



Power of Local Natural Resource Governance in Conflict Contexts

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Well, thank you for the introduction and for inviting me. It's certainly been a very long trip. I hope it will be worth your while to listen to our experiences.

As opposed to the first two presentations that have talked a lot natural resource management from a post-conflict, violent conflict perspective, my presentation draws on different dimensions of conflict. In Botswana, we have not been involved, or we have not experienced any violent conflict, per se. But the area of natural resource governance is experiencing different levels of conflict; conflict with regards to policy formulation processes, who formulates those policies, the level at which different stakeholders participate in those processes and the level of which they can have influence over those processes. But we also look at the extent to which natural resource governance has mitigated conflict with regards to land use conflicts, access to resources, rights, and so forth.

My presentation essentially gives you a summary of issues and lessons learned from the IUCN CBN Arms Apart Program where, since 1999, we have looked at the way that community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in Botswana has been unfolding and we've essentially documented experiences and lessons learned in different forms.

I started looking at 'why should it be important for us to draw lessons between CBNRM and conflict mitigation'? And one of the reasons why we are doing this is because CBNRM offers a framework for dealing with conflict in a participatory and equitable manner, particularly when you are dealing with conflict with regards to resource use and access, like I mentioned. It addresses ongoing conflicts between multiple stakeholders, conflicts between the private sector, who may be involved in tourism initiators and the local communities living in those areas where tourists come to visit and where the business sector tends to make a huge profit.

We are looking at natural resource-based institutions and the fact that they are critical for conflict mitigation, especially in areas where there is a high dependence by the local or the



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rural dwellers on natural resources. And that environment or management of natural resources has been recognized as a tool for facilitating peace.

And examples are often drawn from the management of transboundary resources, such as shared river basins or transfer in tier conservation areas in other sectors. It is through such local institutions that communities organize themselves, shared norms, and the values and rules that pertain to the use of natural resources.

There are different definitions of CBNRM. In this context, we are looking at those principles and practices that argue that conservation goals should be pursued by strategies that emphasize the role of local residents in decision-making about the resources.

Rural communities have had money for special resources through their own indigenous or traditional systems for many years. And although there's a lot that we can learn from this area, we have tended to concentrate on formal CBNRM or formal community-based natural resources as stipulated in existing policies, as well as, as it unfolds through projects like the project-based approach to natural resources.

It is often evolved from the failing of centrally planned approaches to wildlife management. Once those had failed, we started to look at how can we better improve these approaches and how can we involve the local communities on the use of these. The underlying assumption is, of course, that communities must benefit from the resources and have direct control in order to value the natural resources. And it has been applied through southern Africa over the last 20 years in Botswana, over the last 15 years, and it's largely driven by NGOs and the donor communities.

In Botswana, we have based the ideals of CBNRM on equality, natural resource conservation, and social development. We are looking at coordinating stakeholder involvement or participation at a district and national level. So not only do we focus on the local communities, but we are also looking at the role of the local governance structures. We are looking at the role of NGOs, the role of central government, and the role of the private sector in managing natural resources, working in partnership with the local communities. It gives communities direct incentives, establishing clear linkages between the benefits of natural resources and encouraging community investment in conservation, as well as enhancing community self-reliance.





The CBNRM programs in Botswana have essentially focused on the dark red areas, which are called the wildlife management areas or the controlled hunting areas. These often border protected areas and tribal or communal land areas where, on the communal land areas, you are looking at agro-pastoral activities as the main land use. And within the protected areas, you are looking at wildlife and land use. So the wildlife management areas are zones that buffers the two very distinct land use practices. Within the wildlife management areas, the most dominant land use that has been promoted is conservation, and by thus doing -- involving the communities in the direct management of natural resources.

The different activities that the CBNRM activities in Botswana are focused on are wildlife-based activities; your hunting safaris, trophy hunting, photographic safaris; the use of velt or non-timber forest products; cultural tourism; craft production fisheries; and most recently ranch land management. In very few cases, we look at the involvement of communities in transboundary water resources.

These are the benefits that we have seen: A continued increase with regards to the number of households that are involved in the use of community-based use of natural resources, as well as the economic contribution of conservation and the increase in wildlife numbers.

Now, coming back to the dimensions of natural resource conflict. At the local level, we find that there is a lot of conflict with regards to land and control of land whereby, before the community-based natural resource programs were introduced, the land was taken away from communities, one during the colonial period. But we also see a continuation of that trend, post the colonial period with the introduction of the Tribal Land Act in 1968, which essentially decreased the role of the local and traditional authorities in managing and making decisions about land and the natural resources and replace them with formal structures such as the landlord -- the land boards.

And then we also have, in instances, the wildlife management areas that I was showing earlier, which are often occupied by communities whose livelihoods are largely based on natural resources. However, the communities have no rights or access to natural resources, and therefore, which has a negative impact on their livelihood strategies. Most of the communities in those areas would have been your hunter-gatherers, your fisher communities and very little, your agro-pastoral communities. And therefore, by not having access to the resources, it basically meant they had to depend on government handouts and on social services, government social services for their livelihoods.





And then we also see an increase in terms of privatization of the commonage as a result of land and agriculture policies such as the Tribal Grazing Land Policy of 1975, which essentially made communities such as the San squatters in their own land because they were not involved in agro-pastoral activities. Their own land use practices become insecure. And the only way that they can gain access to land is by owning ranches and so forth, and when the demarcation of ranches was carried out in response to the Tribal Grazing Land Policy, a lot of the same communities that lived in those areas lost access to the ancestral territories.

We also see a lot of competing and overlapping rights resources between neighboring communities and as well as between resource user groups within one community. So you would find that where a certain group of people may be given exclusive grazing rights it actually hampers or has a negative impact on other members of the community who would have needed to use the resources for gaining access to medicinal plants, gaining access to wildlife, and gaining access to velt products and so forth.

We also see a lot of land use conflict resulting from livestock and crop predation for communities that are living within or adjusting to protected areas. In this case, the reaction from the local communities is to view wildlife as a nuisance rather than regard it as an asset. Because of the alienation of the local or traditional structures and the direct management of natural resources, we see a breakdown in the local management strategies that often lead to open access.

And then in areas where there is very high tourism, and at the moment, tourism contributes about 5 percent to the national GDP, we saw a very limited citizen involvement as well as very limited rate at which the citizens were benefiting from the lucrative tourism industry beyond providing a pool for cheap labor in those areas.

How has CBNRM mitigated the conflict at the local level? From our experiences, some of the lessons that we've learned, including the factors for success, are that through CBNRM, we've seen an increase in the participation of local communities through the community-based organizations, and that conservation becomes increasingly regarded as legitimate land use by the local communities. We have seen a decrease in poaching in community-based organization areas, your wildlife management areas. Where there is no registered CBO and direct involvement of the local communities and the management of the nature resources,





poaching levels are still high. The value of wildlife is, again, better appreciated by the local communities due to the direct links and benefits from the resource.

And we've also seen that CBNRM tends to facilitate democratic processes for natural resource management at a local level and thus provides a platform for previously marginalized communities to access land and natural resources. And this is often made possible by having individuals within the group that tend to be insightful, dedicated and committed to such processes and also occupy positions of influence within the community. So if they sit in a position that allows them to actively engage with the politicians, that allows them to actively engage with the private sector and therefore be in a position to balance the power with regards to nature resource management, and we have tended to see very positive results with regards to conflict mitigation on the long-term basis.

David earlier mentioned that just looking and focusing on the local institutional structures themselves is not enough. What we have seen as well is that if we have a long-term facilitation or mentoring process in place, often provided by NGOs over a long term period, the chances of success and having sustainable conflict mitigation processes in place are much higher as opposed to having short-term project cycles or processes that are linked to your three to five year project cycles.

The CBNRM program, although it has not given communities ownership rights, per se, has at least contributed to improving a sense of ownership of the land and nature resources. Essentially communities feel that they own the land because at least they now have access or they now have use of factory rights, which they previously did not have. Even though those rights are limited to a 15-year lease, it's better than the position that they were in before, where they had no rights at all or no access at all.

We've had quite a number of issues and challenges in this area. One of them is that we have not fully tapped into the power of local institutions, because we tend to promote a highly managerial approach to nature resources, where we bring in processes of setting up an institution, drawing up the constitution, having an officer that is responsible for your finances, quarterly meetings and so forth, which completely ignore preexisting traditional systems, or local institutions, or just how people themselves would have been organizing themselves in order to come up with rules on access and the use of nature resources. So instead of building on people's preexisting knowledge of systems, we've tended to override those by bringing in new and often alien institutions, and by so doing I think we've lost





opportunities of building real robust and resilient social structures to allow for conflict mitigation over a long period of time.

And we have continued to grapple with issues around financial and organizational risk management -- David was talking about corruption earlier on. There are several incidences of community funds that have gone missing or community funds that have just simply been mismanaged. In the long-term, this has threatened the sustainability of CBNRM programs as well as the security around maintaining the principles of CBNRM in the country. And we've had very limited success with regards to business and enterprise development, and again, this is because we tend to deal with community projects by working solely with the communities and leaving out private sector. So instead of bringing in multiple stakeholders and working with their areas of comparative advantage, because it's a community-based process, we've tended to focus solely on community institutions. Therefore the development of real community private partnerships remains limited, and although we've had the implementation of CBNRM over a long period of time, we also lack a shared vision between the stakeholders.

The objectives of CBNRM for people at a community level tend to be very different from the reasons private sector wants to get involved or the reasons why government itself is facilitating the process. In the instance of Botswana, because communities are not involved in the processes of setting quotas or deciding on what wildlife management area goes to which community, the communities tend to be very passive recipients of benefits and with no direct involvement in the management decisions nor in the monitoring of the resource itself.

The indigenous peoples land rights issues are still not fully catered for within the program because, as I mentioned earlier, we've only within the program dealt with use refractory rights and therefore the policy does not go out of its way to redress the issues of marginalization and dispossession of ethnic minorities in the country.

And the use refractory rights are limited in the sense that they're 15 years, which made it difficult for investment or for people to realize their investments as opposed to your 50 to 99-year leases for your freehold lease. In some cases, we've seen that the community hunting areas or the wildlife management areas have caused conflict by failing to cater for overlapping rights between different resource users, user groups within the community as well as overlapping rights between neighboring communities. In some cases, we've seen an





allocation of one concession being given to a neighboring community instead of a community that resides within that wildlife management area.

And then the traditional leaders or the traditional institutional structures are marginalized by CBNRM and in a case where we begin to have policy debates about the future of CBNRM, you see traditional leaders actually coming out in public and speaking against the continuation of CBNRM.

We've also learned that investing in local institutions alone is not adequate and that there's a need to build the political capital of the local communities. There's need to build the relationships between the local government structures with your village trust communities or your community-based organizations. There's need to engage on a regular basis with policy makers and decision makers.

And once you start bringing in your policy makers and decision makers, issues are then upscaled at a macroeconomic level, where for instance, in the case of Botswana, the politicians are beginning to ask questions around benefit sharing at a national level, where they're saying, "Diamonds," like David was saying earlier, "diamonds are also natural resources." And the way in which the benefits of diamonds are shared or distributed in the country tends to be different with regards to natural resources, where the benefits for diamonds are felt at a national level. All of us get educated of government funds that are drawn from the sale of diamonds, whereas the benefits from the wildlife would tend to benefit communities that live within the vicinity of protected areas and wildlife management areas.

Once you start going into that debate, it then pits CBNRM against the national principles for economic development and social development, and it becomes very difficult to come out with arguments that are pro the continuation of CBNRM. It also brings in the issue of power balances, where communities are coming into direct conflict with government and the private sector, who have access to more resources and whose literacy levels are much higher than those of the communities, who have information and facts in a way that is organized different from the communities. And already it puts the communities in a disadvantaged position.

We've also seen that once it comes to policy formulation processes, although it is a highly democratic country, or highly democratic state, the space for participation in policy formulation and decision-making is not always equal. And it is not always equitable either.





Although we can say to the policy makers that diamonds do not eat goats, whereas lion and hyena, you know, prey on people's crops and people's wildlife, it becomes very difficult for us to come up with real, convincing arguments that can influence politicians, who may not necessarily be depending on the communities living in wildlife management areas as part of their electorate. We have tried to respond to some of these challenges by setting up a CBNRM national forum, which brings together the private sector and the government. It brings together local communities in order to debate issues that are topical and come to common ground on issues around CBNRM.

We try to have meetings every two years, conferences every two years, and on a quarterly basis, we have a national steering community meeting with all the key stakeholders represented in that. We publish the CBNRM status report, carry out a lot of research on the lessons learned in CBNRM as well as try and write media articles that are targeted at the politicians, sharing the lessons learned and trying to influence political processes.

The national forum itself has had different levels of influence and impact over the years. For instance, in 2001, CBNRM was in a very unstable situation in the sense that, because of the issues around corruption and financial mismanagement, one of the senior people within government, in this case who happened to be a permanent secretary for the minister of local government, issued a saving gram which was suggesting to take the benefits of CBNRM from the communities and give them to the local councils.

Our reaction was to oppose that and lobby for the benefits to remain with the communities because one, the local government structures are still inefficient in terms of spending their own budgets, and the investment from the taxes and so forth is usually spent on schools, roads, instead of looking at direct benefits in terms of improving food security at a household level and so forth. And CBNRM was feeling that gap.

But the influence of the forum itself has limitations. When we were looking at reviewing and working on the final CBNRM policy in 2007, suddenly, even though the national forum was set up as a multi-stakeholder for looking at influencing policy formulation processes, the policy formulation process was then taken out of that body and confined to the corridors of government. We saw a situation where the policy space was shrinking and the different stakeholders could not have direct influence on what actually went into the policy.





Because of that the CBNRM final policy as it stands is very different from the draft policy that had been influenced in the implementation of CBNRM over the last 15 years. Some of the very fundamental principles or basic principles of CBNRM have been removed from that. For instance, the power or the right of the communities to make key decisions on the use of the natural resources has been removed from the community level and given to government structures or what is referred to as the technical advisory committees. So instead of the local communities being given the right for self-determination and choosing what private sector they weren't going to join -- private sector partnerships with or which company to give concession area -- this decision is now being made by the technical advisory committee. And again, there are very systematic processes that have been put in place within that policy, which again, continue to limit the role that communities can have in one, monitoring the resource itself, and also making decisions on quota allocations for wildlife resources.

Within the CBNRM policy as well, there's a new element where 65 percent of the returns from wildlife quotas is now going to be retained by government, going into a government environmental fund and the communities retain 35 percent of those benefits. So we're seeing a shift from a situation where communities were allowed to keep 100 percent of the benefits to where they're allowed to keep only 35 percent of the benefits.

From these lessons, what we learn is that conflict mitigation needs to be an ongoing strategy. As the nature of conflict continuously changes, during the early stages of CBNRM, we were looking at redressing issues of access and ownership. Once we had moved beyond that, we then had to look at balancing interests of the government, private sector and the local communities themselves.

We also learned that politicians need to be continuously engaged in order to secure the political will, that the benefits of CBNRM to the national economic development need to be highlighted at all times. So when we communicate the lessons learned, we also need to be able to articulate what the benefits to the country as a whole have been instead of localizing the benefits of our initiators.

And what we've also learned is that we need to have a strong and locally driven movement in order for CBNRM to be sustainable. In the early stages of CBNRM, we had an organization such as the one that I work for, the World Conservation Union, SNV, the USAID funded Natural Resource Management Program, all of which are, strictly speaking, external international organizations facilitating the process. So we needed to spend a bit more in





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making it a home-grown initiative, such that the principles are shared by the government itself, such that the communities themselves are in a position to stand for CBNRM and fight for the continuation of the program.

We also learned that the process of building institutional resilience needs to be driven and defined by the communities themselves in order for them to tap into their own social capital, looking at their own norms, values and what defines the collective. When we come in and do institutional development, we're in fact building onto the traditional systems.

We've learned that information or knowledge is power. Although we have been documenting the lessons learned and the experiences, we still need to do it in such a way that the communities themselves can take that information and use it for negotiation with government or for negotiations with the private sector. Or even negotiations with neighboring communities and within the community itself.

We've seen that CBNRM needs to build in issues of multiple use and access, as would have been the case with common property regimes. So we've not invested enough in improving common property regimes as they were unfolding at the local level.

Thank you for that.



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