



WORKING PAPER SERIES

# ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

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**WHOSE ELEPHANTS ARE THEY?  
DECENTRALIZATION OF CONTROL OVER  
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE  
CAMPFIRE PROGRAM IN BINGA DISTRICT,  
ZIMBABWE**

by  
Diana Conyers  
January 2002



WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Institutions and Governance Program

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**ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA  
WORKING PAPERS: WP #4**

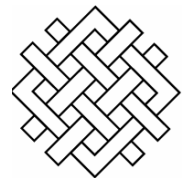
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# **WHOSE ELEPHANTS ARE THEY?**

## **DECENTRALIZATION OF CONTROL OVER WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE CAMPFIRE PROGRAM IN BINGA DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This case study examines the impact of one of sub-Saharan Africa's first attempts to decentralize control over wildlife management: Zimbabwe's much publicized Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) program. The objective of the study is to determine the nature and extent of CAMPFIRE's impact on local institutions and the welfare of local communities, and in particular to see whether it has succeeded in giving local people effective control over wildlife resources. The study focuses on Binga District, an area in which wildlife are abundant and CAMPFIRE plays a particularly important role. The findings are derived largely from the author's own experience living and working in Binga.

The paper is divided into four sections. The rest of this section provides some background information on decentralization in Zimbabwe, the CAMPFIRE program, and Binga District. The next two sections present the Binga case study, including the operation of CAMPFIRE in Binga District, as well as its positive and negative impacts on various interest groups within the District. Finally, the last section summarizes the impact of CAMPFIRE in Binga and draws some general conclusions about the effectiveness of CAMPFIRE as a means of decentralizing control over wildlife and the possible implications for decentralization of natural resource management in general.

### **DECENTRALIZATION IN ZIMBABWE**

In order to understand the context of Zimbabwe's attempts to decentralize control over wildlife management, a brief review of general decentralization policy and practice during the post-independence period is necessary. 'Decentralization' has been high on the Zimbabwe Government's list of policy priorities throughout the country's twenty-one years of political independence, but, as in many other sub-Saharan African countries, there has been a gap between policy and practice (Gasper 1997; Makumbe 1998; Nkomo 1999; Conyers 2001).

There have been significant changes in the nature and objectives of decentralization policy during this period. Although the process of change has been gradual, three main phases can be identified, corresponding approximately to the periods 1980 to 1992, 1993 to 1999 and 2000 to the present. These are described in turn below.

#### *Deconcentration: 1980 to 1992*

During the first phase, the emphasis was on *deconcentration*; in other words, the decentralization of powers to local representatives of central government agencies. This was consistent with the Government's self-image at the time, which was that of a *de facto* one-party "socialist" state. The focus of attention was a hierarchy of development

committees at provincial, district, ward and village levels. The committees, which were composed primarily of central government officials and local representatives of the ruling party, were established in 1984, following a directive by the then Prime Minister. Their main function was to coordinate the various agencies involved in development by preparing “bottom-up” development plans and monitoring implementation activities. This resulted in a frenzy of local planning activity. However, since neither government services nor funds were devolved to the development committees, the plans produced had little or no impact on the actual allocation of resources. Furthermore, the composition of the committees provided relatively little scope for the majority of the population to participate effectively. The main outcome was, therefore, increasing frustration and skepticism about “bottom-up” planning at all levels. On the positive side, however, the experience gave those involved some understanding of the concept of decentralization and, in particular, the importance of financial decentralization. This led to pressures for more meaningful decentralization, especially from national and local officials of the Ministry of Local Government, who had spearheaded the exercise.

Meanwhile, despite the emphasis on deconcentration, significant changes were taking place in the field of rural local government. At Independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a dual system of rural local government: relatively autonomous and affluent *rural councils* in the white-dominated “commercial farming” areas and small, weak, financially dependent *African councils* in the black “communal” areas. Reform occurred in two stages. First, African councils were amalgamated to constitute one *district council* for each of the then fifty-five administrative districts. Although these district councils were elected bodies and employed their own staff, their functions were limited, they were closely supervised by the district administrator (who functioned as chief executive officer), and they were heavily dependent on government grant funding.

The second stage was the amalgamation of the affluent rural councils with the newly formed district councils to produce one *rural district council* for each district. This was a far more complex and controversial process. There was considerable opposition from white farmers, who were afraid that the quality of their services (especially road maintenance, which was the most important function of rural councils) would decline. There were also several different views regarding the functions of the new councils and their relationship to the existing development committees; should additional central government functions be decentralized and, if so, to rural district councils or to development committees? The necessary legislation was, after many delays, eventually passed in 1988. However, it was not until 1993 that the new rural district councils came into effect. Furthermore, the legislation was full of compromises and ambiguities: the most significant being the fact that, although the Act included a long list of functions that the councils were entitled to perform, it made no provision for terminating the central government’s current supply of these functions or for furnishing councils with the resources necessary to undertake them.

In sum, although power was not significantly decentralized to either central government agencies or elected local authorities during this phase, the experience gained from the attempts to establish a “bottom-up” planning system, combined with the establishment of

the new rural district councils, provided a basis that could be used to form a more effective system of decentralization in the next phase.

*Attempts at Devolution: 1993 to 1999*

The establishment of the new rural district councils in 1993 marked the beginning of the second phase of decentralization. By this time the Government's policy on decentralization had changed in two significant ways. Firstly, there was increasing pressure to decentralize, since decentralization was now being advocated as a means not only of giving effective powers to local institutions, but also of "rationalizing" (which in effect meant cutting the cost of) the public service. The Government had committed itself to the latter as part of the 'structural adjustment' program on which it had embarked in 1991. Secondly, the focus now was on decentralization to elected local councils, rather than to appointed development committees. This change in focus can be attributed to a number of things, including the Ministry of Local Government's desire to strengthen the role of the new rural district councils, the fact that the Government had been forced to abandon its stance as a one-party state, and the need to transfer functions to local governments or non-government organizations in order to achieve the objective of reducing the operating costs of central government agencies. Since this new decentralization policy was in line with current international thinking on decentralization, it attracted considerable interest from external funding organizations, including the World Bank and various bilateral agencies.

During this period there was a great deal of debate, led by the Ministry of Local Government and encouraged by external funding agencies, about which of the activities listed as council functions in the 1988 Rural District Councils Act should actually be devolved to them and how. However, no significant functions were actually transferred and only one ministry (the Ministry of Health) even got as far as preparing concrete plans for decentralization. The main reasons for this were a general resistance to decentralization among line ministries and the dilemma of how to decentralize financial resources to local authorities while at the same time reducing public expenditure. The only significant achievement of this phase was the launch of a major donor-funded Rural District Councils Capacity Building Program, which included the channeling of considerable amounts of donor funding for capital development projects through rural district councils rather than line ministries.

*Passing the Buck: 2000 to present*

Towards the end of 1999, line ministries began to adopt a more positive stance towards decentralization. However, this change in attitude was provoked not by the merits of decentralization itself but by the fact that, due to increasing financial and political pressures on the Government, their financial position was becoming so precarious that they were no longer able to deliver services effectively. Line ministries thus seized upon decentralization as a means of extricating themselves from this situation, which was becoming increasingly embarrassing not only for them but also for the ruling party. The

third phase of decentralization policy may therefore be described as one in which the Government has been trying to ‘pass the buck’ of its financial and political problems.

At the time of writing (late 2001), a number of functions have already been or are about to be decentralized to rural district councils, often in conjunction with community-based institutions. They include several education and social-welfare functions, rural water-supply maintenance and the administration of land in small urban centers. However, these functions are being decentralized without adequate financial resources and, in some cases, with little or no warning or preparation. The Ministry of Health has also attempted to decentralize its functions; however, since the health service has been particularly badly affected by the financial crisis, there has been so much resistance from councils and the Ministry of Local Government that these plans have been shelved for the time being. Meanwhile, most of the donor funding for capacity building and decentralized capital development programs has ironically been suspended or terminated, since the majority of external funding agencies have withdrawn support from Zimbabwe in protest at the Government’s current political and economic policies.

Therefore, although the third phase of decentralization has at last resulted in some transfer of functions to elected local councils, it is very unlikely that there will be any positive benefits in terms of either local empowerment or service delivery. The decentralization of functions without the financial resources necessary to execute them, combined with the withdrawal of support for capacity building and the continuing decline in the national political and economic situation, is handicapping rather than empowering rural district councils and reducing rather than improving the quality of service delivery.

## **THE CAMPFIRE PROGRAM**

Although CAMPFIRE involves decentralization, and was in fact one of the first decentralization strategies to be implemented in Zimbabwe, it has developed more or less independently of the wider debate on decentralization; summarized above. This is, perhaps, a reflection of the way in which development policies tend to be artificially “compartmentalized”, within both the bureaucratic structures of governments and the disciplinary structures of “policy discourse”. CAMPFIRE has been compartmentalized within a discourse on *natural resource management*, while decentralization has been part of a parallel discourse on *local government, administration and planning*. Nevertheless, as this study will demonstrate, there are many similarities between the CAMPFIRE program and the more general decentralization efforts described above.

Although the name CAMPFIRE implies that the program is concerned with a wide range of natural resources, it has in fact focused almost exclusively on the management of wildlife resources. The concept of CAMPFIRE was conceived by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWM) in the mid 1980s, as a means of addressing the increasing conflicts between people and wildlife in the many communal areas which border national parks and other protected wildlife areas. The basic rationale for the program, which was described in a policy document in 1986 (Martin 1986), was that if local people had some control over the management of wildlife in their areas and



received some financial benefits from wildlife exploitation, they would value the wildlife and therefore refrain from killing them. The ultimate objective of CAMPFIRE was thus wildlife conservation. However, its attractiveness lay in the fact that, since local people would also benefit, it appeared to provide a ‘win-win’ solution to the problem of wildlife conservation; in other words, one in which both parties, wildlife and people, would benefit.

CAMPFIRE’s basic element is delegating, under the 1975 Parks and Wildlife Act, “appropriate authority” to rural district councils to manage wildlife in the communal areas under their jurisdiction and to derive revenue from its commercial exploitation. This delegation has two, rather different implications in terms of council activities. On the one hand, it gives councils the power to utilize wildlife for commercial purposes, the most popular being the lease of lucrative hunting concessions to private safari operators. And on the other hand, it means that councils are responsible for protecting local people from wildlife damage, a function conventionally known as “problem-animal control” and formerly performed by DNPWM. The delegation of “appropriate authority” is not automatic; it is delegated only to councils in areas with substantial numbers of wildlife and only if the council specifically requests it. The program began in 1988 in four districts; but it gradually expanded until, by 1997, there were fourteen rural district councils with appropriate authority status and most communal areas with significant wildlife populations had been included in the program.

When administering their appropriate authority, the councils are required to follow certain procedures, which are prescribed by DNPWM in a document known as the *CAMPFIRE Guidelines* (DNPWM 1991). The *Guidelines* cover most aspects of wildlife management and exploitation, including:

- the conditions under which hunting concessions may be allocated, including the number of each species of animal which may be killed each year;
- the way in which the revenue received from hunting concessions and other commercial activities may be used, including the requirement that at least fifty percent must be returned to the people in the areas from which the revenue was derived and no more than five percent be used for general (as opposed to wildlife management related) administrative purposes;
- the structures and procedures that must be established to administer the program, including the establishment of a separate department and set of accounts within the council and CAMPFIRE committees in each ward and village; and
- the limited conditions under which “problem animals” may be killed.

Although these procedures are described as “guidelines”, they are in effect conditions. They have been instilled into councils and local residents through intensive training programs, which are highly prescriptive in nature and provide little or no room for local participants to contribute their own ideas or develop their own systems. Further, the Act gives DNPWM the power to revoke a council’s appropriate authority status if it does not follow the *Guidelines*. In other words, CAMPFIRE delegates the responsibility for enforcing national wildlife-management policy rather than devolving actual policy-making powers. The implications of this will become clearer when we look at the Binga

case. It should, however, be noted that DNPWM has not to date used its power to revoke appropriate authority status, despite the fact that councils have not always followed the prescribed procedures.

Because of its dual policy objectives of conservation and community benefits, CAMPFIRE has attracted a great deal of interest and support, both locally and internationally. This is reflected in the number of institutions that have been involved and the volume of resources that have been made available for its implementation. The program has been administered by a consortium of government and non-government institutions known as the Campfire Collaborative Group, which includes DNPWM, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), two local non-government organizations (Zimbabwe Trust and Africa Resources Trust), the Centre for Applied Social Studies (CASS) at the University of Zimbabwe, and the CAMPFIRE Association. The last named is a membership organization, composed of representatives of all the rural district councils involved in CAMPFIRE. It was established by the other members of the “collaborative group”, with the aim of institutionalizing the basic principles of CAMPFIRE within the councils themselves. Large amounts of external funding have been acquired, particularly from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the British Department for International Development (DFID) to support program activities, including training, the establishment of council CAMPFIRE departments, and community-based wildlife management projects.

CAMPFIRE has also played an important strategic role in local, regional and international debates about wildlife conservation and management. Most significantly, it was used by national and regional lobbies at the 1997 meeting of the Commission on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to successfully argue the case for allowing Zimbabwe and some other Southern African countries to resume trade in ivory products. In Zimbabwe’s case, it was very important that the ban on ivory trading be relaxed, partly in order to increase income from ivory sales but also because the elephant population had increased beyond a sustainable level.

Unfortunately, however, this strategic role has resulted in a tendency for official publicity on CAMPFIRE to present it in an unjustifiably positive light. Despite the existence of a number of studies which point out the program’s shortcomings (see, for example, Bond 1993; Dzingirai 1994, 1995; Hasler 1995; Mandondo 2000; Murombedzi 1992, 1994; Muir 1992; Nabane 1995; Thomas 1995a, 1995b), CAMPFIRE has been portrayed as an unconditional success. The impression given is that it has reduced the illegal killing of elephants and other animals and demonstrated the fact that wildlife can be utilized in a sustainable manner to support the development of local communities. One of the objectives of this paper is to show that, at least in Binga District, the situation is actually far more complex and the achievements of CAMPFIRE more questionable.

## **Binga District**

Binga is one of Zimbabwe's fifty-seven administrative districts. It is located in the northwestern part of Zimbabwe, bordering Zambia, and has an estimated population of over 100,000. Although there are a few migrants from other parts of the country in the extreme eastern and southwestern parts of the district, the vast majority of the population belongs to the Tonga ethnic group, which is one of Zimbabwe's ethnic minorities. Binga is one of the country's most isolated districts. The district headquarters is over 400 kilometers from Bulawayo (the provincial headquarters and nearest major urban center) and substantially further from the national capital, Harare. Most parts of the district are not well suited to agriculture, since temperatures are high, rainfall is generally low and very erratic, much of the terrain is hilly and, except in the river valleys, the soils tend to be poor. However, there is a large wildlife population, both within and outside protected areas.

The district's history and economy is dominated by the Zambezi River, which constitutes the 150-kilometer-long border between Binga District and neighboring Zambia. Until fewer than fifty years ago, most people lived near the river, where they enjoyed a life of relative "subsistence affluence," cultivating in the fertile flood plain, fishing in the river and hunting wild game. They had close social ties with the Tonga people on the Zambian side of the river. However, in the late 1950s the Kariba Dam was constructed 130-kilometers downstream and the river was engulfed by the 5,200-square-kilometer expanse of water, known as Lake Kariba, created by the dam. The people living along the river were forced to move, partly to escape the floodwaters but also because most of the land along the shores of the new lake was designated for other purposes, including wildlife and forest reserves and tourist development.

The devastating effects of this relocation, which have been documented by Scudder (1962), Colson (1971) and, more recently, the Binga people themselves (Tremmel et al. 1994), are still felt today. The areas where they were resettled are too dry for reliable dry land cultivation and floodplain cultivation is no longer possible, partly because the resettled areas are in most cases far from the lake but also because cultivation along the lakeshore and stream banks is prohibited in order to prevent soil erosion and siltation. Each of the fifteen chiefdoms who were resettled was allocated a fishing 'camp' on the lakeshore; however, permanent residence in these camps was prohibited until recently and fishing is strictly controlled. Moreover, and of particular significance to this study, wild animals frequently attack both crops and people, while killing animals (either for food or to defend people or crops) is strictly prohibited. And, last but not least, the people's social life was disrupted, since the graves of their ancestors were flooded and they lost contact with relatives and friends on the Zambian side.

The construction of the dam has brought some benefits to the district. Commercial fishing and tourism industries have developed along the lakeshore, a tarred road now links the district headquarters to Bulawayo and other parts of western Zimbabwe, and the district headquarters and a few other centers have electricity. However, since the fishing and tourism industries are dominated by "outsiders", the local people have not benefited as

much as they might in terms of income or employment, while access to economic infrastructure and social services continues to be poor in comparison with most other districts. As a result of all these factors, the people of Binga are among the poorest and most disadvantaged in the country. For example, in the only nationwide survey of household poverty undertaken in Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe 1996), Binga (together with another district, Buhera) ranked highest in terms of the percentage of households considered to be living in poverty.

The combination of their minority ethnic status, unique history and lack of basic infrastructure and services has, however, encouraged the Binga people to strive to improve their social and economic status. There is a strong sense of Tonga identity in local institutions such as Binga Rural District Council, several local NGOs and community-based groups have been established to promote the interests and develop the capacity of the local people, and participation in national politics is increasingly being recognized and used as a means of promoting the interests of Binga residents. The last point is reflected in the fact that in Zimbabwe's critical national elections of June 2000, Binga residents voted overwhelmingly for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, primarily because they felt that they had gained very little from the twenty years of ZANU (PF) government. This had an important impact on Binga's national image. The Tonga are traditionally regarded by other groups, especially the majority Shona and Ndebele, as "primitive" or "backward". However, since the June 2000 elections this attitude has begun to change; both the Government and the opposition now regard them as a force to be reckoned with and, therefore, an important component of the national political scene.

### **CAMPFIRE IN BINGA DISTRICT**

This section of the paper provides an overview of the CAMPFIRE program in Binga District, where it has been operating since 1991. It begins by examining the conflict between people and wildlife, which the program was intended to address, and then describes CAMPFIRE activities and institutions, the utilization of CAMPFIRE revenue, and people's knowledge and perceptions of the program.

#### **Conflicts between People and Wildlife**

As in other parts of the country, CAMPFIRE was established in Binga to address the increasing problem of conflicts between people and wildlife. Binga is one of the few "CAMPFIRE districts" in which wildlife are found throughout the district, albeit in varying numbers. National parks and safari areas constitute about twenty-four percent of the district's land area and another ten percent consists of forest reserves in which there are also large numbers of wildlife (Tyrie 1990). Since these protected areas are not fenced, animals move freely between them and the adjacent "communal" land on which people live. Common species include elephant, buffalo, several different types of antelope, and various smaller animals such as baboons, monkeys, jackals, warthogs and bush pigs, while lions and leopards are occasionally found. There are also significant

numbers of animals in Lake Kariba itself, the most important being hippopotamus and crocodiles.

The conflicts between people and wildlife take three main forms (Zambezi Valley Consultants 2000). First, the wild animals cause damage to people, crops and domestic animals. The main cause of such damage is elephants, which frequently raid crops (especially maize) and sometimes kill or injure people. However, other “problem animals” include lions, baboons and, along the lakeshore and major rivers, hippopotamus and crocodiles. Second, although it is illegal to kill wild animals, people sometimes do so, in some cases to protect themselves or their crops and in other cases for food or sale of meat or other proceeds. Third, there are conflicts over the use of land, with crops, domestic animals and wildlife competing for the use of the district’s limited land resources.

All three forms of conflict have intensified over the last few decades (Hoare 1995; Zambezi Valley Consultants 2000). The main reason for this intensifying conflict is that the numbers of people and (particularly since the eradication of tsetse fly in the mid 1980s) domestic livestock have increased, resulting in the extension of human activities into areas previously used exclusively by wildlife. This increase in population is due primarily to natural increase but, in the extreme eastern and south-western parts of the district, there has also been some migration from neighboring districts. The increase in conflicts can, however, also be partially attributed to increases in some species of wildlife, particularly elephants, which are the main cause of conflict. Although reliable information on wildlife numbers is difficult to obtain, it is estimated that the number of elephants in the Sebungwe area (of which Binga is a part) has been increasing for several decades, while the land available for their use has been contracting due to human-population growth (Taylor and Cumming 1993; Hoare 1995). Consequently, they are increasingly concentrated in national parks and other protected areas and in the relatively sparsely populated communal areas adjacent to these protected areas, which include substantial parts of Binga District.

Prior to the advent of CAMPFIRE, there were two main schools of thought as to how to resolve these conflicts. Conservationists and wildlife enthusiasts argued that Binga is unsuitable for agricultural production, since it is not possible to grow crops reliably without irrigation. Moreover, due to the combination of steep slopes, shallow soils and low rainfall, the land is highly susceptible to erosion and degradation if subjected to intensive cropping or grazing. Consequently, Binga should, they maintained, be conserved as a wildlife area. The other school of thought, promoted by agriculturalists and the Binga people themselves, was that Binga’s wildlife should be restricted to the national parks and other protected areas, leaving the communal areas free to be used, as prescribed in the Communal Lands Act, for human settlement and cultivation. If crops were no longer subject to wildlife damage, it was argued, agricultural productivity could be considerably increased through irrigation and other improvements in production methods.

Unfortunately, neither of these scenarios was actually practicable. The conservationists' strategy would, in effect, require the movement of tens of thousands of people out of the district, while that of the agriculturalists would mean killing or relocating large numbers of wildlife and fencing all the protected areas. It was this dilemma which led to the birth of CAMPFIRE. CAMPFIRE was conceived by conservationists and land-use planners as a third option—a compromise solution that would enable people and wildlife to coexist. The basic rationale behind CAMPFIRE in areas like Binga was that, if people could earn some income from wild animals, they would not only refrain from killing them but also be less dependent on agriculture, thus enabling the land to be used for its “rightful” purpose of wildlife management. Comparisons were made with semi-arid commercial farming areas, where some private landowners have found it economic to turn their cattle ranches into wildlife management areas (Bond 1993; Cumming 1994).

### **CAMPFIRE Activities**

The responsibility for operating CAMPFIRE in Binga rests with Binga Rural District Council, in its capacity as the “appropriate authority” for wildlife management. As elsewhere, the Council's CAMPFIRE activities are of two main types: commercial exploitation of wildlife resources and “problem animal” control. The main form of commercial exploitation is, again as elsewhere, the lease of hunting concessions to private safari operators. There are three main hunting concessions (plus a few minor ones), each covering a specific geographical area. Together these concessions comprise all the communal areas in the district. In other words, safari hunting is allowed in any part of the district designated as communal land. There are, however, restrictions that prevent hunting in the immediate vicinity of human settlement.

Initially the concessions were, as required in the *CAMPFIRE Guidelines*, leased through public tender. However, in several cases the original leases have been renewed or extended without first being put out for tender. Each concession is operated by a different safari company. However, the two main companies involved are interrelated and their concessions managed jointly. The leases allow the safari operator to kill a certain quota of animals in return for an agreed payment to the Rural District Council. Although the leases extend for a number of years, the quotas (which specify the number of each species that can be killed) are revised annually. The quotas are set by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWM) after consulting with the Council, the safari operator and community-based CAMPFIRE committees. However, the rate of payment is negotiated between the Council and the safari operator.

The Council is also involved in a number of less-lucrative, “non-consumptive” forms of wildlife exploitation—that is, activities that do not involve the killing of animals. Most of these entail the lease of specific areas of communal land to companies that provide accommodation and/or game viewing safaris for tourists. In these cases, the Council's income is confined to the lease fee and, where appropriate, hotel or restaurant license fees. The Council does not itself operate any wildlife enterprises, “consumptive” or “non-consumptive.”

The Council's other main responsibility is that of "problem-animal" control (generally referred to as PAC). The Council is required to, as far as possible, protect local people from wildlife damage. The main method of PAC is to send armed game guards to frighten or, if necessary, kill animals that are causing problems. Although the number of animals that may be killed for PAC purposes was originally determined by DNPWM, the Council has been allowed to use its discretion since 1998. However, in the case of animals such as elephants, which cause the main problems, the number killed for PAC purposes is deducted from the Council's safari hunting quota—thereby reducing its potential revenue from safari hunting and thus causing conflicts of interest within the Council itself.

The Council has also promoted a number of projects designed to provide more effective protection from wildlife damage. These involve the construction of electric fences to separate wildlife and people. There are two main types of fence: circular ones that completely enclose and therefore protect settled areas, and linear ones that deflect wildlife away from major populated areas. At the time of writing (late 2001), there were five circular fences in existence and six others under consideration, and two linear fences in existence and another under construction. Some of the fences have been constructed by the Council with financial support from external funding agencies and others by safari operators. The responsibility for fence maintenance usually rests with local residents, but in some cases with safari operators.

### **CAMPFIRE Institutions**

Binga Rural District Council, like other rural district councils in Zimbabwe, is an elected body, comprised of one representative (known as a councilor) from each of the district's 21 wards. The chairperson is elected by the councilors from among themselves. The Council has a number of committees, each responsible for specific Council functions. The CAMPFIRE program is the responsibility of the Conservation Committee. The Council employs its own staff, subject to conditions prescribed by national legislation. CAMPFIRE has its own department, which is responsible for all CAMPFIRE activities and maintains its own accounts. The department is headed by the CAMPFIRE Manager and includes a training officer, game guards and clerical staff. The department's activities were for many years subsidized by funds from external agencies. As in other districts, these funds, most of which were earmarked for training, were initially channeled through a Zimbabwean NGO, the Zimbabwe Trust, and later through the CAMPFIRE Association. However, external funding has gradually been reduced and the department is now dependent on CAMPFIRE revenue.

According to both the *CAMPFIRE Guidelines* and Council policy, there is supposed to be a CAMPFIRE committee in each of the district's twenty-one wards and in each of the villages (which usually number three or four) within a ward. In practice, although the ward committees are all operational (albeit with varying degrees of effectiveness) the village committees often exist on paper only. Members of the village committees are supposed to be elected by the local population as a whole, while ward committees consist of representatives of each constituent village committee. However, because of the

practical difficulties of organizing mass meetings, the members of village committees (and therefore also ward committees) are often elected by a relatively small group of people, which commonly includes members of the general purpose ward and village development committees (see above), traditional leaders, and a few independent individuals who take an active interest in community affairs.

The main role of the ward and village committees is to take responsibility for the ward's share of CAMPFIRE revenue, including maintaining a ward bank account, deciding (theoretically in consultation with the community as a whole) how the money will be used, and organizing the implementation of projects thus funded. However, they are also responsible for reporting "problem animals" and educating the general public on the importance of wildlife conservation. There is a considerable amount of work involved, especially at ward level. Some wards with relatively large amounts of CAMPFIRE revenue employ a full-time person (known as a *resource monitor*), while those with electric fences employ *fence monitors* to monitor and repair the fences. In most wards, however, the various duties are performed by committee members on an honorary basis.

### Utilization of CAMPFIRE Revenue

Information on the amount of revenue obtained from CAMPFIRE and, in particular, its utilization, is difficult to obtain, partly because of inadequate financial recording systems in the Council but also because, for reasons which will emerge later, Council staff are at times reluctant to reveal full information. Table 1 shows the total amount of revenue received from safari hunting, which is the main source of wildlife-related revenue, and the proportion returned to the wards (known as *ward dividends*), for the years 1990 to 1999. Comparable information on income from other wildlife-related activities (for example, lease fees for "non-consumptive" wildlife tourism and the sale of animal products resulting from PAC activities) is not available. However, it is small in comparison to that from safari hunting and, contrary to both the *CAMPFIRE Guidelines* and at least one Council resolution, it has never been systematically redistributed to the wards.

**Table 1: CAMPFIRE Revenue**

Year	Total Revenue Z\$ <sup>a</sup>	Ward Dividends	
		Z\$	% Total Revenue
1990/91	no data	90,613	no data
1992	no data	425,766	no data
1993/94	no data	1,728,241	no data
1995	1,856,753	1,106,678	59.6
1996	1,669,974	1,247,253	74.7
1997	1,789,000	569,423	31.8
1998	3,618,235	1,203,231	33.3
1999	5,286,388	2,857,750	54.1

SOURCE: BINGA RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL 2000.

<sup>a</sup>US\$1 was equivalent to about Z\$10 in 1990 and Z\$35 in 1999.



It is evident from this table that the proportion of revenue returned to the wards has varied significantly and that, in some years, the Council has failed to return the fifty percent required by the *CAMPFIRE Guidelines*, despite several Council resolutions affirming the intention to transfer at least this amount. Most of the money the Council retains it uses to operate the CAMPFIRE department. However, the limited information available suggests that, in a number of financial years, more than the maximum five percent has been used to fund general Council administrative expenses (Zambezi Valley Consultants 2000). This situation is likely to become increasingly common in the future, due to the withdrawal of donor support for CAMPFIRE and the fact that Binga Rural District Council, like most other local authorities in the country, is finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet in the current harsh economic environment.

The size of the ward dividends varies considerably, not only from year to year but also between wards, since the dividends are based on the amount of wildlife revenue derived from the area. However, here again Binga Council has failed to fully implement the *CAMPFIRE Guidelines*. According to the *Guidelines*, the amount of money a ward receives should be related directly to the number of animals killed (and therefore revenue generated) in that specific ward. The purpose of this policy is to enable people to see a direct relationship between the number of animals killed and the benefits they receive, in order to encourage people to value the animals and thus conserve them. However, Binga Council argues that such a system would be administratively complex and would mean that some wards would receive very little income at all. The revenue received from each hunting concession is, therefore, divided equally between the wards within the concession. Since the concessions vary in terms of wildlife populations and, therefore, hunting quotas and CAMPFIRE revenue, there are still significant differences between wards. Nonetheless, all the wards within a concession receive the same amount. The impact of this policy is illustrated in Table 2, which shows the amount of money that each ward received in 1998, in total and (based on the estimated number of households in each ward) per household.

**Table 2: CAMPFIRE Revenue by Ward, 1998**

Ward	CAMPFIRE Revenue (Z\$)	
	Total	Per Household
Tyunga	137,319	151
Nabusenga	137,319	89
Nagangala/Sinampande	137,319	130
Sinansengwe	137,319	248
Sinakoma	54,928	76
Sikalenge	54,928	52
Kabuba	47,168	47
Chinonge	47,168	47
Kariangwe	47,168	55
Muchesu	47,168	70
Pashu	39,984	49
Dobola	39,368	32
Lubu	39,368	50
Lubimbi	32,184	40
Sinamagonde	32,184	23
Manjolo	24,653	28
Simatelele	24,653	43
Siachilaba	24,653	27
Sianzyundu	24,653	20
Saba/Lubanda	24,653	26
Tinde	24,653	30

SOURCE: ZAMBEZI VALLEY CONSULTANTS 2000.

Most of the ward dividends have been used for community projects, mainly primary-school infrastructure (classrooms, toilet blocks and teachers' houses) as well as other social services (for example, health facilities, preschools, a dam and a social center) and income generating projects (especially grinding mills, but also some community stores, a leather-making project, and a project manufacturing paper from elephant dung (Zambezi Valley Consultants 2000). However, in wards with electric fences, a substantial proportion of the dividends is used for fence maintenance. Furthermore, some of the money is inevitably used for administrative purposes, including (as already indicated) employment of resource monitors and fence monitors in some wards and, in all wards, the costs of travelling to the bank to deposit or withdraw money and providing refreshments for those attending CAMPFIRE meetings.

The dividends are not normally distributed to individual households, even in compensation for wildlife damage. There are two main reasons for this; first, the Council encourages the use of dividends for community development purposes, and second, the amount of money involved is (as Table 2 indicates) seldom sufficient to give meaningful amounts to individuals. This is yet another area where the practice in Binga (and, incidentally, most other districts) differs from official CAMPFIRE policy. The *CAMPFIRE Guidelines* do not actually stipulate that dividends must be given to

individual households, but they encourage it, on the grounds that the more personal the benefits, the more impact there is likely to be in terms of conservation.

### **Knowledge and Perceptions of CAMPFIRE**

Despite the fact that CAMPFIRE activities at ward and village levels tend to be dominated by a relatively small group of people, the general public is relatively well informed about CAMPFIRE. Although there is no quantitative data to prove the point, it is evident from reports of public meetings held in 1999 to discuss conflicts between wildlife and people (Zambezi Valley Consultants 2000), and from casual observation, that virtually everyone has heard of CAMPFIRE and that most people have a reasonable understanding of its nature and purpose. This can be attributed to a number of factors, including the impact of wildlife on people's lives, the length of time the program has been in operation, the amount of publicity it has received (for example, through extension and training programs), the fact that it brings money into local areas, and the visibility of most of the projects for which this money has been used.

However, it is equally obvious that CAMPFIRE is a highly controversial program. This is evident from the heated nature of debates about CAMPFIRE in public meetings, at both district and local levels, and from the prominent role that CAMPFIRE issues play in local politics, particularly the politics of Binga Rural District Council. The nature of this controversy and the reasons for it will become evident in the next section, which looks at the positive and negative impacts of CAMPFIRE on the various interest groups in the District.

### **THE IMPACT OF CAMPFIRE**

This section of the paper describes the impact of CAMPFIRE in Binga District. It looks first at the positive impacts of the program; that is, the things it has achieved and the benefits it has brought to individuals and organizations within the District. It then looks at its negative impacts—its shortcomings and the problems it has created.

#### **Positive Impacts**

There is no doubt that CAMPFIRE has had some positive impacts in Binga. Its main achievements and benefits are: increased awareness of wildlife issues, funding of community development activities, enhancement of Council income and status and acquisition of development planning and management experience. These are described below.

##### *Increased Awareness of Wildlife Issues*

All those involved in CAMPFIRE have gained a better understanding of issues related to wildlife management. For example, councilors, Council officials and members of ward, and village, CAMPFIRE committees are all now aware of the commercial value of

wildlife, the potential and problems of exploiting this value at the local level, the need for wildlife conservation, and the practicalities of “problem-animal” control. Moreover, even the ordinary village resident in Binga now realizes that wild animals have a commercial value and is aware of the conservationist arguments for wildlife protection. And, equally important, the individuals and organizations involved in wildlife management at the national level have learned, from the experience in Binga and elsewhere, a great deal about the practical problems of community involvement in wildlife management.

There are already signs that this increase in awareness is in turn having a positive impact on the evolution of the CAMPFIRE program, both locally and nationally. For example, in Binga, a study of the impact of CAMPFIRE on conflicts between people and wildlife was commissioned by the Council, with support from WWF, in 1999 (Zambezi Valley Consultants, 2000). The study identified a number of major problems underlying CAMPFIRE and suggested possible ways of dealing with them. The Council has so far failed, due to internal problems, which will be discussed later, to consider these findings in any comprehensive or systematic way. However, some of the issues raised have been addressed and the problems have at least been put on record. At the national level, a major stakeholders conference on CAMPFIRE was held in 2000, where a number of similar issues and problems were discussed.

*Funding of Community Development Activities* As indicated above in “Utilization of CAMPFIRE Revenue,” a substantial amount of money has been made available to the ward level through CAMPFIRE and, although not all of this has been put to productive use, it has facilitated a number of community projects that would not otherwise have materialized. For example, in the first ten years of CAMPFIRE operations, at least fifty new primary school classrooms were provided with CAMPFIRE funds. Since there is an acute shortage of classrooms in Binga District (Mupambe 2000) this is a small but significant contribution to local development.

Furthermore, the fact that people at ward level have direct access to funding, which can be used for projects of their choice, has provided an impetus to community organization and development in general. It means that they have the financial capacity to resolve at least some local needs and problems, and to do so quickly and without recourse to external agencies. For example, if urgent repairs are needed to community infrastructure, such as a school building or borehole pump, CAMPFIRE funds can be used to support the necessary work. During the year 2000, for instance, the cash-strapped Zimbabwe Government found it no longer had the money to pay local “pump-minders,” so borehole users were forced to pay the pump-minders themselves if they wanted their pumps repaired. When Binga residents became aware of this, a number of ward CAMPFIRE committees decided to use CAMPFIRE funds to pay the pump-minders. Similarly, albeit less “productively,” if there is a need to bring people together for an important meeting or celebration, CAMPFIRE funds can be utilized to buy food for the occasion. The ability to fund activities in this way increases the status and legitimacy of local institutions (including ward and village development committees, water-point committees and school development committees, as well as CAMPFIRE committees themselves) and makes the concept of community planning meaningful. In districts without a CAMPFIRE program,

there is little such community development or planning at ward or village levels, simply because there is no community revenue.

### *Enhancement of Council Income and Status*

CAMPFIRE funds have also enhanced the income and status of Binga Rural District Council. It is not possible to assess the precise nature and extent of the financial impact, since there is no detailed information on the utilization of the money that is not distributed to wards. For example, as already indicated in the section titled *Utilization of CAMPFIRE Revenue*, it is not known how much money has been used for administrative expenses other than those directly related to CAMPFIRE, what these other expenses were, and how they would have been met if CAMPFIRE revenue had not been available. However, it is generally acknowledged that some CAMPFIRE revenue has been used for other purposes and that this has helped the Council to meet its administrative overhead expenses at a time when most other sources of Council revenue have been diminishing. Furthermore, the fact that the Council has had access to large amounts of wildlife revenue, irrespective of the way in which this money has been used, has enhanced its status as an organization. The existence of the CAMPFIRE department has enabled the Council to employ additional staff and acquire additional essential (and prestigious) assets such as vehicles and computers, while its control over the allocation of CAMPFIRE revenue has enabled it to demonstrate its power and influence.

This is admittedly a questionable benefit. As already explained, the rationale behind CAMPFIRE is that the net financial benefits should accrue to individual wards rather than to the Council as a whole, in order to discourage people from killing wildlife. Similarly, it can be argued that enhancing the status of the Council merely promotes the development of an elite group who exploit council resources for their own interests rather than those of the general public. However, there is another school of thought, promoted by some advocates of local government (including councils themselves and the Ministry of Local Government), which argues that councils should have more autonomy in deciding how CAMPFIRE revenue is used, that they should be entitled to receive some direct financial benefits from the exploitation of wildlife (and other natural resources) in their areas, and that councils cannot function effectively unless they have some status. I shall return to this important debate later. At this stage, however, the significant point to note is that, whether one considers it desirable or not, CAMPFIRE revenue has enhanced the Council's income and status.

### *Development Planning and Management Experience*

Access to CAMPFIRE revenue has enabled both the Council and local CAMPFIRE committees to gain valuable experience of the practicalities of local development planning and management. At the Council level, experience has been gained in negotiating with safari operators, managing financial resources, planning and implementing wildlife-related projects (such as the erection and management of electric fences), conducting PAC activities, and supporting and monitoring local communities. And at the local level, people have gained experience of financial control and

management, and the identification, planning and implementation of community projects, including both infrastructure and income generating projects.

This experience has, not surprisingly, been gained at some cost, and in the section titled *Misuse and Abuse of CAMPFIRE Revenue* I will describe some of the problems that have arisen. However, it is generally acknowledged by those involved in developing the capacity of local institutions that ‘learning by doing’, although painful, is the most effective way in which individuals and organizations learn. This is, for example, the rationale behind Zimbabwe’s nationwide Rural District Councils Capacity Building Program, which has provided funds for capital development at the district level over the last five years (MLG 1998, Nkomo 1999) and, at an international level, similar pilot district development programs sponsored by the United Nations Capital Development Fund in fifteen countries since 1995 (UNCDF 1995).

### **Negative Impacts**

Despite the above achievements, CAMPFIRE has, as already indicated, experienced some major shortcomings and problems in Binga. The main ones, discussed below, are: lack of proven impact on illegal hunting, inadequate local control over wildlife, paternalism and lack of transparency at the national level, inadequate income to provide a livelihood, inadequate protection from wildlife damage, conflicts within and between Council and local communities and misuse and abuse of CAMPFIRE revenue.

#### *Lack of Proven Impact on Illegal Hunting*

Despite official claims about the “success” of CAMPFIRE, it is actually not possible to say whether the program has or has not achieved its ultimate objective of reducing the illegal hunting of wildlife, in Binga District or in other parts of the country. This lack of information indicates a weakness of the CAMPFIRE program, since it means that there has not been any systematic attempt to measure its impact on illegal hunting. The absence of such an evaluation can probably be attributed, at least in part, to the difficulty of obtaining accurate data either on wildlife numbers or on the incidence of illegal hunting. However, it may also be due to a fear on the part of DNPWM and other organizations involved in the promotion of CAMPFIRE that the findings of such a study would fail to support the official claims regarding its success.

Casual observation and inquiries in Binga suggest that there is probably still a substantial amount of illegal hunting, especially for food. For example, anyone walking in the bush in an area with a significant wildlife population is likely to find both a number of wire snares and the occasional remains of animal carcasses. Moreover, it is not uncommon to encounter either men out hunting with a dog or people eating meat suspected to be game meat. There also appears to be an increase in the number of people owning guns and in recent years there have been several cases where someone has shot a large animal (usually an elephant) in self-defense.

Furthermore, and perhaps most significantly, discussions with local people suggest that the main deterrent to illegal killing of the more-valued and closely monitored wildlife species, such as elephants, is not the benefits people have obtained from CAMPFIRE but the fear of prosecution. A common complaint in Binga is that, if an elephant kills a person, one has to go to the Council or the police to report the case and often no action is taken against the elephant, but if the word gets round that a person has killed an elephant, even in self defense, the authorities are there in no time and the person is arrested!

#### *Inadequate Local Control over Wildlife*

CAMPFIRE also claims to give local people control over "their wildlife." In reality, however, as I have already indicated, the amount of control that either the Council or local CAMPFIRE committees actually have is very limited. The Council has the power to decide whether to exploit wildlife commercially within the limits determined by DNPWM, to whom to lease hunting concessions, and how to manage the PAC system designed and controlled by DNPWM, while ward and village CAMPFIRE committees have the power to decide how to utilize the financial proceeds from such exploitation. Neither the Council nor local residents have the power to make what are to them the most important decisions about wildlife management—decisions such as whether wildlife in communal areas should be conserved at all, how many animals may be killed commercially, what other means of controlling "problem animals" could be adopted, and whether local people should themselves be allowed to hunt, possibly subject to certain conditions.

The reasons why so little effective power has been decentralized will be considered in the conclusion, as part of the broader discussion on the implications of the case study for the decentralization of control over wildlife management. At this point, however, it should be noted that the failure to decentralize substantial control is, from the local people's perspective, probably the main shortcoming of CAMPFIRE in Binga. It is related, directly or indirectly, to many of the other problems and, consequently, is a major cause of the controversy surrounding CAMPFIRE in the district.

#### *Paternalism and Lack of Transparency at the National Level*

The approach which DNPWM and other members of the CAMPFIRE Collaborative Group have adopted in establishing CAMPFIRE in Binga (and other districts) has been characterized by a combination of paternalism and lack of transparency. This can be attributed to two factors: a tendency to regard people in the districts as children, who cannot be expected to fully understand conservation issues or trusted to behave 'responsibly', and the recognition, as pointed out above, that CAMPFIRE gives rural district councils and local CAMPFIRE committees only very limited powers.

One of the most obvious manifestations of this problem is the CAMPFIRE training program. Most training activities have been 'top down' in nature. Their main aim has been to instill in councils and communities the wildlife management systems that the national institutions consider desirable. Consequently, they have been designed at the

national level and administered in a didactic manner, leaving little room for local responses or inputs. Moreover, both the language used in training material (including the *CAMPFIRE Guidelines*) and the mode of delivery have tended to be misleading and paternalistic. For example, it is frequently stated that CAMPFIRE gives local communities the power to manage wildlife resources, when in reality the amount of power they have is actually very limited. Similarly, people are, as already noted, frequently told that local wildlife are “their resource,” when in actual fact it is obvious that, both legally (in terms of the Parks and Wildlife Act) and in practice, wildlife are still regarded as the property of the state. Furthermore, concepts and systems are explained in an unnecessarily simplistic manner. When complex issues are actually discussed, people are only given partial information. For example, at a workshop in Binga attended by councilors and central and local government staff, I witnessed a national CAMPFIRE official explaining to the participants how ward CAMPFIRE committees should decide how to utilize their revenue, using a style and language suitable for children rather than adults.

Another example of the problems of paternalism and lack of transparency is the procedure for determining the annual offtake quotas for each hunting concession. The Council and the ward and village CAMPFIRE committees (and also safari operators) have been actively encouraged to take part in determining quota numbers. This involves a lot of work on the part of Council CAMPFIRE staff and local committee members, since they have to estimate the quantity of all the main species of animal in each ward. These figures are then used to calculate recommended quotas for each ward and, based on the ward quotas, for each concession, which are then sent to DNPWM. However, when the actual quota allocations are announced by DNPWM, they bear little or no relationship to the proposals made locally and no explanation for this is given. It thus appears that DNPWM does not take this participatory exercise seriously.

A third example of the problem is the CAMPFIRE Association. The Association, which comprises representative councilors from all “CAMPFIRE districts,” is intended to represent the interests of the councils and their constituents. However, the Association was established not by the councils themselves but by the other members of the CAMPFIRE Collaborative Group, namely DNPWM, WWF and the Zimbabwe Trust. These institutions introduced the idea to councils, procured financial and manpower resources for its operations, and gradually handed over most of their own support and training functions to it. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the Association’s views and priorities tend to reflect the orthodox “CAMPFIRE ideology” of the national level institutions rather than the many concerns and misgivings about CAMPFIRE that exist at district and, in particular, ward and village levels.

#### *Inadequate Income to Provide a Livelihood*

It was noted in the section titled *Conflicts between People and Wildlife* that, when CAMPFIRE was introduced in Binga, some conservationists conceived it as a way of providing local people with an alternative means of livelihood to agriculture. In this respect, it has clearly failed (Zambezi Valley Consultants, 2000). The number of people



who are employed in wildlife related activities is small and, as the figures in Table 2 demonstrate, the dividends that wards obtain from CAMPFIRE are so small that, if they were distributed among all residents of the ward, the impact on household income would be insignificant. This is the case in most CAMPFIRE districts. A nationwide study of CAMPFIRE revenue between 1989 and 1993 (Bond 1993) suggested that, given the way in which CAMPFIRE revenue was utilized, there was only one ward in one district where dividends were sufficient to provide a meaningful income at the household level, and the situation has not changed much since then. For example, in 1999 the annual ward dividend per household ranged from Z\$6 to Z\$7,573 (US\$0.16 to US\$197.53), with a mean of Z\$671 (US\$17.49) and a median of Z\$221 (US\$5.78) (WWF 2000). Even the maximum dividend is substantially lower than the annual income from commercial agricultural employment, which was about Z\$12,000 in 1999.

There are a number of ways the potential income from CAMPFIRE at ward level could be increased within the present *CAMPFIRE Guidelines* (Zambezi Valley Consultants 2000). For example, the Council could return a larger share of the existing revenue to the wards, either by spending less on PAC or by refraining from using CAMPFIRE revenue to subsidize other Council activities. Alternatively (or in addition), it could increase the total amount of CAMPFIRE revenue, by negotiating better deals with safari operators, entering into joint ventures with these companies, or conducting its own safari operations. Moreover, there is also some scope for the development of small, community-based “non-consumptive” wildlife tourism activities. However, there are problems associated with all these options and, although no attempt has been made to calculate the additional revenue which could thus be raised, it is probably unlikely that it would be sufficient to enable significant dividends to be paid to individual households.

The decentralization of additional powers to councils or local CAMPFIRE committees could result in more substantial benefits from wildlife. For example, if the Council was allowed to increase the quotas of animals awarded to safari operators, major increases in CAMPFIRE revenue could be obtained. And if local people were themselves allowed to hunt, even subject to certain conditions, there would be increased income and employment opportunities. However, there is a risk that such benefits would be short-lived, since, in order to generate sufficient dividends or employment to have a significant impact on household income, it might be necessary to exploit wildlife resources at an unsustainable level. Furthermore, in the case of elephants, off-take levels are limited by international quota restrictions.

#### *Inadequate Protection from Wildlife Damage*

The main complaint about CAMPFIRE from local people is that it has failed to protect them from wildlife damage. Every year a substantial proportion of the district’s crops are lost due to wild animals, especially elephants, and several people are killed or injured, usually by elephants, hippopotamus or crocodiles. Furthermore, the risk of being attacked, particularly by elephants, limits people’s freedom of movement, especially at night.

Although the Council is responsible for “problem-animal” control (PAC), it is actually able to do very little to alleviate the problem. There are three main reasons for this. Firstly, the centralized system of PAC used is very ineffective, since by the time that people have reported a case of damage to the Council and the latter has sent its game guards to take action, the problem animal concerned is usually far away. Secondly, the Council does not have the resources to attend to all PAC reports, especially in the peak crop-damage season, which is between January and March. For example, between January and March 1999, 157 reports were received by the Council’s CAMPFIRE department, but only fifty-two (thirty-three percent) were attended to (Zambezi Valley Consultants 2000). Thirdly, on the relatively rare occasions when the game guards do actually confront problem animals, the usual tactic is merely to scare them away. Sometimes an animal is killed, but, particularly in the case of elephants, usually only as a last resort; for example, if the animal is particularly aggressive and therefore poses a major threat to human life.

The erection of electric fences, particularly the circular ones, has proved, in Binga and elsewhere, to alleviate the problem considerably. However, there are a number of problems associated with such fences. For example, they are expensive both to erect and to maintain, effective maintenance requires a high level of community organization, and many people resent the idea of being enclosed in a fence. (Hoare and Mackie 1993; Hoare 1995; Zambezi Valley Consultants 2000.)

There appears to be little scope for significantly reducing the PAC problem under the present wildlife management system. Increases in the efficiency of the Council’s PAC operations and the provision of more electric fences would no doubt alleviate the situation, but only marginally. The most effective solution would probably be to increase the number of Council game guards and post them at ward level (or alternatively appoint local people as game guards) and allow them to shoot problem animals on sight. But any such approach is unlikely to be approved by DNPWM and other members of the Collaborative Group, since it could lead to indiscriminate killing.

#### *Conflicts Between and Within Council and Local Communities*

CAMPFIRE has provoked conflicts between the Council and local residents. There are two main sources of conflict, both of which have already been mentioned. The first is the distribution of CAMPFIRE revenue. As already indicated, the Council has on several occasions failed to return the required fifty percent of revenue from safari hunting to the wards and, despite council resolutions to the contrary, there has been no systematic return of other forms of CAMPFIRE revenue to local communities. The second source of conflict is PAC. The Council is blamed by local people for its failure to address the PAC problem effectively. The combination of these two factors has resulted in a deteriorating relationship between the Council and its residents, which has in turn hampered the Council’s ability not only to implement the CAMPFIRE program but also to exercise its other development functions.

These issues have also created conflicts within both the Council and individual communities. For example, there are conflicts between councilors, who have found themselves caught in the middle of the battle between Council and residents, and Council staff, who are responsible for the implementation of CAMPFIRE and play a major role in policy making. There are also conflicts between those councilors who are members of the council committee responsible for CAMPFIRE (who are involved in the formulation and implementation of CAMPFIRE policy and have various opportunities for personal gain from CAMPFIRE) and those councilors who are not. And at the local level, there are conflicts over CAMPFIRE between councilors and the people they represent, and sometimes also between members of CAMPFIRE committees (who tend to be blamed for CAMPFIRE-related problems) and other residents. All these conflicts are fuelled by the misuse and abuse of CAMPFIRE funds, which is discussed in the next subsection.

### *Misuse and Abuse of CAMPFIRE Revenue*

Despite the substantial amount of resources which the CAMPFIRE program has devoted to extension and training, there have been many cases of misuse and abuse of CAMPFIRE revenue, both at Council level and in the wards. Such cases take various forms. The Council's failure to return the intended proportion of revenue to the wards, discussed above, is of course one such example. However, others include wastage of CAMPFIRE money due to administrative inefficiency, utilization of such money for projects which fail due to lack of sufficient technical or management skills, and deliberate abuse of CAMPFIRE revenue (or the revenue from CAMPFIRE-funded projects) for individuals' personal gain.

It can, with some justification, be argued that such incidents are inevitable and that they are part of the "learning process," which was listed in this report under *Development Planning and Management Experience* as one of the program's benefits. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that, at both council and community levels, people are learning from such experiences. In the short run, however, they have a negative impact, both on district development and on the image of CAMPFIRE. Two examples, one from the Council level and one from a local community, will indicate the type of incidents involved and the costs and benefits thereof.

Local government elections were held in 1998, resulting in the election of a number of new and more articulate councilors in Binga District, one of whom was elected Council chairman. The new chairman was determined to get rid of the chief executive officer (CEO), partly because he believed that the latter's role in council affairs was too dominant and lacked transparency, but also because of personal political rivalry between the two, who were members of different factions within the ruling ZANU (PF) party. In his efforts to unseat the CEO, the chairman uncovered various evidence to suggest that he and other council staff were abusing CAMPFIRE resources. The Council proceeded to suspend the CEO and other staff and appointed a commission, chaired by the district administrator (a central government official), to investigate the allegations. Although the commission's report was never made public, it is widely known that it revealed a number of irregularities in the conduct of CAMPFIRE business, including the sale of produce

from PAC activities and the allocation of hunting concessions, all of which suggested that Council staff were obtaining personal financial gain from these activities. However, the Ministry of Local Government instructed the Council to reinstate the CEO and other staff, pending an audit of the Council's books. The audit was done but, by the time the report was ready, the Council was embroiled in other political problems, related to the nationwide political tensions resulting from the June 2000 general elections, in which the ruling ZANU (PF) party suffered a major defeat in Binga District. The chairman was particularly affected, since he had promoted the losing ZANU (PF) candidate. Consequently, he did not present the audit report to Council and abandoned his direct attempts to get rid of the CEO. This left both the individuals concerned and the Council as a whole in a state of confusion, since the evidence of malpractice remained but no one else had the courage to take up the issue and pursue it to some sort of conclusion.

These events have had a serious and long-lasting impact on Council operations. From early 2000, when the initial suspension of staff occurred, up to the time of writing (late 2001), the Council has failed to perform effectively. The chairman was eventually voted out of office in mid 2001, and replaced by someone more supportive of the CEO. However, conflicts and tensions remain, since there are divisions among councilors, the CEO has lost credibility in the eyes of many council staff and the general public, and the image of CAMPFIRE has been tarnished. This has resulted, among many other things, in the Council's failure to seriously consider the findings of the study on conflicts between people and wildlife undertaken in 1999 (see above). On the positive side, however, the problem has helped to increase public awareness of the politics of CAMPFIRE, and of local government in general. For example, in August 2001, councilors and members of ward CAMPFIRE committees boycotted a CAMPFIRE workshop, in protest of the Council's failure to return the required proportion of CAMPFIRE revenue to the wards.

The second example concerns the use of CAMPFIRE dividends in one ward, Simatelele. Around 1995, the ward decided to use its dividends to put down a deposit on a grinding mill. The balance of the money was loaned to the community by the Council, on the understanding that it would be repaid from future dividends and/or revenue from the grinding mill. However, the mill, which was run by the ward CAMPFIRE committee, only operated for a few months before the engine suffered a major breakdown due to lack of proper maintenance. Moreover, during the brief period in which it was in operation, it failed to make a profit, due to a combination of poor management and the alleged abuse of revenue by members of the committee. The engine was sent to the Council for repair and, for reasons that are difficult to ascertain, was not returned to the community until mid-1999. Moreover, during this time, the ward received no CAMPFIRE dividends because they were retained by the Council to repay the loan for the purchase of the mill. Therefore, for more than three years, Simatelele ward had no grinding mill and no dividends. Needless to say, the image of CAMPFIRE in the area during this period was very low.

However, the community has learned some lessons from this incident. By the time the grinding mill was returned, a new and more-responsible CAMPFIRE committee had been elected and the committee members decided to lease the mill to a private operator rather

than run it themselves. This system, although not without its problems, has so far proved to be reasonably effective.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The final section of the paper attempts to draw some tentative conclusions from the case study. These conclusions are presented under three headings: the impact of CAMPFIRE in Binga, the effectiveness of CAMPFIRE as a means of decentralizing control over wildlife management, and the implications for the decentralization of natural resource management in general.

### **The Impact of CAMPFIRE in Binga**

CAMPFIRE has undoubtedly had a major impact in Binga. On the positive side, it has increased awareness of wildlife related issues, provided revenue for local development projects, enhanced the status of both the Council and ward- and village-level institutions, and provided valuable experience of the practicalities of development planning and management. However, on the negative side, it has failed to achieve either the objectives of the national and international institutions involved in the design of CAMPFIRE or the expectations of local communities. In terms of the former, it has failed to replace agriculture as the main source of livelihood in the area and, as far as one can tell, to significantly reduce illegal hunting. And from the people's point of view, it has failed to address the problem of wildlife damage. Furthermore, CAMPFIRE has been used by an aspiring local elite, which includes councilors, council officials and some members of local CAMPFIRE committees, as a means of achieving both personal financial gain and political status, and for this reason, it has fuelled various conflicts within the district.

### **Effectiveness of CAMPFIRE as a Means of Decentralizing Control over Wildlife Management**

Although the Binga experience has revealed a number of problems related to CAMPFIRE, the focal one is the fact that the Government has not actually decentralized effective control over wildlife management, either to councils or to local communities. Councils have merely been given the power to manage wildlife on behalf of national authorities, and are therefore subject to nationally imposed rules. Meanwhile local communities have only been given the power to decide how to utilize wildlife revenue allocated to them by the councils. Thus, even if both councils and local CAMPFIRE committees performed their roles effectively, following the procedures laid down in the CAMPFIRE guidelines, local people would not have effective control over wildlife management. They would not, in particular, have the power to address the wildlife management issues which are of greatest concern to them, all of which involve making decisions about the number of wildlife which should be allowed to exist in communal areas.

Why have local institutions not been given more control over wildlife management? According to Marja Speirenborg (personal communication 2000) some members of the

CAMPFIRE Consultative Group have suggested this, but their proposals have been resisted by DNPWM. The most obvious objection that DNPWM is likely to raise is that greater local management control would be contrary to national and international laws, and that these laws are designed to protect wildlife. There is some truth in this, but it is only part of the truth. Elephants, however, are the principle point of contention because they are both the main source of wildlife revenue and the main cause of wildlife damage. In the case of elephants, there is probably little room for maneuver, since the Commission on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) regulations impose strict controls over the number of elephants that can be killed. However, in the case of other animals, councils could in fact be given much more control than they have at present. For example, Zimbabwe's Parks and Wildlife Act states that it is illegal to kill any wild animal without a permit; however, it also gives the responsibility for issuing such permits in any particular area to the "appropriate authority", which in the case of CAMPFIRE districts is the Council. In other words, there is no legal reason councils should not issue permits for the killing of any number of animals, and give such permits to local people if they so wish.

The real reasons why councils and local level CAMPFIRE institutions have not been given more powers in relation to wildlife management are more complex. There are probably three main factors involved.

*First*, the national, and to some extent also international, agencies responsible for the promotion of CAMPFIRE do not 'trust' councils or local CAMPFIRE committees to exercise wildlife management powers in a manner that would provide what they consider adequate protection for wildlife. In this respect, they may well be right. Many councils and local CAMPFIRE institutions might well decide to increase offtake levels to an unsustainable level, either to increase short-run revenue or to reduce the problem of wildlife damage. However, this begs some more-fundamental questions about wildlife management: questions such as why wildlife should be protected, who should decide what constitutes an 'adequate' level of wildlife protection, and what should be done if the interests of wildlife conservation conflict with those of human welfare?

*Second*, individuals in key positions in DNPWM and other national government agencies involved in wildlife management have vested interests in maintaining control over wildlife management activities in communal areas. In some cases, they may actually have financial interests in these activities; for example, connections with safari companies or involvement in illegal wildlife dealings. The financial stakes involved in wildlife exploitation are so high that some such clandestine activities are almost inevitable and, although conclusive information is obviously difficult to obtain, I have been reliably informed that in Binga a minor hunting concession was allocated (without being put to public tender) to a safari company in which a DNPWM official had interests. More often, however, the reluctance of national officials to relinquish control stems simply from the fact that their position and status, and sometimes even their continued existence, depends on the extent of their authority. Any reduction in this authority is thus resisted because it is regarded as a personal threat.

*Third*, the rural district councils have failed to put pressure on the Government to give them more powers. The existing limits and conditions of their wildlife management powers have seldom been questioned, either by individual councils or by their representative body, the CAMPFIRE Association. This can be attributed primarily to the manner in which the CAMPFIRE program was established : CAMPFIRE procedures were designed at the national level and instilled into councils in a doctrinaire manner and the CAMPFIRE Association was created by the center, not by the councils. However, vested interests within the councils themselves have probably enhanced the problem. Although once again it is difficult to obtain conclusive information, one may assume that in most councils the key individuals involved in CAMPFIRE have, as in Binga, found ways—legal or illegal—of utilizing the existing system for their own personal benefit. Moreover, in some cases, this may have been achieved through collusion with national officials. Consequently, these individuals have no need to press for more powers and no desire to “rock the boat.”

### **Implications for the Decentralization of Natural Resource Management**

Four general conclusions may be drawn from this case study regarding the implications of CAMPFIRE for the decentralization of natural resource management in general:

First, attempts to decentralize control over natural resource management will not bring significant net benefits to local people, and consequently probably not operate in the manner intended, unless they address the issues of real concern to local people. Thus, in the case of CAMPFIRE, the majority of Binga’s rural population would no doubt say that CAMPFIRE has failed because it has not addressed the critical problem of wildlife damage to people and crops.

Second, even if the decentralization is designed to take account of local concerns, the benefits will not necessarily accrue to the majority of the population, since they may be “hijacked” by a small elite at either district or local level. For example, in the case of CAMPFIRE in Binga District, most local residents have not received as much financial benefit from local wildlife exploitation as they might because of misuses and abuses of CAMPFIRE revenue by both the Council and local CAMPFIRE committees.

Third, attempts to decentralize effective control over natural resource management are likely to be resisted by those institutions that will lose power, due to the vested interests of the individuals involved. It is evident from the overview of decentralization in Zimbabwe that the failure to decentralize significant control over wildlife management is merely one example of a much bigger problem. The fear of losing power and influence is probably the main reason why key individuals in all central government agencies have resisted moves to decentralize significant functions to rural district councils. It is only when these functions become a source of personal and political embarrassment, due in this case to the lack of financial resources to deliver effective services, that decentralization is taken seriously.

Fourth, effective decentralization of natural resource management is likely to raise fundamental questions and conflicts about rights and responsibilities in relation to natural resource conservation. The questions that CAMPFIRE raises about why and to what extent wildlife should be protected and who should determine the degree and form of protection, apply—in some form or other—to the management of any natural resource. The critical question is, as the title of this paper suggests: *Whose natural resources are they?*



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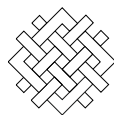
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