

Transforming CBNRM Education in Southern Africa: Bridging the Gap Between Classroom and Natural Resource Governance

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In 2009, Brian Child (Geography & CAS), Grenville Barnes (School of Forest Resources & Conservation), Sandra Russo (UF International Center) and Brijesh Thapa (Department of Tourism, Recreation, & Sports Management) were awarded a three-year \$600,000 Higher Education for Development (HED) grant, "Transforming CBNRM Education in Southern Africa." Our goal is to facilitate renowned scholars and practitioners in southern Africa region to synthesize and record twenty years of experience in the region's cutting edge Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) programs to provide quality curricular materials for universities, vocational colleges, practitioner training and the private sector.

Since the 1960s southern Africa has led a global change in conservation policy based on the principles of sustainable use. Countries like Zimbabwe and Namibia experimented boldly, first introducing policies that devolved use and benefit rights from wildlife to private landholders. The successes of these new policy approaches are reflected in blossoming wildlife numbers and a vigorous wildlife economy. The next challenge, beginning in the 1980s, was to extend the concepts of incentive-based conservation to the socially complex communal lands where the majority of rural Africans live.

This led to well known initiatives like CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe and Namibia's national CBNRM program, whereby local communities benefit from and therefore conserve wildlife and other natural resources. Key to these programs was the development of new economic and political institutions for governing wild resources, including strengthened property rights, new markets and rural democratization. Other innovations combined participation and science to improve wildlife and natural resources through adaptive management.

In this current project UF faculty and students work closely with southern African conservation practitioners and communities, undertaking interdisciplinary environmental, social and economic



research related to state and community conservation. We have paid considerable attention to building long-term relationships, and to orientating our research towards local needs and problems. Additionally, we work with practitioners and communities to develop the long-term monitoring systems that are critical for adaptive management.

This experience enabled us, in July, to provide training on governance and economics to a forum comprising communities, government officials and the private sector to improve the management of and benefits from the extraordinary resources in Botswana's Okavango Delta. Later that month, 58 scholars and practitioners from eight countries met in Pretoria, South Africa, to map out a strategy for improving curricular materials, teaching and research related to CBNRM in southern Africa. With matching funding from USAID and Norway through WWF, participation included twelve universities, seven colleges, major NGOs and practitioners working in the

region (WWF, AWF, WCS, IUCN, Resources Africa), representatives of the tourism and hunting industries, and USAID which funds this project and has invested over \$100 million in community conservation in the region since 1989.

The workshop concluded that it was essential to integrate research with training and practice, and that although a substantial amount of knowledge has been accumulated by a network of dedicated scholar practitioners, it has extended only haphazardly into education institutions and academia more generally. Training materials do not adequately reflect the current "state-of-knowledge," and too few people are being trained in new approaches to issues like biodiversity conservation, climate change, food security and payments for environmental services.

The Pretoria workshop was the first step to strengthen a community-of-practice of committed scholars and practitioners around the tasks of: 1) collecting, collating, and designing CBNRM curricula and materials;



and 2) institutionalizing these in local universities and colleges. To capture southern Africa's extensive lessons, we will be holding a series of write-shops in field locations over the next three years. Our output will be a series of books, manuals and teaching materials written collectively by scholars and practitioners covering subjects like natural resource governance, economics, marketing and business development, social learning and adaptive management, participatory resource management. These write shops will include the next generation of teachers and trainers to encourage their

buy-in to the materials and pedagogy that links to field practice.

The Project PI is Brian Child who has considerable experience implementing CBNRM in southern Africa, including Zimbabwe's pioneering CAMPIFRE program. Brijesh Thapa adds tourism expertise, and Grenville Barnes adds capability in resource governance and property rights. Sandra Russo is an agronomist with considerable expertise in the region and in training approaches. The program is also linked to research projects being implemented in the region

by Geography professors Jane Southworth (land change science), Eric Keys (rural sociology, agriculture and innovation), Michael Binford (bio-geography) and Abraham Goldman (agriculture and parks) and more than a dozen graduate students working on natural resource governance.

Brian Child is associate professor in the Department of Geography and the Center for African Studies. This project is managed through the Higher Education for Development (HED) office with a three-year funding award of \$600,000 from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).