial census of elephants and buffalos which were undertaken by Taylor and Mackie in 1997 since 1988 in selected CAMPFIRE districts, high potential areas in the Zambezi Valley revealed high levels of variability between annual surveys. The authors' findings indicate a remarkable stability in the population of elephants and buffalos considering the high levels of human immigration into the surveyed areas (Taylor and Mackie 1997). For example, elephant number estimates in Siabuwa, Gokwe North, Omay and Guruve North all indicated a relative stability in the population. Elephant number estimates for Mukwiche and Chewore showed growth.

Additionally, Cumming and Lynam (1997) conducted a study on the wildlife and livestock populations at the Zambezi valley. Comparing data from the Sebungwe and the Dande Chiswiti areas, their findings tallied with Taylor and Mackie's observations. Cumming and Lynam further illustrated that elephant density between 1980 and 1996 for both communal areas and for protected areas indicated stability despite high levels of human in-migration. The in-migration they referred to had caused rapid extension of land clearance for agriculture, which were thought to be the key threat to wildlife habitat in the area. Cummings and Lyman's findings indicate that the survival of large wild herbivores in the communal lands of Sebungwe and Dande Chiswiti was because of critical thresholds of human population density which had not yet been reached. The Netherlands Government evaluation identified the same trend in the south east lowveld of Zimbabwe and claimed that this was because of serious repercussions for the CAMPFIRE programme and for long term sustainability of the nature-based tourism sector in the next 10 to 15 years (Royal Netherlands Embassy 1998).

More so, Adams and McShane (1996) laid down the rules of trade concerning wildlife products, which influenced the amount of income accruing to local households. For example, in June 1999, five District Councils received their first tranche from revenue accrued from stockpiled ivory of problem animals usually life threatening or crop raiding animals.

Problems Associated with the Implementation of CAMPFIRE Projects in Zimbabwe

The implementation of CAMPFIRE programmes in Zimbabwe had been characterised by several challenges as many researchers suggested that, CAMPFIRE programmes did not define the communities that were to manage the projects. Moreover, Murphree maintains that the central government devolved wildlife management to the Rural District Council level only, but the

CAMPFIRE documents were silent on how to confer the effective status of Appropriate Authorities to these communities. Murphree elaborated that retaining appropriate authority at the RDC level raised immediate doubts regarding how much control local communities would be allowed to have and how much long-term commitment to the programme would be created at the village level (Murphree 2000). Several scholars contend that with resource ownership in the hands of the RDCs, the participatory component of the programme was compromised even before CAMPFIRE was implemented (Murombedzi 1999, Murphree 2000 & Newsham 2002).

Lack of devolution was yet another problem identified by previous scholars in Zimbabwe. Murphree (2004) and others considered the level of devolution for wildlife management to be a fundamental weakness in CAMPFIRE with the quality of governance, both at the RDC and ward level as an equally important concern. These scholars argued that with good governance, RDCs could effectively manage the resources for the benefit of the local communities, however, this was not the case with the CAMPFIRE programme implementation.

In addition, critics have also pointed to problems arising from the CAMPFIRE's early reliance on donor funding especially from the Western countries (Murombedzi 1999 & Newsham 2002). These investments, while essential during the start-up period, tended to erode self-direction and self-sufficiency in community development. Some districts established CAMPFIRE projects with the primary purpose of leveraging donor funds, rather than to achieve sustainable wildlife management (Murombedzi 1999). As a result, this created more problems for CAMPFIRE programme as the RDCs became more corrupt.

Impact of Politics and Other External Factors on CAMPFIRE Projects

The political situation in Zimbabwe in general had been unstable since attaining independence in 1980 where most parts of Matabeleland were affected by mass killings known as Gukurahundi. Literature also suggests that CAMPFIRE project structures were the main organs of the ruling political party ZANUPF, which captured all state institutions for the maintenance of control or dominance of all rural areas (Newsham 2002). This was evident on the ground, as the district, ward and village wildlife management committees were based on structures set up by the local government. Suffice to say, the political situation determined the implementation and results of the CAMPFIRE programme in most districts of Zimbabwe. Thus, the programme was consequently perceived by the local communities as government oriented, which had nothing to do with the needs and aspirations of the locals.

Furthermore, Patel (1998) identified many problems of CAMPFIRE that were endemic to the political and economic structures within Zimbabwe. Patel argued that CAMPFIRE was supposed to be viewed in the national political arena since national policies, politics and economics often promoted or hindered its initiatives. Political interference and manipulation by the government undermined local participation in some districts (Murombedzi 1999). Although one of the strengths of the CAMPFIRE programmes were its application of a multi-sectoral and multi-level approach facilitating policy integration across agencies, however, the internal differences and lack of coordination among different sectors posed difficulties (Murombedzi 1999 & Newsham 2002).

Other scholars noted that some politicians attempted to influence RDC's decisions on revenue distribution, which affected CAMPFIRE benefits to the ward and households (Hasler 1999,

Murombedzi 1999 & Newsham 2002). Previous literature further revealed that the national, provincial and district politics influenced project outcomes. Hasler's research found that national and district politics had an impact on programme performance and the extent of local participation. However, Hasler found these effects to vary from case to case and they did not explain the failures in governance and participation at the local level.

In addition, the complexity of the system of government also had negative implications for meaningful local participation for CAMPFIRE programmes. At the sub-district, district, provincial and national level, decisions made were not highly participatory. According to Pimbert and Pretty's typology of participation, the principle of representative participation can be effective, in the context of rural communities with little democratic experience. The representative participation approach in CAMPFIRE programmes was never practiced as it ranked local communities at the lowest (Newsham 2002).

Furthermore, the government also reduced the activities of Non-Governmental Organisations and this negatively impacted on CAMPFIRE programming as projects depended on for administrative support (Hasler, 1999). While the USAID funding in 1990s sharply reduced NGOs' capacity, the national crisis constrained their work in the field. Consequently, the USA and the European Union imposed sanctions on Zimbabwean government, this further reduced the level of international assistance for CAMPFIRE projects in Zimbabwe.

Additionally, Hasler (1999) points out that some of the most impoverished household heads did not know what CAMPFIRE programme all was about. These marginalized foragers and former hunters were largely excluded from the programme and yet had most contact with wildlife, as they lived right in the boundary of the nearby CAMPFIRE projects. Hasler's findings were that people did not want to openly reveal that they were not happy with the CAMPFIRE programme. He opined that some people felt that dividends were insufficient and that the programme was imposed on them by the government. In addition, Hasler also indicates that the direct links between programme benefits and management of wildlife were not easy for the average ward resident to identify, hence, creating mixed feelings towards the programme.

Evidence from literature suggests that international politics also played a negative impact on the implementation of CAMPFIRE projects in Zimbabwe. Many scholars maintained that most of the CAMPFIRE's external funding in Zimbabwe came from USAID. This implied that, if US taxpayers opposed the project's reliance on USAD, low funding would be the norm. This, therefore, could negatively affect the implementation of the programme. In addition, international donors had the power to credit or discredit CAMPFIRE through their propaganda at international level.

CAMPFIRE Programme's Hidden Agenda

Literature suggests that there were several issues around the implementation of CAMPFIRE projects that were unpacked. For example, politicians and senior government officials representing different constituencies and government departments had agendas that were not consistent with CAMPFIRE objectives (Newsham 2002). Other scholars argue that the central dimension of CBNRM programmes like CAMPFIRE, were Northern or Western ideas imposed on weak national governments and marginalised local communities through asymmetric power relationships (Derman, 1995). Views by Hughes (2001), Wainwright & Wehrmeyer (1998) were

that CBNRM programmes like CAMPFIRE were largely premised on private property owners, or international conservation interests to promote their own agendas under the guise of local community empowerment. Hughes and others further argued that in Africa, typically white landholders supported CBNRM to burnish their image, fend off national land redistribution schemes and protect the game they were using for their own money-making enterprises. In the same vein, Hasler (1999) noted that international environmental NGOs backed CBNRM for conservation purposes, for fund-raising opportunities, and had no commitment to rural development or community control.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CAMPFIRE project was established in the Mbazhe Dam area, located in Gezekhaya Village, Ngomambi South Ward in Nkayi District, Zimbabwe. The area is approximately 42 Kilometres from Nkayi Growth Point. The place was mooted as a nature reserve for the purpose of creating a breeding place for ducks, birds, crocodiles, fish and a rest camp for the then Nkayi District Commissioner (DC) and his visitors. The study focused on the Mbazhe dam as it was the main area of the CAMPFIRE project and everything evolved around it.

This study opted for the qualitative case study research design in understanding the nature of the problem where a conflict of interest led to the failure of the CAMPFIRE project in Mbazhe community. Bhattacherjee (2012), an advocate for this design posits that a qualitative case study is usually suitable for understanding a problem, and complex organisational processes that involve multiple participants. Qualitative studies can be carried out with a single participant or with as many as 60 or 70 participants representing multiple contexts and a sample of more than 20 is large enough (Gay et al., 2009 and Creswell, 2009). Gay et al. also noted, having many participants does not make research results more reliable and Saunders (2015) notes that research questions and objectives that do not require statistical estimation should have a sample smaller than 30 participants. Adjacent local communities that were involved in the implementation of CAMPFIRE project were also studied. The study area was purposively selected based on the existence of local communities with a diverse CAMPFIRE history. The sampling approach entailed purposively selecting households within the sample. A purposive selection was employed for the main reason that gaining consent in Zimbabwe is seldom given (Zikhali, 2018). Therefore, relying on households known through previous research encounters as well as familiar with research processes through associations with NGOs was likely to yield consent and active participation. Zikhali further notes that there is often suspicion on the part of participants in rural communities of the motives of research.

The study identified a kraal head in the Gezekhaya village and within the selected kraal head, ten (20) study villagers were selected for data collection as well as 10 CAMPFIRE project committee members. Consistent with Lewis Anthony Dexter (1970)'s elite interviewing and key informants' techniques, interviews with the 20 villagers and 10 CAMPFIRE project committee members were conducted. Key informants were identified and typically provided explanations and interpretations of events over a period within the research framework. Households were purposively selected in ward 5 giving a total sample size of 23 households (*n=23*). In each household, the three oldest persons were identified and selected for interviews per household. The total participants therefore were thirty (*n=30*). Secondary data was also appropriate for the inquiry because of the nature of the study and the benefits associated with secondary data that

was available (Mutanana, 2016). Reports and records from the key Nkayi District Administrators' offices were also explored.

A Description of the Study Site

Nkayi is a district in Matabeleland North Province of Zimbabwe. It is characterised by low rainfall, poor infrastructure and semi-arid to arid conditions. Rainfall tends to be very low in the area with mean amounts of between 17–70 mm (Hoko, 2005). As already noted above, it is administratively divided into 30 wards which in turn have been subdivided into 156 villages (Nkayi RDC, n.d.). The 2012 population census notes that Nkayi's population totalled to a figure of 109, 371 people with an average household size of 5.1 persons (ZimStat, 2011).

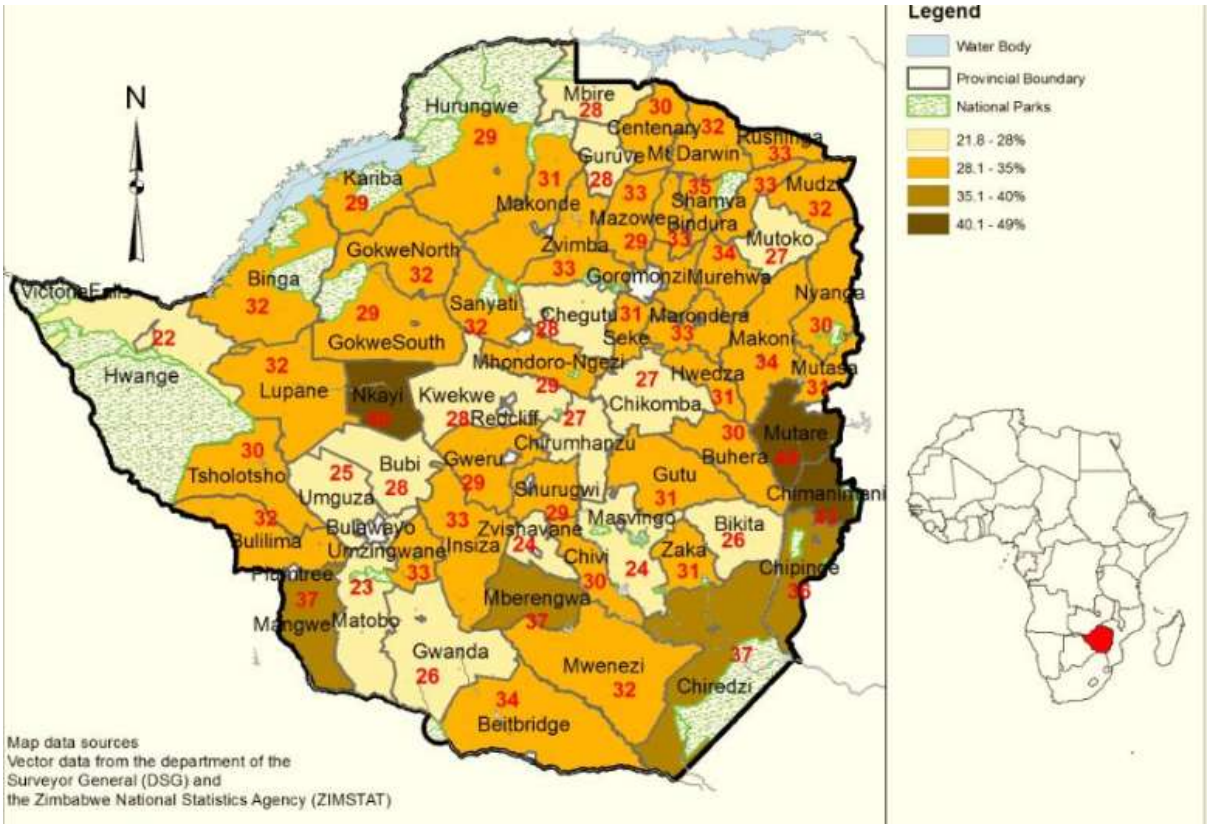

Figure 1: Districts in Zimbabwe with Nkayi district indicated as area of the study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Economic and Social Benefits of CAMPFIRE

The study sought to find out the economic and social benefits on the implementation of CAMPFIRE project in the Mbazhe community. Most participants (villagers) informed that they did not gain any monetary benefits from the project. Fifteen (50%) participants indicated that the CAMPFIRE project managed to mend the Mbazhe Dam wall and attended to the rest camp road, making the dam area to be accessible by those visiting the project. Furthermore, participants informed that the Mbazhe Dam was the main source of drinking water for both livestock and human beings. These findings were consistent with Hasler (1999) who noted that infrastructural development

for CAMPFIRE projects in the form of roads were for the benefit of the interested parties and not communities. The observation also confirmed that CAMPFIRE project managed to construct a dam, connected tapes and drilled boreholes in the community. The local people and their livestock had no problems of water shortage during the time of CAMPFIRE project.

Problems Associated with the Implementation of CAMPFIRE

Most of the participants informed that corruption was one of the challenges that affected CAMPFIRE project implementation in Mbazhe community. These participants opined that the district authorities received money from donors, and nothing was sent to the local communities as benefits. One participant said "if you look right now, we have Jubbett cutting timber and nothing is benefiting us, only district councillors are benefiting. If the district council cares about us, they should bring the fruits to us as locals regardless of the amount." On the CAMPFIRE project, most of the participants indicated that it was difficult to trust people who had robbed them before and hope for better.

The majority 20(67%) of the participants revealed that those who were selected during the CAMPFIRE project implementation as committee members were government supporters. The findings from the study were supported by Murphree et al (2004) who considered the level of devolution for wildlife management to be a fundamental weakness in CAMPFIRE programmes. The authors found that quality of governance, both at the RDC and ward level was an important concern. In other words, with good governance, RDCs could effectively manage the resources for the benefit of the local communities.

Furthermore, 10(33%) participants indicated that the CAMPFIRE project was not negotiated with them as the governing authorities fenced the area without consultation. Consequently, the local people resisted to be evicted, creating a conflict between the local committee members and the affected homesteads. These results were consistent with the findings of Newsham (2002) and others. The authors' arguments were that locals could have been consulted on programmes affecting them. Also, authors further argued that with resource ownership in the hands of the RDCs, the participatory component of the programme was compromised even before CAMPFIRE was implemented (Murombedzi 1999; Murphree 2000; Newsham 2002). The local people became angry at each other resulting in them being uncontrollable with many of them destroying property meant for CAMPFIRE project.

One (1) participant exposed the local people's dependence on the area for grazing and farming purposes, arguing that CAMPFIRE project was a threat to their livestock and farming fields. This therefore resulted in the locals resisting against the government authorities' orders to be evicted from their original birth places.

Impact of Politics and Other External Factors on CAMPFIRE

On the thematic area pertaining to the issue of Zimbabwean politics on project implementation, data was gathered from participants on their understanding of Zimbabwean politics. The participants described politics as a "dirty game" impacting negatively on community projects and members participation. Most participants informed that the CAMPFIRE project's failure was inevitable as many people in the community did not see value in forced government projects.

Furthermore, most of the participants (83%) felt that the timing of projects was not good as the government only recognised the importance of local or rural people towards elections. These findings were supported by Newsham (2002) who found that politicians and senior government officials representing different constituencies and government departments had agendas that were not consistent with CAMPFIRE programme objectives. Consistent to these findings, Dzingirai (2003) argues that the government's agenda was far from empowering and enriching the rural poor, but the community-based programme exploited and marginalised the rural poor.

Most of the participants (83%) also stressed that the problem with the government was its authoritarian type of rule. Participants' arguments were that the government was not listening to the people to get their felt needs. These findings were in tandem with Murombedzi (1999) who argued that political interference and manipulation by the government undermined local participation in the implementation of CAMPFIRE projects in some districts. These participants also revealed that the local people were still angry with the government on many issues of neglect and drought, and this led on CAMPFIRE project failure.

CONCLUSIONS

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the CAMPFIRE project in Mbazhe community failed due to a myriad of reasons which encompass authoritarian type of leadership imposed by the government authorities and political instability on the people of Mbazhe as well as corruption at district level. However, the local people benefited from the CAMPFIRE project through drilling of water pumps, boreholes, construction of dam wall, road construction which connects the local people to the Nkayi growth point and fishing in the Mbazhe dam. The CAMPFIRE project's ideology was initially good but bad on the implementation as Mbazhe residents were displaced from their areas of residents to far places without being consulted. The local people rejected the CAMPFIRE project as most of them depended on small fishery enterprises as a method of survival. Also, residents resisted the government's CAMPFIRE project as they were going to leave their grazing areas in preference for government-oriented project. Further, the CAMPFIRE project also sought to take farming areas used by local people. The Mbazhe dam is near Shangani river, close to the riverbank, very fertile and good for farming. Consequently, the Mbazhe community did not want to lose their grazing area, productive land, hunting areas and fishing activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the objectives of the study and conclusions, the study recommends CAMPFIRE project implementers to consider the intended beneficiaries of the mooted project. This could be done through consultation with the people during the planning phase and their participation. Also, devolution of power by government should be exercised to all districts and provinces of Zimbabwe so that local authorities could benefit from their local resources. The study further recommends that the government should adopt humanistic approach when dealing with people at grassroot level. The backdrop to this being that the people of Matabeleland are still skeptical about government's activities and programmes based on the previous Gukurahundi massacres that were perpetrated to them in the early 1980s.

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