

Democratic Governance and Its Effect On Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM): Botswana and Zambia

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My doctoral research focuses on examining how democratic governance affects the performance of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), a conservation and rural development initiative that has been practiced over the past two decades in Southern Africa.

As part of developing this doctoral research, preliminary research was conducted during summer 2008 in Botswana and Zambia with the following objectives: to undertake a governance assessment of four CBNRM villages in the Okavango Delta and build collaborative linkages with Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Community Institutions and the University of Botswana and to assess, the status of CBNRM in Zambia.

In Botswana, I worked as part of a larger group of both University of Florida faculty and graduate students and Young African Professionals who are broadly studying social and ecological systems in Southern Africa. One main focus of the team has been

to develop standardized systems for measuring the effectiveness, legitimacy and performance of community governance. The areas of study were Mababe, Sankuyu, Khwai and the Okavango Community Trust (OCT). Using a survey instrument termed the "Community Dashboard" household interviews were conducted. This included a total of 32 surveys in Mababe; 33 in Khwai; 41 in Sankuyu and 167 in OCT. Household heads were interviewed on their perceptions of how CBNRM was performing in their areas. The survey gathered information on demographics; community structures and functions; participation in CBNRM meetings; elections; community resource rights; information



dissemination; trust in leadership; and an overall rating of the CBNRM program.

In addition to the household surveys, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods were undertaken in all four communities. Using PRA tools, focus groups were organized that included young, middle and old-aged members of the community. Information gathered included environmental, institutional, and major historical events that had occurred in each community. At the completion of research in each community, feedback meetings were organized to present the results to the general assembly. This process is both an auditing system for the data gathered, and is important in ensuring research done is not extractive but beneficial to communities.

In Zambia, research was conducted for a period of three weeks. Zambia has one of the oldest CBNRM programs in Southern Africa, however it has recently slacked in its implementation and government support. This preliminary research was to determine the current status of CBNRM in Zambia, and examine whether it could be used as a comparative site in the doctoral research. A total of nine in-depth interviews were conducted with practitioners in the field of CBNRM. These interviews reveal that CBNRM in Zambia faces three major challenges: donor support for natural resource management has greatly reduced; community institutions are focusing on more ownership of natural resource areas; and government, particularly the Zambia Wildlife Authority, is investing into measures that would increase good governance at the community level.



Patricia Mupeta is a doctoral student in Interdisciplinary Ecology in the School of Natural Resources and Environment. Her research in summer 2008 was made possible by a Pre-dissertation Research Stipend from the African Power and Politics (APP) Program. APP is funded by a grant from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), to a research consortium of which CAS is an institutional member.