

## CHALLENGES, DILEMMAS AND POTENTIALITIES FOR POVERTY RELIEF BY HERITAGE SITES IN ZIMBABWE: VOICES FROM CHIBVUMANI HERITAGE SITE STAKEHOLDERS

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### ABSTRACT

Zimbabwe is perhaps one of the few countries in the world with the highest density/concentration of dry stone walls hence, the evolution of the term “Zimbabwe Type Site”. Zimbabwe Type site is a term that is used in archaeology to refer to particular styles of walling in Iron Age stone wall ruins (Encyclopedia, 1987). There are over 300 dry stone walls in southern Africa but they are mostly concentrated on the Zimbabwean plateau. Masvingo Province in which Great Zimbabwe is located, has a number of recorded Iron Age sites most of them with great potential of improving the livelihoods of host communities through ecotourism if properly managed, harnessed and marketed. Chibvumani, the case study adopted in this study, is one such site. The site has archaeological, educational, religious as well as economical values. The local communities, stakeholders who used to benefit economically or otherwise from the aforementioned site in the early 80s are currently co-managing the site with Mamutse primary school (a local school that has been given the responsibility by National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) to look after the general maintenance of the site on behalf of NMMZ) under the adopt-a-site programme, which however is creating problems with local leadership and other community members. The problems are in turn causing challenges and dilemmas for NMMZ. This paper explores the challenges and dilemmas around Chibvumani heritage site which indeed have negatively impacted on the management and development of the site into an ecotourist centre. Considering the site’s strategic location which is at the centre of the upcoming Mtema ecotourism centre and Birchnough Bridge which are about 30km away, the paper further explore the potentialities of Chibvumani as both a heritage site and ecotourism centre.

**Keywords:** Chibvumani, heritage site, challenges, ecotourism, stakeholders, Zimbabwe

## INTRODUCTION

Africa is recognized not only as ‘the cradle of humankind,’ but also as a continent of great antiquity and civilization with many varied layers of history. As Ndoro, Mumma and Abungu (2008) have described it, Africa is a continent where heritage is embedded in movable and immovable, tangible and intangible. The multifaceted heritage of Africa is therefore not only admired and appreciated, but also a lived and usable heritage. Heritage is technically defined as our legacy from the past, what we live within the present, and what we pass on to future generations, to learn from, to marvel at and to enjoy (SAHRA, 2005), that is, tangible elements such as monuments and sites as well as intangible properties such as ethical values, social customs, belief systems, religious ceremonies and traditional knowledge systems of which intangible heritage is the sign and expression (UNESCO, 2003). It therefore follows that when talking of the management of heritage we are talking about “care and continuing development of a place such that its significance is retained and revealed and its future secured” (Ndoro, 2001:2).

In Zimbabwe, like in many parts of the world, the main issues that heritage management strategies have tried to address over the past decades have been the protection of sites from natural and human damage, and the promotion of public awareness and tourism (Mazel, 1982; Jopela, 2011). In Africa, Zimbabwe is among the few countries with a plethora of man-made stone structures which include Great Zimbabwe, Khami, Musimbira and Chibvumani, among many others scattered throughout the country. These sites contribute tremendously to the enrichment of both the spiritual and material culture, the latter of which helps boosting the country’s economy and alleviate poverty among local communities around the sites. Yet for the sites to benefit both the present and future generations, they need to be sustainably managed. The need for conserving heritage sites is aptly captured in the international charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites that was introduced in Venice in 1964 which states:

*Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people to remain to the present day as living witness of their age-old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity (Chilachila, 2006).*

Yet while it is agreeable that heritage sites in Zimbabwe, as those elsewhere, need to be sustainably managed for the present use and for posterity, their conservation and management are often associated with numerous problems especially between the government body [National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ)] and local communities and/or local traditional leadership. Chibvumani heritage site, the site adopted as a case study in this study, is one among many sites in the country who besides their potentialities to contribute to the national economy are being rocked by numerous conservational management problems. As such, this paper explores the challenges and dilemmas faced by management authorities for Chibvumani heritage site in southeast Zimbabwe, and the potentialities that lie ahead if sustainable conservation and management are achieved. The choice of Chibvumani heritage site among many other sites in Southeastern Zimbabwe and beyond is not accidental. It is premised on the pretext that the site has a proven and tested background of supporting a

potential viable ecotourism industry which can go a step up as poverty relief for the local community and in boosting the national economy.

### **CHIBVUMANI HERITAGE SITE: GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Chibvumani heritage site is located in Bikita district in Masvingo Province at the southern eastern edge of the Zimbabwean plateau, about 128km from Masvingo city along Masvingo-Mutare highway. It is one of the estimated 300 dry stone walled structures of what archaeologist now refer to as the Zimbabwe culture of Southern Africa. The culture is broadly dated to the period between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century AD (Pwiti & Ndoro, 2005). Bikita is the 3<sup>rd</sup> driest district in Masvingo after Chivi and Chiredzi and is perennially plagued by food shortages induced by low rains. Its growth point (Nyika) is located about 85km east of Masvingo town. Its name is probably derived from the shona name *dikita* which means antbear which describes the shape of a hill (Encyclopedia, 1987).

The climatic conditions in this district are generally hot with an annual average temperature of 23 degree Celsius. The mean maximum monthly temperatures exceed 30 degrees Celsius in the hottest month of the year October, with the mean monthly temperature of around 15 degrees Celsius in the months of June, July and August. Its altitude is 1067 above sea level and its annual rainfall is 1127 (see Caton-Thompson, 1931: 42). The site which is about 600m to the south of the 128km peg along the Masvingo-Birchnough Bridge highway is at the apex of a low hill known as Chibvumani. It was proclaimed national monument number 115 in 1966 (Mubaya, 2006). Chibvumani monument can be accessed from two points from the aforementioned highway. The first is to turn off at the NMMZ directional signpost into an old tarred road and drive for 3km to another NMMZ signpost. The other one is to turn off at the 128km peg along the Masvingo-Birchnough Bridge highway into the old tarred road and drive for 1km to the NMMZ signpost. From there one gets into a dust road for the final 500m to the bottom of Chibvumani hill.

The hill, located in the Mamutse Communal Lands, commands a magnificent view of the surrounding country. It consists of many large granite boulders and natural rock passageways which were incorporated into the structure (Caton-Thompson, 1931). Getrude Caton-Thompson, the only archaeologist to conduct scientific research at Chibvumani heritage site in 1929, concluded that the site was constructed by the ancestors of the Karanga people probably soon after the demise and/or abandonment of Great Zimbabwe in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. She further asserts that there were two distinct periods of occupation, the first dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and a later period that included the construction of new walls, terraces and the leveling up of earlier surfaces in the enclosures (Caton-Thompson, 1931: 67).

### **PROBLEM BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION**

Heritage managers in Africa in general, and Southern Africa in particular, have learnt from experience that the laws that they inherited from their respective colonial governments regarding the management and conservation of heritage are problematic as they largely place local communities at the periphery in the management and conservation projects of heritage sites. In Zimbabwe, for example, the colonial government promulgated and enacted legislation which deliberately and purposefully alienated the indigenous communities from their various heritage sites which were perceived as sources of their pride and

identity. Heritage sites that were proclaimed national monuments and declared world heritage sites during the colonial era were listed exclusively on the basis of scientific values without taking into cognizance the spiritual values attached to them by their makers and/or authors (the suppressed and silenced indigenous communities). This was different from pre-colonial Zimbabwe where the value of heritage sites was based on both their tangible and intangible properties, and their custody vested in the traditional leadership such as elders, chiefs and/or kings. This connotes that the adoption of western formal legislation has had the effect of alienating the local people from the administration of their natural and cultural heritage (Ndoro & Kiriamu, 2008: 54). Such disrespect of African values and intolerance of colonialists to African virtues resulted in an end, in some communities, to traditional practices and values (Katsamudanga, 2003).

In Zimbabwe, the displacement of much of the population due to colonial land policies, like the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Land Tenure Act of 1969, disrupted some of these practices (Pwiti & Ndoro, 1999). Most displaced people went to settle in the Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs), where they were “aliens” who could not easily fit into the new socio-cultural set-ups. Shrines in the areas occupied by European were left unattended as colonial property rights could not allow entry into areas now under private ownership (Katsamudanga, 2003).

The coming of majority rule (in 1980) through a hard fought struggle came as a relief to the local communities who mistakably thought that independence heralded freedom to associate and interact with their heritage. Little did they realize that the legal systems put in place by the suppressive white government were still in existence but to their utter amazement being enforced by their kin and kith-their fellow countrymen. For Pwiti & Mvenge (1996), the conflict has become more open in the years following the independence of the country because people have been allowed cultural expression, unlike during the colonial era when many forms of indigenous cultural expression were discouraged and in some cases denounced as evil. This was the beginning of the problem that is still haunting and terrorizing the current crop of heritage managers. With time, the alienated local communities became increasingly activist, demanding a stake in the study and protection of their past (Pwiti & Mvenge, 1996). In addition to direct and meaningful involvement, they insisted on benefiting socially and economically from archaeological resources. At Chibvumani heritage site which is the case study for this study, an adopt-a-site programme was instituted with a view to re-engage the local community in issues of management and conservation of the site. The nearest school, Mamutse, was granted custodianship by NMMZ on its behalf hoping that the information about the site will be used for learning purposes and consumed by all members of the public. Such a move as this has seen the birth of a new branch of archaeology known as community archaeology which has been regarded as an alternative dimension of conventional archaeology and heritage management, empowering previously powerless peoples, particularly the indigenous and local communities that have lost rights to their heritage through colonialism (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008).

It is curious to note that the adopt-a-site programme in relation to Chibvumani heritage site seem to be the best successful story in the NMMZ southern region and beyond, problems rocking the conservational management of the site are evident. Such problems are exemplified by an incident in 2009 where part of the Chibvumani granite wall was destroyed by a member of the local community only to be restored by NMMZ in 2010. Other problems concern discontentment of some local community members and leadership on how conservation and management of the site is being executed. Such problems and

the backdrop that Chibvumani heritage site has a proven and tested background of supporting a potential viable ecotourism industry owing to its strategic location (which is approximately 25km between an upcoming Mtema ecotourism centre and Birchenough bridge along Masvingo-Mutare highway) justify the present research. Besides, the only research that was carried out at Chibvumani heritage site was by Getrude Caton-Tompson in 1929, but focusing on the use of space with no regard of the opinions of the local communities pertaining to the site as well as the potential of the site in promoting ecotourism especially given its relationship and proximity to Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site. The present research thus seeks to fill in this gap to explore the potentialities of Chibvumani heritage site in relieving the local communities of their abject poverty and in contributing to the national economy.

### **CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS FACING CHIBVUMANI HERITAGE SITE**

The major challenge bedeviling the development of Chibvumani heritage site into a competitive ecotourist centre is lack of funds (from the government through its statutory arm NMMZ) to set up a sound ecotourism environment at the site. NMMZ, being a government department under the Ministry of Home Affairs, is seriously underfunded by the central government hence its inability and failure not only to monitor and inspect monuments but also to turn them into viable ecotourist ventures befitting some of them which are strategically positioned like Chibvumani monument.

When NMMZ realized that it could not effectively manage and develop the heritage bestowed to it on behalf of the people of Zimbabwe, it thought of engaging the local community living around Chibvumani monument to look after the site on its behalf. To this end, NMMZ entered into an informal contract/arrangement with Mamutse Primary school under an initiative known as “adopt-a-site” programme. The “adopt-a-site” is a brain child of NNMMZ which seeks to involve the local communities in managing, preserving as well as presenting their heritage. The genesis of the “adopt -a- site” programme evolved around the notion that communities associated with heritage resources in their areas should be actively involved in the conservation, management and presentation of such resources. The approach aims at educating the locals to appreciate the cultural heritage and put them at the hub and centre of heritage management (Nemerai, 1995). Consequently, the community would derive direct benefits from the site that would inevitably improve their socio-economic well being.

It is however sad to note that the adopt-a-site programme practically came to a halt in 2008 when the rest of the Zimbabwean economy was hard hit by the hyper inflation that reached alarming levels. Consequently NMMZ, failed to carry out regular/routine inspection of national monuments. Amidst the economic furor, a mentally disturbed member from the local community took the advantage and extensively vandalized the monument by destroying original walls and instead constructing new ones (Mubaya, 2010). It is highly possible that if the program was adequately funded and supported it could have been used as a foundation on which to anchor the ecotourism concept in rural areas of developing economies like Zimbabwe. However, the failure by the government to develop Chibvumani into a remarkable ecotourism centre has been greatly attributed to sanctions which have resulted in important sources of foreign exchange and direct investment drying up (Ferreira, 2004). The subdued macro-economic environment has negatively affected the tourism sector in the country and promising ecotourism ventures have not been spared.

This new way of managing heritage sites located in rural areas adopted by NMMZ offers new challenges and insights to heritage managers and opportunities to local communities. It is also fundamental to note that this arrangement unintentionally and implicitly created divisions within the broader local host community in the sense that the school (in isolation of the rest of the community) was singled out as the custodian of the site by NMMZ. While the duties of the school are merely geared towards the general maintenance of the site, it cannot enforce some of the spiritual values that enshrine the site. The traditional leadership which has the capacity to enforce the spiritual values of the site is only involved in issues relating to the site on the good will of the school. What remains problematic is that the site cannot be developed without the consent and approval of the traditional leadership which has been left out of the management equation. Interesting to note is the fact that the school is a social development in an area and cannot be given custodial duties of the site ahead of the traditional leadership which has been accessing and interacting with the site before the establishment of the school.

What has emerged is a situation whereby the different stakeholders have different interests on the site. The community (traditional leadership) want cultural and spiritual fulfillment from the sites which they value. The school wants to derive educational and economic benefits from Chibvumani. NMMZ on the other hand is looking at the overall protection and management of the heritage site for posterity hence it is now submerged in a dilemma on whether it should relinquish management and conservational powers to traditional leadership/local communities or use legal instruments to deter potential offenders at the site.

The other challenge facing Chibvumani heritage site is that the management of heritage in Zimbabwe has failed to meaningfully take on board the private sector. The private sector largely benefits from tourism in various ways but has not been engaged by authorities in charge of managing heritage to assist in maintaining and developing heritage sites. Mamutse Primary School has managed to source funds from the private sector to construct a model wall of Chibvumani. This demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt that the private sector has a role to play in the upkeep of heritage sites. Non engagement and involvement of the private sector is counterproductive. Institutions mandated to look after heritage should think outside the box and not necessarily wait for the government to provide funding but should also cast their net wide and incorporate and partner with the private sector.

The lessons learnt from similar previous ecotourism ventures in Zimbabwe and the Southern Africa region is that local communities alone without technical support, business marketing and promotion assistance from established tourism enterprises cannot facilitate economic viability and overall sustainability of ecotourism ventures. Even in apparently successful conservation and development projects, local participatory decision making institutions are fragile and require continuous external support and capacity development in managing and marketing the ecotourism ventures (Balint & Mashinya, 2006).

### **THE POTENTIALITIES OF CHIBVUMANI HERITAGE SITE AS AN ECOTOURISM CENTER**

Zimbabwe is blessed with spectacular variety and beauty yet remains a quiet and spacious haven for the discerning visitor (Chenga, 2012). Chibvumani can be a successful heritage site cum ecotourism centre if the local communities are given space

to offer direct services to visitors such as traditional food stuffs, guiding services and craft products. The school and the traditional leadership are keen on developing the monument. They even went an extra mile in availing their meager incomes to support the conservation and presentation of the site. What is interesting about Chibvumani monument is that the community has already engaged the donor community to assist them in realizing their dreams of having an ecotourism centre near the site. In spite of the failure by NMMZ to meet the contractual obligations, the school is working towards improving the visibility of the site as well as marketing it in an effort to increase its visitorship. Currently, they have constructed an immaculate and magnificent model wall of Chibvumani monument near the school adjacent the NMMZ directional signpost. The purpose of the model wall in conjunction with the sign post is twofold. Its first and obvious purpose is to alert the visiting public that they are only 3.5km away from their destination. The second purpose is to publicize the site as well as increasing its visibility. What is interesting is that the school sourced money from an NGO (Culture Fund) to construct the model wall. NMMZ provided the required technical expertise and assistance. The school is also considering adopting the site as a center for domestic tourism through setting up a traditional craft centre near the model wall. The craft centre would assist several talented individuals within the community to show case their prowess in hand crafts and by so doing improving their livelihoods and opening up their area to the regional and international community. The community around Chibvumani monument is multi-talented and specializes in various cultural activities ranging from traditional dances to diverse facets of the craft industry. The proposed culture centre would also compliment the site and this will also enrich the experience of the visitors. Apart from complimenting the monument, the culture centre would also be used as a venue for hosting culture related functions such as Culture Week in the district and province respectively. What remains a hurdle is that the community is lacking support from government departments such as the National Arts Council, NMMZ, Bikita Rural District Council, ZTA-Masvingo, the political leadership of the area among many stakeholders. These would actually support the community by mobilizing resources and publicizing the project to potential funders.

While the effort of the school is commendable, the benefits that would accrue from the ecotourism centre would ideally go towards the general maintenance of the site as well as cushioning the livelihoods of the broader community. It is however disturbing to note that there is no clear policy or agreement of how the perceived benefits which will accrue from such ventures will be shared between the community and NMMZ although it has been agreed in principle that the school will reap the supposed benefits.

The school is also considering using Chibvumani monument as part of their educational resource (Chigiya, 2012, pers com). With most of the schools around Chibvumani monument yet to pay a visit to the famous acclaimed Great Zimbabwe national and World Site, the school would want to encourage nearby schools (primary and secondary) to first visit Chibvumani as a way of inculcating in children, a sense of ownership and identity. Funds permitting, the school in partnership with NMMZ is planning to set up a site museum near the model wall and all these would form part of the ecotourism centre. The museum would show case and display some of the artifacts that were discovered through excavations at Chibvumani monument by Caton-Thompson in 1929. The site museum would be monitored by tour guides from the school and the community. NMMZ would facilitate the training of tour guides and the whole project would be owned by the community.

While community archaeology has given local communities and indigenous groups around the world a voice in archaeology and heritage management (Pwiti & Mvenge, 1996), it has also restored access to their heritage to groups that have been denied it. Community involvement takes various forms that are context-dependent, including public outreach, involvement of school groups and local communities in archaeological excavations, site management, and conservation. Community involvement has been seen as a way of achieving a broader-based and multivocal past.

The application of participatory management has had varied success in the field of heritage management depending on the context in which it has been applied, and the evidence from some heritage sites in sub-Saharan Africa reveals mixed results; some far from satisfactory. Most of the goals – particularly those aimed at involving local communities in decision making in heritage resources – still remain unfulfilled and at best experimental. The discourse of community participation is sometimes overly ambitious in its intents and, from a practical point of view, is not easy to apply. This is because communities are neither universal nor homogenous (Chirikure et al, 2010). Furthermore, many professionals pay lip-service to the whole concept of participation because the interests of local communities and those of professionals do not always coincide.

In summary, Chibvumani is one of the few sites in Zimbabwe with great untapped potential of becoming the first heritage site to be developed into an ecotourism environment that would inevitably and actively involve local communities in preserving, maintaining, presenting and above all, managing it in consultation with NMMZ. While such an arrangement is theoretically ideal, it is difficult to enforce and practically implement against a background of legal frameworks which are still western in outlook and most unfortunately do not take into cognizance local values and aspirations. It is however imperative that impacted groups and local communities should be involved in the management process where possible – not just as informants, but as active participants. The advantage of a participatory approach is that it promotes a greater sense of community ownership and helps ensure that proper weight is given to local communities.

### **VOICES FROM CHIBVUMANI HERITAGE SITE STAKEHOLDERS**

The location of Chibvumani heritage site in a rural set up makes it a centre of attraction and an appetizing cake of which everyone wants a piece. The myths and legends associated with the hill on which the monument is situated make it susceptible to religious exploitation by the traditional leadership. The traditional leaders feel that the site is the abode of the departed spirits of their ancestors hence the need to respect the taboos that have since time immemorial restricted and prevented minors and even elders from climbing the hill and using it as a grazing place. In view of the disappearance of many African cultural values that embody especially the intangible aspects of culture in the face of modernity and globalization, the elders are of the view that if Chibvumani is developed into an ecotourist center it can be adopted as one of the centers where some of the traditional rain making ceremonies and rituals can be carried out under the guidance and supervision of the local spirit medium. This would give visitors an opportunity to have an insight into some of the cultural practices that are fast disappearing while at the same time inculcating into the minds of the current crop of heritage managers and youths the importance of intangible heritage in preserving heritage sites. They strongly believe that the management of heritage sites and their subsequent development into ecotourism centers is a welcome idea which should afford heritage



managers the opportunity to closely work with concerned communities in presenting heritage. While the idea sounds noble and appealing, the legal framework that protects cultural heritage in Zimbabwe (the NMMZ Act Chapter 25/11) is silent about the participation and involvement of local communities in managing heritage. This however, presents a dilemma to heritage institutions on whether they should incorporate local communities or manage sites using the legal instruments. The other problem with communities is that being cosmopolitan their interests sometimes differ and conflict posing challenges to the heritage manager and rendering the whole undertaking futile.

The neighboring schools both primary and secondary which also constitute some of the stakeholders view Chibvumani heritage site as an important cultural educational resource which they can use to teach their pupils on site as well as to enrich and enhance their educational curricula. They strongly support the idea of developing the site into an ecotourism centre as this would among many other things present them with the rare opportunity of interacting with visitors from across the globe. In addition, they would use the center as a venue for hoisting district and provincial culture related functions thereby putting their area on the limelight. The schools are planning to engage the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (based in Masvingo town) to promote Chibvumani heritage site under the domestic tourism program. Such a move would also encourage local tourist to consider visiting Chibvumani.

Within the vicinity of Chibvumani heritage site are two traditional dance groups (Ngororombe and Chinyamvera) both have scooped accolades at national and international levels. Both specialize in dancing, singing and beating drums. These two groups are very supportive of the idea of having the site developed into an ecotourism center because once that is achieved; they will showcase their prowess to visitors while at the same time handing over the legacy to their children.

In short, it is apparently clear that all the stakeholders are agreeable to the idea of developing Chibvumani heritage site into an ecotourism centre. What remains a major stumbling block is lack of unified coordination and financial backing from the government and the private sector.

### **THINKING WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS**

It has been shown in the discussion that the community around Chibvumani heritage site on account of their unique behavior towards the positive conservation and development of Chibvumani heritage site has out of the good will of NMMZ been given a significant stake in the overall management of the site. This was out of the realization that some of the communities living around cultural heritage places are major stakeholders of the resource and strong partnerships and cooperation with them contributes to achieving the objectives of our cultural heritage resources (Mboya, 2006). This paper therefore, recommends that local communities should not be viewed as threats to heritage sites but as significant owners and/or stakeholders who if properly engaged and brought on board can extensively contribute to the survival and enrichment of heritage places. It is therefore fundamental that heritage must bring some benefits to the local community for it to be sustainable (Ndoro, Abungu & Mumma, 2008).

The other point that has come out clearly in the preceding discussion is that it is now clear that heritage conservation is the business of all, including the private sector. Mamutse primary school has obtained funding from a non-governmental

organization (Culture Fund) to market Chibvumani heritage site through the construction of a model wall of Chibvumani adjacent the directional sign post leading to the site. It is interesting to note that the private sector benefits from heritage through tourism and other heritage industries, but is unfortunately not considered a major stakeholder in heritage conservation. The result is that the private sector has done little or nothing to support heritage conservation in most of Africa (Eboime, 2005). This piece advances the view that the private sector has a role to play in heritage conservation and that this is not solely the responsibility of the government.

Another crucial point that has emerged out of this discussion is that while people who live around cultural heritage places are crucial to the long-term survival of these places; there is need to put in place incentive systems that motivate them to invest time and energy in managing and maintaining the sites. All these require adequate; planning, good implementation strategies, policies, process for the synthesis of the information and process for the dissemination of the knowledge and information generated. Resultantly, it is recommended that NMMZ should revisit the 'adopt-a -site' program and find ways of rewarding the community as a way of motivating them to continue looking after the site in a sustainable manner.

Last but not least, it has been aptly demonstrated in the foregoing discussion that the other reason why most efforts to resuscitate the ecotourism sector have failed is that the strategies adopted have been implemented in isolation from other economic and political fundamentals. What is therefore required is an integrative approach to problem- solving regarding the ecotourism industry in particular and the economy in general (Mamimine, 2006). Consequently it is recommended that Zimbabwe as is the case with many southern African countries should incorporate the development of heritage sites into ecotourist centers into the overall agenda of development.

## **CONCLUSION**

The paper, has against the general trend elsewhere, demonstrated that the relationship between communities and heritage managers in Zimbabwe is gradually taking a new twist as communities who were alienated and sidelined at the periphery in matters relating to the management of heritage, are now symbiotically cooperating and initiating socio-economic ventures around cultural resources with economic potential. This is considered a positive move against a background of an inherent and outdated legislation that does not embrace and appreciate the involvement, participation and sentiments of communities in heritage management. Community participation is one of the most potent ways of including owners and stakeholders in the protection and development of cultural heritage.

However, as noted in the discussion, these successes are sometimes overshadowed by the popping up of unforeseen problems normally associated with the presence of different stakeholders with multiple interests, and it is difficult to bring such diverse interests together. The challenge is to make decisions that do not exclude or marginalize any interested party (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008), yet simultaneously fostering sustainable development.

More importantly, the discussion has noted that the government through its various arms is failing to provide the necessary financial backing to such communities owing to the perceived bad image of the country that has forced the donor community to desert the country when they were needed most. Apart from the challenges outlined in this study, heritage sites alongside

ecotourism (to Zimbabwe and Southern African region) have been hailed as promising strategies for providing sustainable development and alleviating poverty of the rural communities. Yet, heritage managers seem reluctant to relinquish power and authority to the rural communities.

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