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CASE STUDIES ON SUCCESSFUL SOUTHERN AFRICAN NRM INITIATIVES AND THEIR IMPACTS ON POVERTY AND GOVERNANCE

USAID-FRAME PHASE I SYNTHESIS REPORT
FINAL DRAFT

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Key Elements of the UNCCD Relevant to the Four Case Studies	3
Contribution of CBNRM in Southern Africa to Combating Desertification ...	4
Increased Management Authority, Responsibility and Participation by Local Communities	4
Integrated Approaches and Cooperation of Stakeholders	5
Capacity Building of Communities for Sustainable Natural Resource Management	5
Diversification of Rural Incomes and Employment Opportunities	5
Enabling Policy and Legal Environment.....	6
Sustainable Resource Management.....	7
Conclusions	8
References	10

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a synthesis of the results and lessons learned from four cases studies of environmental and natural resources programmes in southern Africa that contribute to combating desertification. The four case studies were carried out as part of a project initiated by the USAID-funded FRAME programme aimed at capturing and sharing of knowledge related to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). In particular the FRAME project aims to develop regional studies documenting achievements in promoting sustainable natural resources management as a means of combating environmental degradation, reducing poverty and promoting good governance.

FRAME has supported a number of case studies assessing the environmental, economic and governance impacts of investments in natural resources management in several West African countries. This paper and the accompanying case studies provide a similar assessment for southern Africa. All four of the case study programmes have received support from USAID. The Botswana case study provides an overview of the implementation and results of a national CBNRM programme that was launched in 1990 through the Natural Resource Management Project (NRMP) funded by USAID and the Botswana Government. USAID was also a major contributor to funding the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) which provides the Zimbabwe case study. CAMPFIRE was initiated by the country's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM) in the mid 1980s. USAID funding to CBNRM in Botswana ended in 1999 and its funding to CAMPFIRE ended in 2003. CBNRM activities continue in both countries implemented by community-based organisations (CBOs), and supported by non-government organisations (NGOs) and government wildlife agencies.

The Malawi cases study provides an overview of Phase I of the Community Partnerships for Sustainable Resources Management (COMPASS) programme which ran from 1999-2004. The primary goal of COMPASS was to identify and support community-based activities that would generate immediate and tangible economic benefits for CBNRM practitioners while encouraging conservation of natural resources. USAID support to COMPASS is continuing into a second phase for another five years from September 2004 to 2008. The fourth case study covers the Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Programme in Namibia up to the end of its second phase in 2004. LIFE supports a broader national CBNRM programme in Namibia implemented by government and NGOs. The case study provides an overview of programme results and then considers LIFE's partnership with a number of other agencies to support sustainable NRM in a specific community. USAID is currently supporting a third phase of the LIFE programme up to 2009.

Although there are differences between the case study programmes, all four can be categorised as community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) programmes with a specific focus on sustainable management of natural resources at the local level. Three of the case studies (Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe) have a strong focus on wildlife conservation and maintenance of wild habitat while the fourth (Malawi) focused on a broad range of natural resources. All four combine broad conservation goals with poverty reduction and rural development goals and recognise a number of different linkages between sustainable natural resource management and poverty reduction. The three wildlife-based programmes place emphasis on economic incentives as important components of the enabling framework for sustainable natural resource management. As a result they have a strong emphasis on income generation. The COMPASS programme in Malawi also focused strongly on income generation, but more in terms of finding alternative means of generating income that would reduce or replace existing means that depended on (over) exploitation of

resources. All four have governance components and emphasise decentralisation and/or devolution¹ of decision-making to local levels.

None of the programmes considered in the four case studies was established specifically to combat desertification or to meet the goals of the UNCCD. However, the evidence from the case studies indicates that these programmes contribute to achieving the broad goals of the UNCCD and the more specific objectives of national desertification action plans in a number of ways. This paper provides an assessment of how these links are being made. It also identifies the constraints and challenges facing community-based natural resource management as a means of combating desertification.

¹ Murphree (2000:5) defines these concepts as follows: “Decentralisation is the delegation of responsibility and limited authority to subordinate or dispersed units of hierarchical jurisdiction, which have a primary accountability upward to their superiors in the hierarchy. Devolution involves the creation of relatively autonomous realms of authority, responsibility and entitlement, with a primary accountability to their own constituencies.”

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE UNCCD RELEVANT TO THE FOUR CASE STUDIES

“Desertification” as a concept has evolved over time from a fairly simplistic crisis “narrative” of rapid land degradation and advancing deserts caused by human activity to a realisation that the issue is a complex one that requires a greater understanding of the interplay between social and natural factors (Swift 1996). There is greater recognition that African drylands are driven by climatic variability and that conditions that gave rise to the crisis narrative were observed during periods of severe drought in the Sahelian region. Longer term monitoring and research has shown that there is more resilience in dryland systems than was originally thought. It has also been recognised that desertification is difficult to quantify and long term monitoring over several wet and dry cycles is required to provide any reasonable indication of trends in environmental change. This makes it difficult if not impossible to assess the impact on desertification of the case study projects even where, as in the case of CAMPFIRE, there has been data gathering over a considerable period of time. We have also noted that the case study projects were not designed specifically to combat desertification, so the indicators used and data gathered by these projects are not necessarily those most appropriate for measuring a contribution to combating desertification. In these circumstances we have considered the principles and approaches of the United Nations Convention of Combating Desertification (UNCCD) and identified those which overlap with the principles and approaches of CBNRM. We have then tried to assess the extent to which the four projects have performed in these areas of overlap.

The UNCCD places considerable emphasis on the participation of local communities [Article 3, (a)], cooperation between all stakeholders [Article 3 (b)], and the promotion of the sustainable use of natural resources [Article 3 (b)], promotion of alternative livelihoods [Article 10. 4], and capacity building of local communities for sustainable land and resource management [Article 19]. Annex 1, the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa suggests that national desertification action plans should include measures to delegate more management responsibility to local communities [Annex 1 Article 8. 2. (c)], diversify rural incomes and employment opportunities [Annex 1 Article 8. 3. (a)]; ensure integrated and sustainable management of natural resources [Annex 1 Article 8.3.(b)], improve institutional organisation through decentralisation and the assumption of responsibility by local communities and the establishment of local structures [Annex 1 Article 8.3.(c)] and amending the institutional and regulatory framework to provide security of land tenure for local populations [Annex 1 Article 8.3.(c)].

The above elements, which overlap with the principles and approaches of CBNRM, can be grouped as follows:

- Increased management authority, responsibility and participation by local communities
- Integrated approaches and cooperation of stakeholders
- Capacity building of communities for sustainable natural resource management
- Diversification of rural incomes and employment opportunities
- Enabling policy and legal environment, including land and resource tenure
- Sustainable resource management

The following section considers how the four case study programmes are contributing to these elements.

CONTRIBUTION OF CBNRM IN SOUTHERN AFRICA TO COMBATING DESERTIFICATION

INCREASED MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION BY LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In all four countries program activities were based on a policy and legal framework that ostensibly promotes devolution of authority over natural resources to local communities. However, in three of the case study papers shortcomings are identified in the policy and legal framework itself or in the implementation of the framework. In Malawi the failure or laxity of government to implement policy and enforce legislation undermined various CBNRM initiatives (Mauambeta in preparation). In Zimbabwe the CAMPFIRE ideal of devolving authority to local village level has in most case been thwarted by Rural District Councils holding on to authority and revenue (Taylor in preparation) leading to a form of “aborted devolution.” The legal framework gives rights and authority to the district councils which often ignore the policy guidelines that promote, but do not require, devolution to community level. This situation results in what would more accurately be described as decentralisation using Murphree’s definition noted above. In Botswana government is threatening to withdraw the ability of communities to obtain direct payments from the private sector and to channel the income through a special fund (Arntzen in preparation). Further, communities are not able to take important decisions such as quota setting and there appears to be little incentive to become engaged in active management. The Namibian CBNRM policy and legislation goes the furthest in the region in providing to local communities rights over wildlife and tourism that are entrenched in legislation. However, although this was not addressed in the Namibian case study (Jones in preparation) the legislation is highly conditional and government holds on to considerable authority, weakening the level of proprietorship enjoyed by the communities.

Despite the limits to authority granted to community management bodies, the community institutions being formed under CBNRM programmes provide an important building block for addressing a range of local issues, including environmental problems related to land degradation. The levels of development and capacity of CBNRM institutions in the region vary considerably within individual countries and from country to country. In Malawi the COMPASS project worked extensively with local CBOs and many are still actively working on behalf of their communities. One described by Mauambeta (in preparation) is involved in food security, agricultural, natural resource management, and health activities. In Zimbabwe Taylor (in preparation) reports that village and ward level wildlife committees provide for a high level of community participation and decision-making with a transparent flow of information relating to key issues, planning and projects. Child *et al* (2003) found that despite the political and economic problems faced by Zimbabwe, some of these committees had shown considerable resilience and were still functioning where income from wildlife was still being received. New developments include the establishment of community trusts and cooperatives at sub-district level. In Namibia the #Khoadi //hoas conservancy is an example of a CBNRM management body formed for wildlife that is also involved in range management.

A number of analysts have stressed the importance of maintaining communal resource management systems in southern Africa, both for promoting sustainable natural resource management and for promoting sustainable livelihoods (e.g. Turner 2004, and Campbell *et al* 2002). However if the institutions referred to in the case studies are to fulfil this role, they need to strengthen their internal legitimacy. Arntzen (in preparation) reports that there are governance problems in many of the community-based organisations

(CBOs) in Botswana and this issue was highlighted by Jones (in preparation) in Namibia. The main problem is a lack of accountability between committees and residents.

INTEGRATED APPROACHES AND COOPERATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

The case studies reveal mixed results in terms of promoting integrated approaches to natural resource management and the cooperation of all stakeholders. In Malawi, the COMPASS case study demonstrates a form of CBNRM that relies only marginally on wildlife and ecotourism. With limited wildlife resources outside protected areas, communities were able to identify and carry out various CBNRM initiatives based on their own priority needs, problems areas, opportunities and available natural resources. Most of the activities carried out in Malawi such as afforestation and tree planting linked directly to Malawi's National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP). The Zimbabwe case study (Taylor in preparation) confirms that although CAMPFIRE has tried to diversify into the management of other resources it remains largely wildlife based because the highest returns come from wildlife use and wildlife-based tourism. Although there are direct and indirect links between CAMPFIRE and the goals of the national desertification action plan (NAP), the links have not been fully recognised in the NAP. Bond (2001:240) in a separate analysis of CAMPFIRE also emphasises the lack of sectoral integration in Zimbabwe, stating: "The enabling legislation for the use and control of most natural resources in the communal lands is fragmented, resource specific and vests control in either central or local government."

In Botswana, Arntzen (in preparation) suggests the broadening of the initially wildlife-based CBNRM approach offers good opportunities to incorporate activities that are part of the UNCCD-national programme and the work on indigenous veld products where community trusts are also being formed to deal with broad land management issues. The #Khoadi //hoas case from Namibia provides an example of an approach specifically designed to promote integrated management and cooperation of service providers. It shows that integrated approaches can work where services are coordinated through a holistic community development and management plan (Jones in preparation).

CAPACITY BUILDING OF COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

All four projects have had a considerable focus on capacity building. Their experiences point to the need for a wide range of support that does not focus only on technical skills for resource management. Capacity building is required for developing effective organisations that deliver appropriate services to residents, for developing representative and accountable institutional arrangements, and for developing and running enterprises whether operated by the community itself or through some form of partnership or joint venture. Such capacity building requires a long time horizon and often needs sustained on-site support (Arntzen in preparation). In Malawi, most CBNRM programs have been designed to ensure that local people must participate and benefit. It has also been realized that local communities are neither "stupid," "illiterate," "lazy," nor "incapable." What they require is to be understood and supported in their capacities to deal with their challenges and realize their potential.

DIVERSIFICATION OF RURAL INCOMES AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The general conclusion from the case studies is that the impact of CBNRM in terms of generating income at household level is fairly small. This is partly because not all income reaches community level (e.g. CAMPFIRE), or where it does, the money is spent on the operations of the CBO, community projects or lies in a bank account (Botswana) or the level of enterprise is small and it takes time to generate income where resources have to be restored (Malawi). Only where jobs have been created through tourism and hunting, where spin off enterprises are created or relatively high cash dividends are paid to households is there a significant impact on household income. In some cases, policy and legislation do not provide for full

devolution of income to local communities and promote revenue sharing between government and community (Zimbabwe, Zambia). In other cases, some resource rich communities have not fully developed their income generation potential. Often this is because they do not have the internal capacity to manage several relationships with the private sector or to manage their own enterprises. There is thus potential to increase household incomes from wildlife and tourism through promoting further policy and legislative reform and increasing the capacity of communities to exploit existing opportunities.

There are, however, other important contributions to livelihoods that meet UNCCD objectives. The following is drawn from Arntzen *et al* (2003:56) and describes the situation in Botswana. It serves as an appropriate summary of the wildlife-based CBNRM programmes in the region:

“CBNRM projects are at best an additional, but not a main, source of livelihood. CBNRM has probably made a stronger contribution towards improving livelihood security by diversifying livelihood sources. Firstly, CBNRM projects provide a limited source of income from sources that hitherto did not contribute to rural livelihoods, i.e. commercial use of wildlife and veldproducts. Secondly, CBOs provide non-material benefits that are important to rural livelihoods, e.g. transport, insurance and funeral assistance. Thirdly, it has reduced people’s dependency on drought-prone agriculture. Fourthly, CBNRM projects have empowered community members with assets that can support future livelihoods. These include natural resource use rights, financial assets and credit, physical assets and human skills. In this way, communities have the opportunity to reduce dependency on government handouts, and increase livelihood security.”

The wildlife-based CBNRM programmes in the region often operate in remote, marginal semi-arid areas with limited potential for productive activities. CBNRM therefore brings additional livelihood activities and income sources where these are scarce. However, these conditions also pose challenges for communities to decide how to use their collective income. It may be wiser for them to consider re-investing some of the revenues outside of the community areas. In Namibia for example, a wealthy conservancy such as Torra could consider investing in freehold land. This could boost its livestock and wildlife activities as well as helping to meet Namibia’s land reform objectives.

In Malawi CBNRM have improved livelihoods in a number of ways. Some communities have been able to generate income from the sale of various conservation-based enterprises such as mushrooms, honey, guinea fowl, fish, fruit juices and similar products. Such income has been invested in, while some communities have started their own businesses. In most cases, communities have improved their health and averted hunger at the household level through direct consumption of various products. In such cases, CBNRM initiatives have diversified food sources and offered safety nets during critical hunger periods. Some conservation initiatives such as agro-forestry and perma-culture practices have improved soil fertility and reduced the use of chemical fertilizers. This, in turn, has meant that farmers are able to increase food production and reduce crop production expenditures.

ENABLING POLICY AND LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

The country reports indicate that the policy and legal frameworks in the case study countries extend some form of tenure over natural resources to local communities. The focus has mainly been on decentralising or devolving rights over wildlife, and in some cases forest resources. However, as pointed out above, governments tend to hold on to key areas of decision-making and control over these resources. A result of this is that the use of wildlife is still entangled in a web of bureaucracy that creates high transaction costs for community and private sector alike and acts as a disincentive for adopting wildlife as a land use.

Further, in the region generally, provision of rights over natural resources has not been accompanied by provision of secure land tenure for communities. Ownership of land remains in the hands of the state and local communities have usufruct rights over the natural resources on the land. Tenure issues were highlighted as a problem in the Namibian case study and throughout the region reluctance by governments to address issues of communal land tenure remain a constraint to promoting sustainable land and natural resource management. In general, the problem relates to a lack of ability to exclude others from using land and

resources that a community has been conserving. But more locally the problem also relates to the extent that individuals have secure access to land and resources and the assurance that others will not over exploit the resources.

In Zimbabwe, the Communal Land Act vests ownership of communal land in the State and the administration of communal land in the hands of the Rural District Councils. Botswana has a complex array of legislative provisions regarding land tenure (Maluwa 1998). Tribal land is owned by land boards in trust for the benefit of the people of Botswana and the land boards administer and allocate tribal land. However, the Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP) allows for privatization of communal land through 50-year renewable and further privatisation of communal rangelands takes place through borehole ownership, which gives the owners *de facto* control over surrounding grazing areas. In the absence of secure group tenure over land, communities are unable to exert sufficient control over the land and its resources to enable appropriate management inputs.

Elsewhere in the region Mozambique has introduced legislation that enables local communities to gain title over their land and lease the use of resources on their land to other entities. Although not well implemented by government (Nhanumbo *et al* 2002), the approach is a potential model for the rest of the region. Malawi's Land Policy (RoM 2001) strengthens community rights over land, recognising communities as customary rights holders. The policy states that government supports community participation in the management of public land and the right to a share of the revenue derived from public land established on land belonging to a Traditional Authority.

The CBNRM approaches documented in the case studies represent initial steps towards dealing with the tenure issues that underpin sustainable resource management, but they do not go far enough.

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Some analysts suggest that the contribution of CBNRM in southern Africa to biodiversity conservation is questionable and there is little evidence of local people investing time and money in biodiversity management (Magome and Fabricius 2004). The evidence from the case studies is rather more nuanced. In Zimbabwe Taylor (in preparation) provides evidence that wild habitat is being maintained in some CAMPFIRE areas, numbers of key wildlife species are stable with some increasing and communities are involved in management activities such as wildlife monitoring and quota setting. In the #Khoadi //hoas conservancy in Namibia there is evidence of increasing wildlife numbers and the conservancy has set aside a large piece of land for wildlife and tourism. The conservancy employs its own "environmental shepherds" who monitor wildlife and assist community members with livestock management issues (Jones in preparation).

In Botswana, although community involvement in active management is low, Arntzen (in preparation) identifies a number of positive environmental impacts from CBNRM including a decline in poaching in CBNRM areas, improved attitudes towards wildlife and veldproducts, and some regeneration of veld - products by communities. Wildlife management areas (many of which are under CBNRM) have better and more diverse vegetation than rangelands primarily used for livestock. In Namibia and Zimbabwe, CBNRM contributes to halting desertification through land set aside for wildlife and tourism that is thus not susceptible to processes leading to land degradation. In a region subject to highly variable climatic conditions temporally and spatially, CBNRM is an appropriate strategy for applying appropriate land uses in marginal areas and widening the suite of land use options available to local communities.

In Malawi, with the exception of forest reserves, national parks and wildlife reserves, the only green patches that one sees in the landscape are graveyards "forest islands" and some community and private forests planted and managed under various initiatives. The community and private forests and graveyards have survived because of ownership and user rights associated with them.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the case studies demonstrate a number of ways in which CBNRM is contributing to combating desertification, much more can be done to increase this contribution. The key areas for additional work include:

- Engaging with governments on tenure issues, particularly land tenure,
- Engaging governments over the expansion of rights to local communities over natural resources,
- Providing continued capacity building support to community organisations, particularly in areas such as enterprise development and financial management,
- Providing greater support to establishing the appropriate processes that promote accountability of community committees and good governance,
- Seeking closer links and integration with national desertification action plans and other related sustainable land management activities and programmes,
- Promoting greater integration of management activities at local levels and greater integration of service provision through community driven initiatives, and
- Expanding and “selling” conservation of natural resources best practices and models that work to the rest of the region for greater adoption and replication.

In Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe, there are very different levels of potential for communities to generate income from wildlife and tourism. There are those communities with high potential for income generation based on assets such as proximity to protected areas, presence of some or all of the “big five” game, spectacular scenery, etc. There are those with medium potential with some wildlife (mostly plains game), limited tourism opportunities and perhaps the possibility of gaining income from other resources such as thatching grass and forest products. Then there are CBNRM communities with little or no wildlife or tourism, which are dependent on timber and non-timber forest products, rangeland, and crop growing for their livelihood activities. In this last category, income-generating activities are low at the community level, but as in Malawi there are still opportunities to improve household incomes in small, but significant ways. The challenge in Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe is to enable CBNRM communities in this last category to become sustainable with their limited income generating potential. In these three countries, the private sector has played an important role in providing capital, skills and marketing for community-based tourism and wildlife activities. Where “empowerment” of communities is relatively strong through community control over land or assets and good management capacity, there are examples of positive relationships between private sector and communities. There are also examples of communities being exploited by the private sector and lacking any real control over private sector activities. A challenge still exists to find ways to forge more productive and constructive community-private sector partnerships.

Many donor projects create community committees to liaise with project staff and drive activities with donor funds and once the project ends the committees and their activities collapse. This scenario is unlikely with the activities of the four projects where income accrues to communities or households through various forms of business enterprise. The need to run the business or joint venture (for tourism or hunting) requires continued engagement. Where income accrues to communities, ongoing decision-making is required on how to use the income. At this level there is therefore a strong likelihood that the CBNRM activities initiated by the case study projects will be sustainable. The community management institutions emerging under these CBNRM programmes can therefore provide a useful institutional base for many other projects concerned with

sustainable natural resource management and land management. As indicated above, the major proviso to this statement is improved internal accountability and good governance within these institutions.

All four programmes demonstrate the need to accept long-time horizons when supporting CBNRM activities. There is clear evidence of evolution over time in these programmes as they have experimented, learnt, adapted and experimented again. There is evidence from Namibia and Botswana that the older community-based organisations have matured over time institutionally and are performing better than newly established ones. Although some studies point to a number of negative impacts of donor support (e.g. Child *et al* 2003 for Zimbabwe) long-term donor funding from USAID and others has been important for laying foundations for CBNRM in all four countries. Significantly CBNRM has continued in Botswana and Zimbabwe, despite the withdrawal of major donor support.

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