

**THE DECENTRALIZATION-RECENTRALIZATION CONFUSION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
DECENTRALIZED MANAGEMENT OF COMMON POOL RESOURCES IN MAHENYE
CAMPFIRE PROJECTS IN CHIPINGE ZIMBABWE**

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ABSTRACT

Issues of resource governance had been a historic problem in Zimbabwe and some countries in the sub-Saharan Africa. There had been a long search for a governance system that could sustainably govern the use of resources. In Zimbabwe the problem can be traced to pre-colonial period and this continued through the colonial period and the post colonial period and it still remain a problem. The centralized system adopted by the colonial government, which was also adopted, by the post colonial government had produced disastrous results in the governance of resource. The quest for sustainable resource governance resulted in introduction of more participatory approached to resource governance. This called for decentralized management systems of governance. This again is done so the decentralization of management roles to lower tiers of the government and the local institutions. However this process had resulted in another recentralization of the management systems at sub-national level were the local people are just involved but remain the periphery of decision making processes and are benefiting very few from the system. This research seeks to examine the extent and effect of this partial decentralization on the governance of common pool resources. The research utilized both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The research results indicated that the decentralization process had achieved very little in terms of empowering the local communities. The communities that are supposed to be owners of the project remain in the periphery both in terms of power to manage and accrual of benefits.

There is therefore great need to create institutions at local level, which are responsible for the management of resources.

Key Words: Resource management, local participation, sustainable development

Background of the Study

Resource governance has remained problematic and the search for management system that could effectively manage these resources had also remained elusive (Chigwenya and Manetas, 2007). The centralized system had been criticized for its failure to integrate the locals in the management structures. They are only included as recipients of laws and regulation that were formulated elsewhere in the central government and their inputs never found space in the generation. The new management system is calling for the involvement of locals in the whole management structure of resources. The new thinking is in line with the sustainable management of resources. The implementation of this participatory system of resource governance is being implemented in different styles. In Zimbabwe it is being implemented as Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) (Maveneke, 1987). This programme can work effectively if there is total devolution of management to the local communities (Murphree, 2004; Jansen, 2001; Taylor, 1992). The participation of locals brings the component of empowerment where the local are given skills to run these programs and this is in line with the new concept of resource governance which calls for participatory approach to resource governance. This is a departure from centralized approaches to resource governance, which had proved to be ineffective in reducing resource degradation mainly because of lack of financial resources and the requisite skills. This centralized system failed to give the required surveillance, which is required to police the implementation of promulgated government statutes. This departure saw creation of lower tiers of government at provincial and district level. This was an attempt to involve communities in the governance of resources. This decentralization process had failed to achieve its intended targets as it had failed to involve the locals. Decision making processes had remained located at the provincial and district level with local communities remaining glued at the periphery.

Statement of the Problem

The process of decentralization was seen as the ideal way of ensuring that the locals take charge in resource governance. A lot has been done to ensure the involvement of local communities. What

remained a problem is that resources continued to be degraded and locals continued to benefit very little from the management of resources. The process of decentralization had achieved very little in terms of empowering local communities in resource governance. The central government through its sub-national offices had remained in control and this partial decentralization had failed to empower local communities in the management of resources.

Justification of the Study

The research gathered information on the impact of partial decentralization on resource governance. This information is very important to the stakeholders in resource governance. These stakeholders include the government, quasi-government institutions such as local authorities. These institutions will see the importance of the total decentralization and the involvement of beneficiaries in development projects. The communities will also find this information handy, as it will highlight their entry points in the whole system of resource governance. The current situation that is obtaining in resources governance, where the benefiting groups are not directly involved in the governance of resources is not healthy as it is a potential breeding ground for resource degradation.

Aims and Objectives

Aim

The broader aim of the study was to establish the impact of partial decentralization in resource governance.

Specific Objectives

- To establish who the actors are in decision making processes in resources governance in Mahenye CAPMFIRE projects.
- To examine the benefits that accrued at local level.
- To compare benefits accrued at local and sub-national level.

Research Methodology

The study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The questionnaire was the only quantitative data-collecting tool utilized and in the qualitative methodologies a number of methods were used which included semi-structured interviews with key stakeholder such as local committee members,

leaders of CAMPFIRE projects and the rural district council. The research also utilized observations where the administration of questionnaires was concurrently carried with observing the conditions of respondents. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS and presented in frequency table, pie charts, and graphs.

Research Findings

Age-Sex

The research utilized respondents from all sexes but females constituted the majority compared to their male counterparts (66% as compared to 34%). Their ages ranged from slightly below 30 years to 60 years. This showed the ages of the respondents were still economically active and no one was in the retirement age or a minor. The 51-60 years age group was the largest that constituted 36% and the 31—40 years age group, was the second largest constituting 28%. The 41-50 years age group and those who were 30 years and below constituted 23% and 19%, respectively. Those whose ages were below 30 years had ages ranging from 26-29 years. Table 1 (below) shows the age-sex profile of the respondents.

Table 1: Age Sex Profile of Respondents

Age group	Males	Females
Below 30 years	8	11
31-40	5	23
41-50	7	16
51-60	14	14
Total	34	66

Source: Survey, 2009

Academic Qualification of Respondents

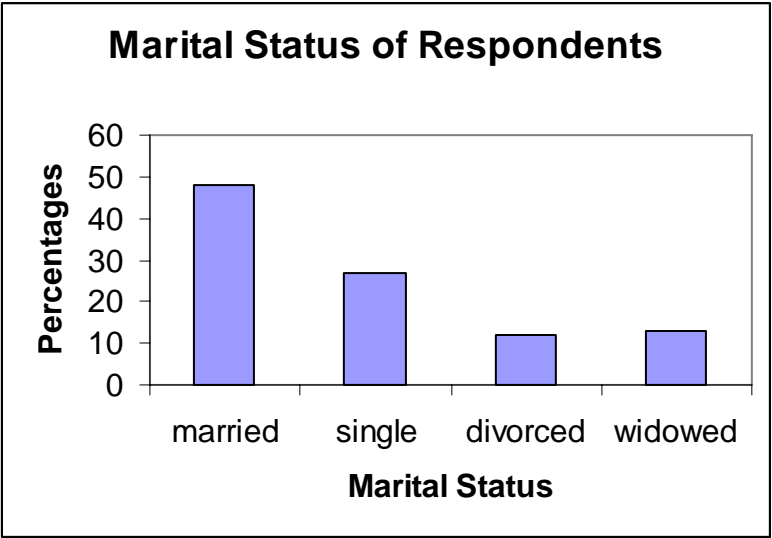
Respondents were of varying educational background. It included those who had no formal education, those with elementary education, to holders of tertiary education. The respondents showed that a number of them had acquired meaningful education, as 86% of them had at least Zimbabwe junior certificate level of education; of this, 49% had at least attained ordinary. Only a few had no formal education (14%) which shows that the majority of the respondents were literate and therefore could read and write. These people can be trained to run projects effectively if the program is planned well. Some of them who had tertiary education could be trained to take positions of responsibility so that they can lead

community-based projects. These are the local resources that can be used by these local people to develop local structures that could be the leading institutions in building local capacity. The outside assistance should be channeled to develop these resources so as to build local skills thereby empowering them to govern local resources. Communities are better placed to manage resources around them. They can cooperate where they can see benefits accruing to them (Murphree, 2004; Radcliff and Woodgate, 1997).

Marital Status of Respondents

The respondents were drawn from varied marital status, which ranged from married, widowed, divorced, and singles. The majority of them were married (48%) and the single constituted a significant percentage (27%), of which males were the majority (20%). This shows that young females are failing to take opportunities that are coming their way. They say it was difficult to take life long commitments before they get married, as it might interfere with their marriage plans. The widowed and the divorced constituted a combined 25% (13% and 12% respectively). Figure 1 (below) shows the marital status of respondents.

Figure 1: Marital Status of Respondents



Source: Survey 2009

Management of CAMPFIRE Project in Mahenye

The management structures involved various stakeholders, which included local communities, rural district council, and non-governmental organization (including CAMPFIRE officials), and their funding organizations. In terms of numbers the local community constituted the majority (53%), but none of them hold a significant position in the management structure. They are assigned very menial tasks. Those who are in the management committee are also kept in the periphery by assigning them very insignificant post like committee members or assistant secretary. The rural district council retains all other important posts. They are the ones that house the chairmanship, the treasurer and the secretary. This existing structure had no space for local people and local empowerment. It seems to be a deliberate attempt by the rural district council to takeaway the management of local resources from the local people. The existing structure is such that important meetings can go ahead with or without local people. This is the situation that is obtaining at Mahenye CAMPFIRE project because the locals are not contributing to most of the decisions that are made in the project. They are just asked to follow religiously decisions that are made somewhere else. Decisions such as how much should be charged on activities that are run by the project or how much should be dividends to participating communities are all made at council level in most cases without the involvement of the local communities. The whole structure of management does not auger well with the empowerment thrust that these community projects are supposed to achieve. Local communities are very important stakeholder in such project and their involvement is critical (Homewood, 2005). The situation is obtaining under the background of existence of people with enough capacity to take such responsibility but they are denied a chance to do so because the decentralization process had failed to empower local people. These people, if trained can takeover most of the responsibilities that remain located at the rural district council and their funding partners. Most of transactions are done at the rural district council. Activities such as receipting of moneys for facilities at the project are all done at the rural district council, which is located, some 150km away from the project. It was more ideal for transparence purposes to create a sub-office at the project site so that maybe, people can have a chance to see what is happening in their project. In this project the community played an important role the community in protecting their heritage but benefits are accruing elsewhere. They are just gatekeeper for resources that they benefit very little. The withdrawal of decision-making powers from the local communities in the governance of their resources is not health for sustainable resource management. This situation is a fertile breeding ground for resentment and sabotage from locals. A better way was to give these people a chance to take part in the

governance of their resources and this can only be done through total empowerment program that should see these people making decision at local level that best suite their plight (Ghai and Vivian, 1992). This should be accompanied by a clear property ownership regime characterized by structures of ownership of resources with management rules and regulations and a clear policy on sharing of incentives (Gartlan, 1997).

Benefits Accrued to the Locals from the CAMPFIRE Project

There are a lot benefits that are derived from the Mahenye CAMPFIRE project and these include development of infrastructure for the community, share of wild meat and some cash dividends. The most import and notable benefit from this project is that they had managed to conserve their natural heritage. The area under this CAMPFIRE project had been kept under good management as compared to other surrounding areas that are not under the project. Some areas are running a risk of fast becoming a desert if the current level of degradation continues. There is a variety of wildlife that is found at Mahenye CAMPFIRE project and they include some of the big-five species of wild life (lions, rhinos, leopards, and giraffes). These animals had managed to attract a lot of safari hunters and this activity is the major cash cow of the project. There are also a lot leisure facilities that are dotted around the project and on of the most frequented lodges was the Chilo Lodge, this had managed to attract international conferences because it had facilities which are of world class. This again had contributed significantly to the revenues of the project.

The revenues from the project had been used to develop community infrastructure mainly in school. It was used to rehabilitate some of the ageing schools. It had also been used to drill boreholes and this had gone a long way in easing perennial water problem in the area. The most notable benefit that directly goes to the participating households is that of periodic allocations of meat. Households had been getting shares of meat nearly after every 3 months. Each household was getting a share ranging from 5kg to 15kg depending on the animal that had been brought down. The meat allocation could go a long way in improving their nutritional status (Lopez, 1996; *The Action*, 1994; Jansen, 2001). However, the frequency and the amount are very low. It started as 5kg-15kg after every three months, but now the frequency had gone to once in a year or in some worst cases after 3years.

Cash dividends had been very sporadic and inconsistent. In some cases, they were paid yearly but the actual dates of payment remained the secret of the rural district council. How the dividends are

determined also remains a mystery to the local people. They are only given figures but they do not know of what percentage was that to the total accruals. The distribution of finances remains the sticking point in the project, as the local communities are not seeing the economic benefits trickling down to them. The share dividends are not consistent, at first they were getting Z\$180 per ward and this was supposed to be distributed among all villagers in the project who constituted between 80-100 households. The total amount due to each household therefore ranged from Z\$2.25-Z\$1.80. This is insignificant and in most cases the money is converted into buying beer and soft drinks for the community. The monies were very little to be to e invested into any household goods. The situation is very depressing in some lean years were the dividend per ward are very low sometimes as low as Z\$50.00 per ward. The monies are very insignificant as the form of dividend in an investment project. What also compounds the situation is that most of the activities at the project were charged in foreign currency but the dividends were being paid in local currents, which means that there are a lot of under dealing that go on at the project. Unofficial reports claim that the project can rack in between US\$8,000-US\$10,000 annually; the situation is more impressive during holidays, such as Christmas, where most of its lodges will be fully booked by international clients. The project had been taken by the rural district council to be its major cash cow and it seems the council is diverting most of the funds generated in this project to fund its capital expenditure budgets. The monies were supposed to generate a lot of interest to the local community in terms of its capacity to contribute to their livelihoods. However, this had remained a pipe dream, as monies are not coming down to them.

The local people had also been benefiting from employment that has been generated from the CAMPFIRE projects. Some of the villagers had been employed as game wardens, lodge attendants, or guards. It should be mentioned that the form of employment remain that of menial jobs, but council or CAMPFIRE official retains major posts. They are the owners of the project and its facilities; rather they literally own these facilities.

Conclusion

The Mahenye community had a very good project that had the potential of uplifting their lives. The amount purported to be generated from the project and develop them and improve their livelihoods. The project needs to be restructured so as to include the local people. The structures that run the project should have local content especially in the decision-making processes of the project. They should try to

incorporate local people so that they are empowered to run the project. There are a lot able and willing people in the community but they are kept out of the project because they do not have the skill. Resources should be channeled to train these people as an empowerment drive to the community. The rural district council should be there as overseers, providing guidance to the local structure so that they get the direction through sharing of experiences. The project should see to it that local people are trained to run these projects. This will see them assuming important roles in the decision making process of the project. This will also see proper prioritizations of development needs of the community. Locating decision-making processes outside the community will likely result in poor prioritization of development needs of the community. The present arrangement does not allow local people to fully participate in the process of governing resources. The government, through its quasi-government organization is still in control and is still siphoning benefits from local resources. The distribution of benefits from these resources follows the logic of who is in control. The local communities, by virtue of their location in the management structure, are getting very little while the larger chunk of the revenues from the project are retained by the rural district council. The decentralization process had benefited the local people very little and this call for total devolution of power to the local people and this should see local people making decision that best suit them. The resources are in the local communities in terms of the human capital what only need to be done is to give them skills that will allow them to run this project. This will not only improve the situation but will see a rekindling of interest among the local people in terms of their involvement in the project as people will have been given chance to make decision that directly affect them. These decisions if well developed will have direct benefits to the local people and this will be a plus in the development of interest to the project.

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