

Some reflections on conservation, sustainable development and equitable sharing of benefits from wildlife in Africa: the case of Kenya and Zimbabwe

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African wildlife represents a unique type of terrestrial biodiversity whose current and future importance should not be underestimated. However, the future of wildlife in Africa is threatened as the largely protectionist approaches to conservation of this resource, which have been used for many years, are no longer viable. Local communities have had little or no role to play in the conservation of wildlife although they suffer from the inconveniences of sharing the same ecosystem with wildlife and receive a negligible share of the benefits that accrue from wildlife. Consequently, there is growing conflict between local communities and wildlife whereby wildlife is not considered a priority form of land use since it does not offer immediate benefits to the local communities. In this paper we examine the issue of equitable sharing of benefits (and costs) of wildlife conservation in Africa, and the problems associated with local participation in the management of this resource with specific reference to Kenya and Zimbabwe. We further explore the issue of wildlife ownership and how this affects the local people's willingness to provide land for wildlife and hence its sustainable conservation. It is concluded that involvement and support of local communities in wildlife conservation is a prerequisite to effective and long-term conservation of wildlife and wildlands as part of the terrestrial biodiversity conservation. We propose that it is possible to reconcile the conservation of wild resources with economic development and human welfare so as to ensure that African countries with these resources have an incentive to ensure their long-term management and survival. New strategies for sustainable management of wildlife must address the issues of ownership as well as effective institutions and mechanisms of ensuring equitable sharing of benefits that accrue from wildlife.

Keywords: benefit sharing, conflicts, conservation, equitable, local communities, management, ownership, resources, wildlife

Introduction

The extensive grasslands of Africa are an ecosystem rich in wildlife which represents a unique biological resource on the African landscape, a resource which is a heritage to the people of the continent. Although this ecosystem is characterized by erratic and low rainfall resulting in largely grassland and scrub vegetation, this environment has been home for the world's most diverse and richest ensemble of wildlife and even flora. These resources constitute a wealth of diversity of goods and services that are an asset which can be harnessed for greater economic development and welfare. Equally important are the pastoralist communities who have, over the centuries, adapted to this ecosystem and have co-existed with the wildlife.

However, what is becoming increasingly clear is that both the wildlife as well as the livelihood of the mostly pastoralist communities who live in the grassland ecosystems are being threatened. Not only is the ecosystem being progressively degraded but the conflict between wildlife conservation and other forms of land use is escalating. In order to re-establish the balance which will enable the wildlife to be sustainably supported in this ecosystem on the one hand, and the pastoralist communities to continue using the resources of this ecosystem, the issues of benefits from wildlife, ownership and management that affect the local communities must be addressed. Failure to recognize and address these issues affecting the local communities in the past has led to a growing conflict between the local communities and wildlife, a conflict which must now be faced up to if the Convention on Biological Diversity is to succeed in wildlife conservation in Africa.

The involvement and support of local communities in wild-

life conservation is a prerequisite to effective and long-term conservation of wildlife and wildlands as part of the terrestrial biodiversity. As a resource, wildlife must be of value to humans and contribute to human development. In other words, it must directly benefit the people who have the option to use the wildlands for other purposes. Consequently, in spite of the existing controversies between the purely protectionist approach to wildlife management and the conservation approach, it is the local communities who will determine whether wildlife conservation is a priority form of land use.

When the Convention on Biological Diversity became effective in December 1993, it signalled a move towards a more proactive dual approach to conservation which seeks to meet people's needs from biological resources while ensuring the long-term sustainability of earth's biological capital, of which wildlife is part. The convention recognizes that an equitable sharing of income and assets is an important component of a strategy for conservation of biodiversity. However, this view seems to be incongruent with the conventional approaches to wildlife conservation which have dominated wildlife management in Africa since the colonial period. This protectionist approach essentially involves the creation of sanctuaries for wildlife in the form of national parks and game reserves as protected areas against the local human populations, a system which must be backed by a heavy law enforcement mechanism. Under this approach, the local communities are viewed as enemies of wildlife. Ironically, wildlife is a fugitive resource which can not be confined to the protected areas. Even the very land which is now designated as protected land rightfully belongs to the local communities. There can be no wildlife without land on which they can survive. So, who owns the wildlife resource and who has the right to conserve it, for both consumptive as well as non-con-

sumptive uses in a sustainable development context? How can wildlife conservation succeed if those who are the owners of the crucial 'space' needed for sustainable wildlife conservation are not involved in the management nor do they benefit from it?

Indeed, as recognized by the Biodiversity Convention, the key stakeholders, the local communities, must be major beneficiaries of the biological resources being conserved. This approach is being progressively reinforced, for example, as expressed by the Executive Director of UNEP in her message on the international day for biological diversity (29 Dec. 1995), that:

'One way to establish stronger support for our measures to conserve our biological diversity is to enlist the support of indigenous conservation efforts of the local people. Their indigenous knowledge and wisdom about the environment may well provide the resilience which will enable us to adapt to the future environmental changes. And, experience has shown that wherever local people have been given greater responsibility for managing their own resources, they have shown both the capacity and a willingness to conserve.'

Past experiences indicate that where government decisions or policies do not fully reflect the 'socially beneficial values' of natural areas, the conservation initiatives are bound to fail (Sugg & Kreuter 1994; Makombe 1993; Swanson 1992). As has been correctly acknowledged, 'Effective national action depends on developing an institutional and legal framework that integrates the benefits gained from conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into national decision-making. It is important to recognize the social, cultural and economic contexts in which actions are contemplated, including the importance of local knowledge and values' (UNEP 1995). Lessons learnt from Zimbabwe, where a community-based wildlife management initiative is being implemented, show that establishment of appropriate local level management institutions which have authority and the ability to manage resources in a sustainable manner is imperative in order to ensure the future of wildlife in Africa (Sibanda 1996).

The conflicts in the costing and valuation of wildlife

The aesthetic and ecological values which have, in the past, been the major concerns regarding wildlife, and which mainly serve interests of the international community, are often in conflict with the social and economic practicalities at the local level. It is necessary, therefore, that new policies and strategies which take into consideration the interests of all stakeholders in the valuation of wildlife be instituted to help resolve these conflicts. In Zimbabwe to a large extent the CAMPFIRE programme attempts to resolve these conflicts to the benefit of both humans and nature. The strategy emphasizes value of wildlife whether actual or potential and whether aesthetic, recreational, social or economic, (Zimbabwe Trust 1992).

The CAMPFIRE concept, for example, emphasizes the fact that value is derived from utility of a resource. Uses of wildlife may range from aesthetic, scientific to practical consumptive uses such as sport hunting or hunting for meat. All uses must be acknowledged because they depend on community norms. The prohibition of certain uses such as consumptive uses have failed when used as conservation strategies.

Hopcraft (1990) shows clearly that value for anything is derived from direct use as well as the perceived value of that resource. He shows how farmers have substituted wildlife with cattle, sheep and goats because of the immediate and perceived value these local people get from domestic animals but not from wildlife. He argued that this was because people were prohibited from utilizing wildlife and in the process of trying to protect wild animals this resource lost its value.

One of the major concerns of wildlife conservation at the local level is the imposition of external values and attitudes. This imposition has worked against the survival of wild animals and continues to threaten their future survival. For example, the decision by CITES to impose a blanket ban on ivory trade is already having devastating consequences on the elephant specifically and on other species in general. Those who continue to impose such values about wildlife do not understand that wildlife survival depends on changing the attitudes of local people and not the imposed demands of the Western world. Basically, the West still does not understand the African value systems. It is clear from what is happening to the elephant and other species that international conventions and the enabling national environmental legislations will not solve the conflict between man and beast. A more pragmatic and people-oriented management approach to wildlife conservation and utilization is needed. Imposing external values on wildlife has undermined conventional conservation strategies (Kiss 1990).

In order to resolve some of the conflicts related to wildlife conservation and local communities, certain fundamental changes must take place. There is need to remove certain mind-sets, prejudices among government officials and conservationists, that treat local people as potential poachers and trespassers. There are others who believe that the African people do not appreciate the intrinsic value of wildlife and therefore are bent on wanton destruction of wild animals. Treating local people as potential poachers only serves to alienate local communities from wildlife and increases conflict.

Local people must be treated responsibly if any conservation strategy is to succeed. For any strategy to succeed it must be ecologically viable, ethically admissible, economically practical and internationally responsible. For this to happen those who live and share land with animals must be involved in the management of wildlife. Resolving conflict between man and beast at the local level will happen once the local communities have access to wild animals as a resource. While it is true that wildlife has intrinsic value, this notion will not save wildlife in the African rural reality where people are poor and often threatened with starvation. Wildlife must be seen as a resource which can provide food and income to the local people. Local communities will provide land for wildlife and let animals multiply once they know that they can derive benefits from them.

The future of wildlife conservation in Africa clearly lies in acknowledging that sustainable conservation is intricately linked with sustainable use of this resource. Local communities attach great significance to direct perceivable use of wildlife and one of the ways that equitable sharing of benefits from wildlife conservation can be achieved in Africa is through the promotion of sustainable management of wildlife.

The main question in sustainable management of wildlife in Africa, therefore, is not just conservation versus exploitation. The institutional, socio-economic and tenurial structures must be changed to empower local communities with the necessary means and resources with which to sustainably develop and manage wildlife as a resource. A resource which substantially contributes to their well-being and one that they will feel obliged to care for so that they can continue to benefit from it on a long-term basis. Therefore, a balance should be sought that can help avoid conflict between local communities and wildlife. Part of the solution lies in recognizing the high cost the local communities have to pay for the wildlife to be conserved *in situ*, and be compensated appropriately.

One of the aims of conventional conservation approaches is to protect what are considered to be endangered species. However, protectionism has not always produced the most desired results. Hopcraft (1990) observed that man, in an effort to protect disappearing wild species, has made utilization impossible by making it illegal to utilize, sell or even manage. This denial of wildlife utilization has led land owners to eliminate wildlife in favor of domestic animals that can generate income and food for them. Hopcraft further argues that utilization is the key to the proliferation and survival of any species. Therefore, the survival of wildlife will depend on sanctioning sustainable wildlife utilization so that land owners will have the option to manage and benefit from wildlife.

There is an opportunity cost for rural communities who are denied the options for using protected and other wildlife areas for other productive uses and the high cost of protection itself. For wildlife to become a viable land-use option, it must prove that land set aside for wildlife can produce just as much benefit as other alternative land uses. Although no generally acceptable calculations of actual costs and benefits have been done, the estimates done by Norton-Griffiths & Southey (1994) for Kenya may help to illustrate this argument. They show that if protected areas and forest areas in Kenya were used for agriculture and livestock they could support 4.2 million people and generate an annual gross revenue of US\$ 565 million and a net return of US\$ 203 million. The foregone net revenue of US\$ 203 million represents an opportunity cost to Kenya of biodiversity conservation. The current combined net revenues of US\$ 42 million from tourism and forestry are inadequate to cover these opportunity costs (Norton-Griffiths & Southey 1994). The opportunity costs can be calculated for communities across the continent in a similar manner. Why should Kenya and the local communities across Africa lose direct benefits from wildlife just so that the rest of the world can enjoy this biodiversity, when that larger world does not want to pay the opportunity cost? This same argument applies to the relationships between local communities and the national interests. It is clear that tourism on its own cannot generate income that is comparable to other land uses.

Why is equitable sharing of benefits from wildlife conservation important?

Equitable sharing of benefits that accrue from conservation of biodiversity has been recognized as one of the pillars of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In principle, therefore, the Convention does recognize the role of local communities in wildlife conservation. Currently, the local communities not

only forego the full exploitation of the wildlife but also the use of the resources set aside for wildlife conservation (land and water). They are also the ones who suffer the inconvenience of wildlife as neighbors and, as such, have a right to claim a fair share of the benefits resulting from wildlife conservation. This approach calls for community-based wildlife management systems in which the local people can take part in the process of wildlife management as a whole and can decide on how to minimize the costs and share the benefits from their resource. While other approaches may be important they will however, not work given the existing relationship between wildlife and local communities in Africa. Benefits from a resource are fundamental to its conservation and sustainable use.

This paper proposes that it is possible to reconcile the conservation of wild resources with economic development and human welfare so as to ensure that African countries with these resources have an incentive to ensure their long-term management and survival. Examples from Zimbabwe's CAMPFIRE programme show that incentives are a major motivating factor in wildlife conservation. There is a direct correlation between conservation and benefits derived from wildlife by communities (Matzke & Nabane 1994). When communities benefit directly from wildlife they tolerate wildlife better. In cases such as Masoka in Guruve, Zimbabwe, communities have actually increased the amount of land reserved for wildlife. This decision was taken by the local people when they realized the sort of benefits they were getting from wildlife. They have also established local scouts and wardens to protect wildlife. The whole community has been mobilized to conserve and protect wildlife.

Communities will agree to conserve wildlife only when they begin to appreciate wildlife as a resource with mitigating features and stop viewing it as a nuisance. In most cases in Africa, those who live with wildlife do not benefit from it. Most of the income is earned by the tourism industry barons who do not invest in the conservation of wildlife (Sibanda 1995b; Makombe 1993). Why then should local communities be expected to conserve a resource from which they do not derive a benefit? The argument often advanced is that the nation as a whole earns revenue from tourism. This argument is flawed firstly by the fact that none of this income ever reaches the communities that suffer the inconvenience of living with wildlife. The Maasai, Pokots, Tongas etc. want to see wildlife contributing directly to their livelihood like providing food, school and health facilities. When that happens these communities will participate in the conservation of wild animals.

The local people need a fair share of benefits from wildlife because they suffer an opportunity cost by allowing this land to be used by wildlife and, in so doing, they deny themselves the opportunity to use the same land for other more beneficial uses. Further, the local communities and national economies subsidize tourism because tourism does not pay the full costs of conservation nor the opportunity cost. After all the revenues reflected in most African countries are a false calculation because most of the tour packages are organized overseas and that money never finds its way to these countries (Sibanda 1995b). The calculations done by Norton-Griffiths & Southey (1993) for Kenya clearly show that the income

earned by tourism and forestry is a net of US\$42 million as compared with the US\$203 million net income from alternative uses of protected wildlife areas and forestry areas. In other words Kenya, a poor developing nation, actually subsidizes holiday makers from rich countries. If indeed the world community feels that this wildlife is important and they want to share the enjoyment of such a resource, then the international community must pay the market price for such a resource which must include the opportunity cost. Unless this happens the developing countries like Kenya cannot indefinitely continue to provide this subsidy in the name of tourism, biodiversity, or as a human heritage. Scientific and social moralization will not provide long-term solutions to the issue of wildlife conservation and protection because the economic realities will not allow that to happen. Therefore the rest of the world has a very clear choice when it comes to conservation of wildlife: either they pay for it in order to gain some measure of influence on what happens to it, or accept the reality that those who foot the bill will decide what happens to that resource.

Ownership and management are essential in fair benefit sharing

Wildlife management at the national level indicates that, in most African countries, wildlife is considered a state resource. The national parks and game reserves are largely managed by the state. Some involvement of local communities in wildlife management in countries such as Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Tanzania is a very recent development which has not taken root in full. Countries like Kenya, though, (the Kenya Wildlife Service) recognize that involvement of local communities is the key to meaningful and effective wildlife management, but have yet to recognize the issue of local ownership and control.

Ownership of wildlife and the land on which they are conserved *in situ* needs to be recognized as a major area of controversy which has a direct bearing on how the local communities can truly benefit from wildlife conservation. In an interview with Chief Mola, Sibanda (1995) argues that the peasant's logic is justified. In that interview, chief Mola wanted to know whose property wildlife is. He concluded his argument by saying if wildlife belongs to the Tonga people then the Tonga people must decide on how to use it and not be told by some one else on how to use their own resources. On the other hand the chief said if wildlife belongs to the state then the state must find land for it and keep it in such a way that it does not interfere with the livelihood system of the Tonga people. The peasants insist both in Kenya and Zimbabwe that those who benefit from wildlife-based tourism must invest in wildlife conservation. The peasants will convert their land to those land uses that give them maximum benefit. This will happen whether or not conservationists and other experts think these land uses are compatible with conservation. Hopcraft (1990) confirmed that farmers will convert their land to those uses that are beneficial to them.

Who has the right to wildlife in Africa? The issue of ownership of wildlife in the continent is closely associated with access, a concept which is greatly misunderstood by the West. A lot has been written about wildlife as an open access resource which makes it difficult to manage. Open access

implies common property, broadly understood to mean unregulated access or use of scarce resources (Harden & Baden 1975). This is understood to mean that people are unlikely to restrain their own behavior when the immediate benefits of their actions are their own, but the costs are passed on to society as a whole or some other specific group. In traditional African society under communal management, both in Kenya and Zimbabwe, there was no open access to wildlife or any other resource (Sibanda 1995b). Open access is an alien concept to traditional African wildlife management and conservation. Resources, whatever their nature, always belong to a community or were controlled by the community or somebody for the benefit of the community.

Open access of wildlife both in Zimbabwe and Kenya, and elsewhere in Africa, is a result of colonial rule which disposed the Africans of their resources and further denied them rights to use these resources. Open access is really a result of the failure of state management of wildlife by remote control. Once the state took over the ownership of wildlife from local communities, it also took over the responsibility for its conservation. However, the state could not police every corner of wildlife estate and, as the costs of policing increased the state became unable to do this policing, a situation which resulted in open access. The blame for open access to wildlife should then go to those who wanted to keep wildlife exclusively for their own benefit and not to the indigenous people.

In Zimbabwe it can be demonstrated that open access to wildlife did not exist before state ownership and control of wild animals. In traditional society in Zimbabwe certain species were protected through a system of social and cultural relations, or with spirit mediums and taboo systems. For instance in both the Ndebele and Shona cultures the pangolin *Manis* spp., lion *Panthera leo*, and porcupine *Hystrix africae-australis*, which were known to be very rare animals and slow breeders were protected and could not be killed or captured without the express permission of the King or Chief. Any one of those could only be killed or capture for medicinal purposes. However, the colonial administration and Christianity looked down upon the African culture and therefore removed the values and respect which the African people had for wildlife. The traditional community-based natural resource management system was replaced with law enforcement. The Africans have never developed any respect for this law nor did the new wildlife management system invoke new values for wildlife. In a situation of traditional management, open access was not possible and any abuse of wildlife could not occur without being quickly detected and the offenders swiftly punished. Cultural norms and beliefs had a very strong influence on how wildlife was managed and utilized.

The existing conflict between local communities and wildlife should be seen as a serious threat to the future of wildlife conservation in Africa. This conflict largely originates from the fact that the rights of local communities to own and manage wildlife have been taken away from them. Consequently, the local communities do not consider wildlife as a resource, *per se* - a resource that is of value to them and for their well being. Instead, wildlife is considered as a form of land use which deprives them of an opportunity to use the 'wildlands' for more economically valuable purposes such as grazing and cultivation.

The reasoning and perception behind the conventional approaches to wildlife conservation have also contributed to the fuelling of the conflict between local communities and wildlife. When humans are considered an enemy of wildlife from whom they should be protected, it does not leave much room for the local communities to even consider wildlife as a resource. Not only does wildlife management in protected areas require large tracts of land which local communities have no access to, but the same wildlife have a direct negative impact on local communities. Being a fugitive resource, research indicates that they spend most of their time outside the protected areas in grazing land as well as cultivated and settled areas (Sibanda 1995b; Mbugua 1994; Kesoi 1994). Thus, the local communities and the wildlife compete for the land resources. Consequently, they damage crops and kill people as well as livestock. All these inconveniences and losses are borne by the local communities. These are also costs that should be accounted for, recognized and paid for, if the conflict between local communities and wildlife is to be effectively addressed.

The Convention on Biological Diversity must recognize the existing antagonism between protectionist and the community-based sustainable conservation approaches. This has direct bearing on management policies as demonstrated by the contrast between the Kenya and Zimbabwe cases. The international community has always supported Kenya in protectionism, for example in 1994 the financial support for policing by Kenya Wildlife Service was as much as \$143 million from donors for its wildlife conservation programme. This is Kenya's protectionist strategy in wildlife conservation and their support for the ban on ivory trade. In the case of Zimbabwe, the community-based 'homegrown' approach to wildlife management where sustainable development and conservation are being integrated, has not attracted international support. Ironically, this is one of the very few cases where the local communities are recognized as key stakeholders and are sharing the benefits from wildlife conservation.

International claimson Africanwildlife

Conflict in wildlife management, conservation and its utilization is not just confined to the local level. The conflict has taken on more and more of an international dimension. It is interesting that wildlife appeals to an international community who also would want to put a claim on its ownership. Many in the West and the international environmental agencies see wildlife as a resource belonging to the whole of humanity or as a heritage of humanity as a whole. This notion is implied in both CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity. One wonders why this should apply to wildlife and not to other resources such as oil in Texas or coffee in Kenya. There are many who want to treat wildlife as international commons, a notion very much promoted by CITES when it banned the trade on ivory (Sugg & Kreuter 1994). There are those who argue that wildlife must be conserved if it proves beneficial to those communities who spare land for it. In other words wildlife must earn income and food for communities or individuals and prove itself as an alternative land use. There is yet another group which believes that wildlife has intrinsic value and should be preserved for that reason. It has a right to live regardless of its value to humans. The proponents of this

usually argue that human beings have taken over wildlife habitat. In other words humans can not claim to be setting aside land for wild animals because the land belonged to wildlife anyway. This notion is not helpful in resolving conflict, it only serves to polarize the situation further and lead to the escalation of the conflict and in all this, the wild animals are certain to lose.

There are many people especially in the West who want to treat wildlife as international commons, basically denying those who live with and share land with wildlife from owning it and controlling its utilization. Favre (1993) says that 'Ban proponents argue that elephants are common heritage of humanity, an internationally accepted principle that is juxtaposed to that of sovereignty, and [one] that builds upon wildlife as a common resource'. Kreuter & Sugg (1994) echo Favre's argument and say that treating wildlife as a common resource has a serious potential mischief because anyone from anywhere could feel justified in exerting control over virtually any species of wildlife in any country.

Programmes like CAMPFIRE have been advocating for ownership of wildlife by local communities. There is evidence from the CAMPFIRE projects in Zimbabwe that communities have become more responsible and responsive to wildlife conservation because they own wildlife and they benefit directly from it. Notions that treat wildlife as international common property basically deny these local people an opportunity to own and control the use of wildlife. Such arguments work against those who advocate for local ownership. Further, they reverse all the gains of CAMPFIRE and place wildlife in an extremely vulnerable position. Conventions like CITES and the decision to ban ivory trade want to transfer ownership and control of wildlife not only away from communities but away from the national governments as well. The African governments need to wake up to the reality that supporting such decisions as the ban on ivory trade will affect their sovereignty and their independence to use the resource for the benefit and development of their people.

While the international community and experts may spend energy and money developing international treaties and conventions and may want wildlife to be an international common resource, the stark reality, however, is that the silent peasants across the villages in Africa will always determine the survival of wild animals. History has shown repeatedly that local people ultimately determine the survival of wild animals. The international community and experts should, therefore, invest money and energy in empowering those who live with and share land with wildlife. This empowerment will come from resource ownership and the right of those people to benefit directly from wildlife. It will also require appropriate local institutional structures that ensure that the local people have the authority and the ability to manage the resources sustainably. Wildlife will not be conserved by these peasants unless they can derive benefits from it. The notion of conserving wildlife for its intrinsic value will not succeed however legitimate. Equipping local communities with knowledge, skills and enhancing their rights is an insurance against misuse of wildlife and is worth the investment. Those at the national and international levels who do not heed this message do so at the peril of wildlife and resource conservation at large.

Current international conventions and agreements seem to want to take away the right of the Africans to own, control and benefit from wildlife. The classic example is the CITES convention and the decision to ban ivory trade. The ban on ivory trade literally turned elephants into international commons. A notion that says that anyone from anywhere can do what they want with the elephant. The developed world given their consumer patterns continue to plunder other resources, for example, overfishing in the seas, polluting waters and the poor nations can not impose sanctions, controls or even conditions on the rich countries. Yet the CITES imposed sanctions and controls on poor nations when it decided to ban trade in ivory, but who will police the big powers?

By imposing all these conditions on the developing nations, the international community is sending a very lucid message that it intends to blackmail the African countries or intimidate them into accepting the will of the powerful. The message is very clear, failure to comply with the powers will result in development aid being curtailed. In fact this blatant blackmail was used against Zimbabwe in Japan during the debate on the ban on ivory trade (Kreuter & Sugg 1994). The international community and the powerful nations want Africans to accept that wildlife is an international resource so that they (the international community) can be involved in the management, utilization and control of wildlife. In this way the Africans would lose control over this resource as they did during the colonial era. It is clear that wildlife has assumed an international political status. The Africans only need to insist that wildlife must be treated as any other resource such as oil in Texas or Saudi Arabia. Claims that wildlife is a human heritage, by implication, denies the local communities the right to own and manage wildlife for their own benefit. In order to resolve the conflict at the international level, the issue of ownership at the local level needs to be resolved. The African governments need to sort out the issue of local ownership of wildlife; only then can they fight the larger issue of the Western world wanting to treat wildlife as an international resource.

The international agencies cannot continue to expect developing nations to go along with these treaties and conventions when there is clear inequity. If the conventions like CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity are for the good of humanity as a whole then the same standards must apply to both the poor nations and the rich nations.

Conclusions and recommendations

Experiences from wildlife management in Africa clearly demonstrate that equitable sharing of benefits is intricately linked with sustainable use and conservation of wildlife. Equity requires that local communities are placed at the centre of the equation for determining the costs of conserving wildlife and the benefits accruing from it. The claim to wildlife and the land it occupies and, hence, the right to manage and benefit from this resource is at the centre of the conflict between wildlife and local communities. While the Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes that local communities are key players in the conservation of biological diversity and that these resources should contribute to their well being, the existing approaches to wildlife conservation do not fully recognize this.

Wildlife conservation in particular must come to terms with the fact that local communities are the 'true' owners of the shrinking 'space' - the land resource which is to support wildlife into the future sustainably. It is also the local communities who have the right to own, control and manage wildlife as their own resource which the rest of the world should pay for if they want to benefit from wildlife. In essence, it is the local communities who must put the price tag on wildlife. If they value it, they will conserve it. However, this will require almost a total overhaul of the current approach and relationship between wildlife and local communities. The notion of wildlife as international commons is dangerous and should not be allowed to derail some of the more progressive programmes like CAMPFIRE.

While CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe is certainly a step in the right direction, it nonetheless has not resolved many of the issues relating to wildlife ownership. The Kenya Wildlife Service has recognized this need and modalities are being worked out to redress the problem. As indicated earlier, in order to change the status of local communities in the management of wildlife, the critical and fundamental issue which any strategy must address is ownership of the resource. Empowerment of communities lies in their ability to own the resource and fully decide what to do with it. This obviously sounds very threatening to conventional wildlife management systems. This, however, is the only way forward because communities will no longer agree to take responsibility and provide land for wildlife if they cannot benefit from it.

Obviously, for community participation to take place, people need institutions that enable their participation. Wildlife management strategies must develop local institutions that have legal authority to manage the resource. Such institutions must be socially acceptable, and have powers of inclusion and exclusion as well powers to resolve community conflict, Sibanda (1996). The most important of these requirements however, is for the experts and the international community to accept that wildlife as a resource must be owned by the local people who share land with it.

It is thus concluded that four key issues require immediate attention in the context of the Convention of Biological Diversity in its noble agenda of conserving the biological resources of the world. These issues include:

- (1) The conflict between wildlife and humans be minimized and allow for coexistence through greater involvement and participation of local communities in wildlife management.
- (2) The benefits of wildlife conservation be directed to those who bear the costs of wildlife conservation and are directly involved in wildlife conservation, forego other types of land use and suffer inconvenience.
- (3) Ownership and sharing of benefits are central to sustainable resource management. The local communities' have a legitimate claim to both.
- (4) A mechanism for the international community to pay the actual cost of conserving wildlife for sharing this resource. Current approaches, for example, in ecotourism are structured in such a way that those who live with wildlife do not benefit from this industry, the realized income is not ploughed back into conservation of wildlife and most tours are organized overseas and therefore a

substantial amount of that money is earned by the 'North'.

The role of local communities in wildlife management and their right to a fair share of the benefits that accrue from wildlife conservation are long overdue. The Convention on Biological Diversity should provide the right environment in which the issues raised in this paper can be addressed in order to find a lasting solution on the future of wildlife in Africa.

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