

POLITICAL ECOLOGIES OF SCALE:

The Multi-tiered
Co-management
of Zimbabwean
Wildlife Resources

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IIED

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Preface

The first eight papers in this series are a linked set which focus on Zimbabwe's *CAMPFIRE* programme. The views presented are those of the authors, not of IIED.

The Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) is an exploration of rural development and conservation in Africa. It seeks to restructure the control of Zimbabwe's countryside, giving people alternative ways of using their natural resources. A wholly African initiative, *CAMPFIRE* emerged in the mid-1980s with the recognition that, as long as wildlife remained the property of the state, no one would invest in it as a resource. Since 1975, Zimbabwe has allowed private property holders to claim ownership of wildlife on their land and to benefit from its use. Under *CAMPFIRE*, people living on Zimbabwe's impoverished communal lands, which represent 42% of the country, claim the same right of proprietorship.

Conceptually, *CAMPFIRE* includes all natural resources, but its focus has been wildlife management in communal areas, particularly those adjacent to National Parks, where people and animals compete for scarce resources.

Since its official inception in 1989, *CAMPFIRE* has engaged more than a quarter of a million people in the practice of managing wildlife and reaping the benefits of using wild lands.

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Introduction

In any discussion of development, one fundamental question always remains unresolved: how can a focus on the livelihoods and lifestyles of the poor be effective when international and national political and economic forces systematically marginalise them? The answer, perhaps, is that we have to ensure that the lowest accountable unit [the micro-level] in environmental and development work is always considered within the broader framework of the other political and economic levels involved [the macro-levels], if objectives

are to be attained. In practical terms, we need to understand the irony that grassroots decision-making may only be possible if it is sanctioned from the top. Certainly, in the context of Zimbabwe's communal lands, benefits, participation, empowerment and responsibility for economic resources seem only to be able to reach the bottom if the top agrees. This has severe consequences for the goals and implementation of the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE).

The CAMPFIRE Programme

At the global level, CAMPFIRE has linkages to wildlife lobbies and is involved in Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) debates. At the national level, it is involved with co-ordinating government ministries and in alliances with vested interest groups. At the district level, "appropriate authority" status links decision-makers with higher and lower levels, often resolving disputes. The same is true of ward and village levels. Even at the household level, productive links are forged with higher and lower levels and there is involvement in the resolution of disputes which may concern household clusters competing for scarce resources or gender issues.

An aim of the CAMPFIRE programme is to devolve control and benefits of wildlife and other natural resources to the lowest accountable units at sub-district level. It is assumed that this devolution will enhance the sustainability of resource use while simultaneously benefiting people. The conferment of appropriate authority status, the legal devolvement of the right to accrue revenues and manage wildlife resources, on District Councils is seen as a means to devolve a sense of proprietorship for local resources to local communities. However, the sub-district level institutions, such as Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOs), are not the legal custodians of natural resources in their areas. Producer communities within VIDCOs

and WADCOs can only make management decisions on natural resources and receive benefits under the auspices of, and within the framework set down by, the legally recognised and empowered councils themselves. Therefore, abiding questions remain about policies of centralisation and devolution of control of wildlife within CAMPFIRE. What are the lowest accountable units at sub-district level and how are they to be empowered so that communities can have controlled access to resources and the advantage of reaping benefits?

To date, the CAMPFIRE programme has worked to set up wildlife committees at village, ward and district levels. These committees run parallel to the local government system of VIDCOs and WADCOs which are in turn represented on the District Council. In addition to this mismatch with local government structures, the effectiveness of village, ward, and district wildlife committees in representative decision-making, and active participation in management, is highly variable. One obvious reason is the absence of a legal right to manage resources. Authority is vested in District Councils, which may or may not be responsible for decision-making within the producer wards where wildlife occurs. Furthermore, District Councils represent a broader spectrum of political and economic interests which often tend to dominate the sometimes idiosyncratic village and ward concerns.

Wider Issues

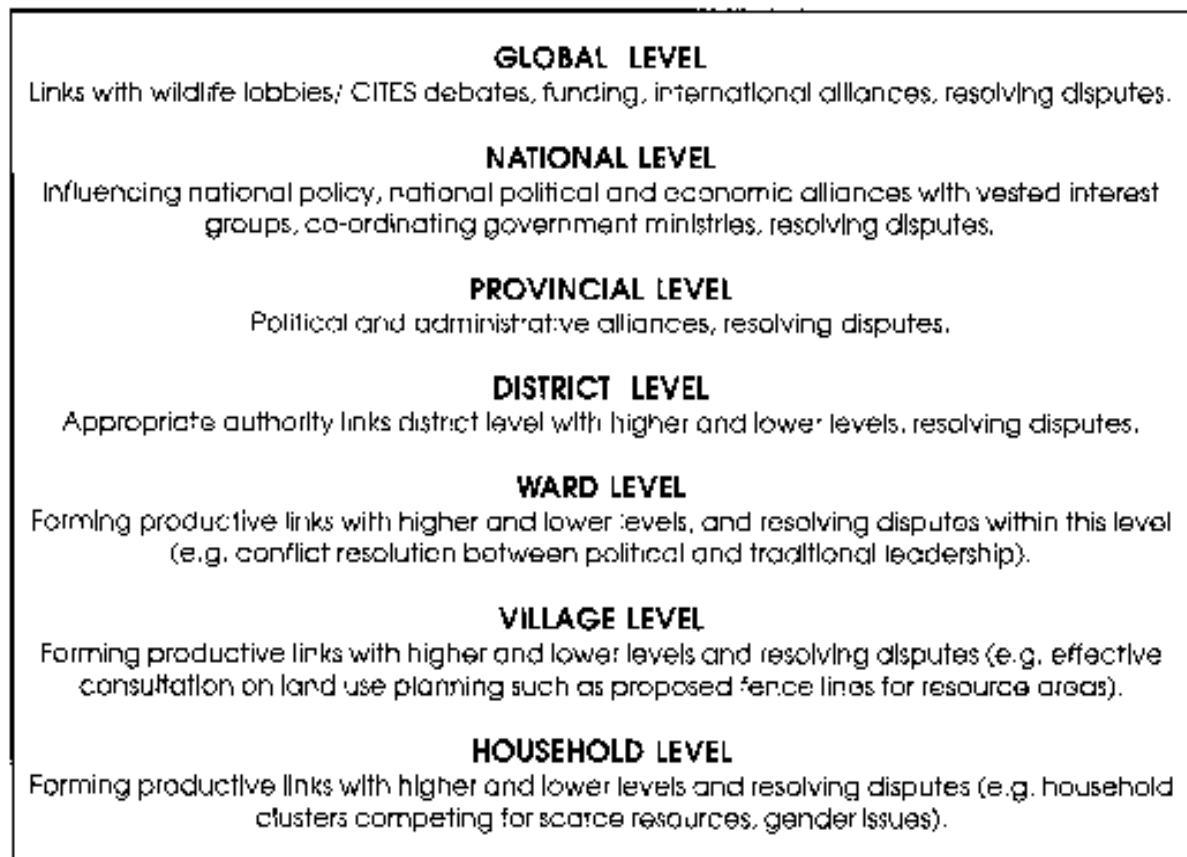
A number of related questions arise from this mismatch and the status of the District Council:

- Is the effectiveness of the institutional set-up for CAMPFIRE dependent on the effectiveness of local government institutions?
- Does CAMPFIRE empower these institutions? Do the institutions empower CAMPFIRE at sub-district level?
- What alternative institutions and linkages exist at sub-district level

which can contribute to the success of CAMPFIRE?

Our analysis of institutional arrangements for CAMPFIRE at sub-district level cannot ignore wider political and economic issues within Zimbabwe and abroad. Global factors such as donor funding, CITES debates on whether or not Zimbabwe can sell its elephant resources, the wildlife lobby, trends and attitudes towards the global environmental crisis, bio-diversity and safeguarding threatened or endangered species all have direct and often tangible effects on what happens at all levels

Figure 1: Political ecologies of scale in hierarchical CAMPFIRE



within CAMPFIRE, including the household level (Figure 1).

In Kanyemba, in Zimbabwe's Zambezi Valley, for example, household foraging activities by VaDema tribesmen entering the Chewore Safari Area, as they have for centuries, were directly affected by increased anti-poaching operations attempting to safeguard rhino and elephant from international poaching syndicates operating from nearby Zambia. The groundswell of concern over these species both at home and abroad has had direct impacts on the food security of local households which are not themselves involved in sophisticated poaching operations. Similarly, the value of rhino horn in the Middle East and Asia makes it attractive for a series of "middlemen" traders to orchestrate connections within impoverished countries such as Zambia and Zimbabwe for poaching purposes.

National level policies can often either enable or thwart CAMPFIRE initiatives and therefore CAMPFIRE protagonists have to operate at this level as well. Indeed, a strength of the CAMPFIRE programme is that in practice it often recognises a multisectoral, multi-level approach and has support at all these levels. Internal differentiation and lack of co-ordination does pose difficulties. For instance, national politicians and senior government officials - representing different constituencies and government departments - have their own agendas which may, or may not, coincide with CAMPFIRE objectives. They are often capable of influencing district level decisions concerning what they consider to be the appropriate distribution of revenues. Such sentiments can directly influence the nature of benefits from CAMPFIRE at the household, village and

ward levels. It has frequently been observed that if correct protocol is neglected, misunderstandings can occur, sometimes leading to hold-ups in the distribution of revenue to households.

For example, the Mahenye Ward in Gazaland, in Zimbabwe's south-east, is made up of Shangaan speakers in a district dominated by Shona-speaking Ndaus. In addition, the Gazaland/Chipinge area has historically been a centre of opposition to the ruling political party in government. This double sensitivity makes it important that government structures are not passed over and that correct protocol is maintained in the interaction between traditional leadership structures in the Ward and the District Council, local government, and provincial administrators.

One step lower, at the district level, similar tensions abound. We have already seen how appropriate authority status is vested in District Councils and not in producer communities themselves. District Councils and local government represent a distinct set of political and economic vested interests. Such vested interests in the district's resources do not always run parallel to the interests of particular producer communities. The District Councils Act (1980) and the appropriate authority status empower councils to manage resources for the benefit of the communities which they represent. In circumstances where councils represent the entire district, not just producer communities, it is not surprising that District Councils are generally reluctant to devolve controls and benefits to producers.

Problems of equity and participation in decision-making do not disappear once

we arrive down at ward and village levels. Internal social differentiation, competing political structures, and different vested interests in resources exist at all levels. For example, cattle-rich households dependent on wildlife areas for grazing, or rural elites who benefit more than their poor rural counterparts, may dominate decision making and hog the benefits. Even if a community decides to distribute revenues to households, there are tensions in the way benefits accrue to men, women and children.

This paper argues that the ultimate outcome of CAMPFIRE is not dependent solely on identifying, empowering, and training the lowest accountable unit. Rather, it is dependent on a series of

effective political and economic alliances between and within the various levels of social organisation which can facilitate CAMPFIRE as outlined above. These alliances can work to safeguard the political sustainability of the programme. The question, therefore, needs to be rephrased: under what circumstances will decision-making institutions at a local level be allowed to actively participate in the CAMPFIRE process? After answering this question we can identify the range of lowest level institutions appropriate for the task, and the types of relationship between participants and institutions which enable positive outcomes. But first we must pursue our analysis of what is happening in CAMPFIRE and tackle an awkward question.

Multiple Jurisdiction versus Local Ownership in CAMPFIRE

Local people are continually told by the government Wild Life Department, non-governmental organisations, and District Councils that wildlife belongs to them. But, as a chief in Binga pointed out, when his people wanted to kill problem elephants they were told by District Council that it was not possible because the quota did not allow it.

We have seen how CAMPFIRE works in juxtaposition with very powerful vested interests from different levels of social organisation. Therefore, long-standing claims to rights of control, use and access have to be orchestrated to enable the participation and proprietorship of communities in the scheme. The most important among these interests are probably those deriving from the state, the private sector and, last but not least, from within the local communities themselves. None of these interests can manage wildlife resources by themselves, and yet each exerts some authority over the resource and consequently relies to some extent on the management of the others. For instance, the Wild Life Department is legally responsible for the overall custodianship of wildlife; the District Council exercises jurisdiction in terms of the 'appropriate authority' status vested in it by the Wild Life

Department and supported by the District Councils Act; and safari and tourist operators claim authority over their concession areas in terms of leases or other arrangements with District Councils. Local communities may claim authority in terms of ancestral rights to specific territory, while use and ownership rights of specific resources are bound up with complex tenure systems, cultural beliefs and practices.

Thus, not only are there a number of long-standing rights to the resource at various levels of social organisation, but these rights are usually pervasively ambiguous, overlapping and competitive. Such claims form a system of rights within rights, constituting what has been called "a bundle of rights of access to wildlife resources" (Maine 1884). Wildlife is therefore held under a system of joint or multiple jurisdiction and it is unrealistic to assume that ownership and control can be exerted by any one level or institution alone. At best what can be hoped for is that certain defined controls and benefits are devolved to lower levels. Because of the ambiguity of rights to wildlife resources, great care has to be taken to clarify what rights local communities can actually exert through CAMPFIRE, and the legal mechanisms to facilitate this also need to be spelt out.

Multi-Tiered Co-Management

Multi-tiered co-management refers to effective linkages among different levels of management and use which can result in mutually beneficial outcomes. These levels or tiers coincide with the political and economic hierarchy already referred to. Because each level is internally differentiated, conflict resolution within levels may be as important as conflict resolution between levels. Thus, looking at it

horizontally, conflicting aims and objectives between the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development - the two government departments involved in accommodating both the traditional and the political leadership within local communities - may be as important an issue for the success of CAMPFIRE as conflicts between vertical levels.

Political Ecologies of Scale

Political ecology refers to the process whereby different levels of vested interest organise themselves in relation to ecological resources. This can apply at a variety of levels such as global, national, district, and household. Thus, in talking about the political ecology of wildlife resource use in Zimbabwe, we consider the social groups at various political levels and their direct relation to the use and management of wildlife.

Lower levels of social organisation, such as chiefs, headmen, WADCOs, and VIDCOs, are more likely to effectively participate in the direct management and benefits of ecological resources if selected institutions at higher levels of social organisation, such as global lobby groups, national politicians, government departments and local authorities themselves have a political and economic vested interest in these lower levels participating and benefiting from the scheme. The sustainability of local level common property regimes is subject to broader political and economic processes. This is the context for CAMPFIRE which will be strengthened through the development of effective co-management links with higher levels of organisation or weakened by the disruptive effects of marginalisation. The more active the lobbying process for empowerment of the lowest levels, and the more vested interests for devolution there are at each level, the more likely local level institutions are to play an active role in managing ecological resources.

The widely accepted principles for running communal management regimes

such as CAMPFIRE all focus on the unit of production, management and benefit whose locus is found at the lowest level. These principles require:

- focused value for those who live with the resource;
- differential benefits in return for differential inputs;
- a positive correlation between quality of management and magnitude of benefit; and
- need the unit of proprietorship to be as small as practicable because large-scale structures tend to be ineffective inefficient, and lead to a tendency to avoid responsibility and corruption.

These principles are useful guidelines. There are, however, other dimensions. Production of wildlife is not simply a matter of local concern as wildlife is mobile and crosses boundaries, which emphasises the multiple jurisdictions involved in its production. The CAMPFIRE experience indicates that "benefit" and "risk" also involve many levels. For example, both society in general and the environment stand to gain or lose from CAMPFIRE outcomes. National politicians are likely to claim credit or dispute blame. The Wild Life Department hopes to benefit from CAMPFIRE by establishing localised management regimes. These could be effective against poaching in circumstances where the efficiency of protectionist policies has been poor. However, the department may lose by not achieving its objectives.

District Councils which embody CAMPFIRE principles, and devolve

controls, decision making and benefits to local levels, may be in a good position to attract donor funding and other benefits; while those District Councils which do not meaningfully involve sub-district levels may, in the long run, whittle away their programmes and undermine their own potential. Beitbridge District Council, for example, is attracting donors because it has developed a reputation for good management. It does not have substantial wildlife revenue but has proved willing to return revenues earned in the single VIDCO with wildlife resources, Chikwarakwara, to the local community rather than absorbing them across the district as a whole. In contrast, Nyaminyami and Guruve have large revenues from wildlife resources in several wards but are less willing to return benefits exclusively to producer communities.

One reason why councils act in the way they do may be because they are making economically rational choices. Districts which have little wildlife revenues may have less to lose in wildlife revenues, and more to gain through donor funding and other opportunities, by implementing CAMPFIRE principles. Districts which have substantial revenue-earning capacity may feel that they have more to lose, and less to gain, by implementing CAMPFIRE principles wholeheartedly.

If local people benefit from, and look after, their resources, the entire society benefits. This applies universally. If local people destroy their resources or deplete them for short-term gains, everyone loses in the long-run. This is essentially a political issue which can mobilise all components of society at different levels. Nurturing and taking advantage of the political forces in favour of CAMPFIRE,

and resolving disputes at those levels which undermine it, is an example of what is meant by political ecologies of scale.

The differentiation of vested interests within levels, and differentiated rights of access to resources between levels, are explicitly recognised as working features of co-management. Devolution of control, on the other hand, may result in the locus of control, management or ownership becoming the exclusive right of a particular level - such as the district or ward. Co-management dynamically takes place both within and between levels. Thus, a husband who neglects to consult his wife on how a household dividend will be used is adopting a poor strategy in terms of co-management. Similarly, chiefs and councillors in a district who disagree, or council executives who decline to consult producer communities on how revenues are spent, are poor co-managers who effectively undermine the programme. By the same token, a ward or VIDCO which advocates complete autonomy of decision-making, and fails to recognise the important role of the District Council and political hierarchies which enable CAMPFIRE to operate, may be in danger of antagonising and unleashing centralised political forces which are capable of holding back the programme.

District administrators, provincial governors, and local members of parliament play distinct roles in each district and these need to be taken into account as vital components for the success of CAMPFIRE. Trade-offs between and within levels have to be made and powerful lobbying groups may have to hold in check aspirations of groups or individuals whose plans run counter to CAMPFIRE objectives.

The CAMPFIRE Collaborative Group as Ombudsman

There are multiple co-management institutional arrangements currently in place at all levels through which CAMPFIRE operates to achieve its objectives. For instance, international interest in CAMPFIRE is an important incentive at all lower levels. The authority vested in the Wild Life Department acts as an important umbrella for implementation and dispute resolution. Perhaps equally important is the networking taking place within the CAMPFIRE Collaborative Group (the CAMPFIRE Association, Wild Life Department, Centre for Applied Social Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe, World Wide Fund for Nature, the Africa Resources Trust, and the Zimbabwe Trust) and between the Collaborative Group and various organs of the state. At district or sub-district level, ward and district wildlife committees, district boards of management or district wildlife management trusts work out the

mechanisms of their different programmes with the representatives of the villages and wards involved. The role of ombudsman for CAMPFIRE is not formally designated but a feature of these co-management arrangements is that key personalities within the Collaborative Group advocate CAMPFIRE at national and district level, and are influential in working out disputes between and within the various levels.

Both District Councils and producer communities have to accommodate the rights of the various arms of the state, such as parliament and government departments, recognise the political and economic forces they are subject to and work within existing frameworks by creating effective alliances and management links. The potential for effective co-management involving the lowest accountable units has already been established by the CAMPFIRE programme.

Contrasting Structures

WADCOs and VIDCOs are encouraged to liaise with ward and village wildlife committees to adopt common approaches towards decision-making at district level. This can be done through district wildlife committees [inter-ward committees], district boards of management or through wildlife management trusts. However, the formal political structure may be bolstered or undermined by traditional leadership roles. Traditional and cultural leadership often plays a more active and important role in decision-making than formal political structures, especially when dealing with geographically, culturally, or politically isolated communities. Internal disputes, sometimes involving traditional and political leadership may occur in which individuals liaise with other vested interests within the community, or outside at higher levels, to influence outcomes at the local level. Conflict and lack of effective decision-making is rife at the lowest levels, both

because of these internal disputes and also hierarchical power relationships. In these circumstances, local people are often in the dark as far as CAMPFIRE is concerned and neither participate nor receive benefits from the programme. As a result, District Councils can easily find justification for remaining the locus of CAMPFIRE at district level.

These examples are not exhaustive. They illustrate that the lowest accountable units have emerged as a response to both local organisational needs and hierarchical power relationships. Each CAMPFIRE case may involve aspects of each situation as local people dynamically respond to different factors at different times. Negotiations and resolution of disputes between the formal political structure, the traditional leadership, and CAMPFIRE wildlife committees and the households which they represent, are vital components of co-management at the lowest accountable levels.

Effective Co-management Links

One of the principal co-management links in CAMPFIRE, that between institutions at a district and community level, relies on the willingness of District Councils to devolve clearly defined areas of decision-making and benefits to producer communities. This should not simply be window-dressing of district level interests by co-opting individuals from producer communities on to district management boards or district wildlife committees. Simultaneously, CAMPFIRE should not expect District Councils to undermine their own vested interests in wildlife. Incentives have to be provided to encourage the devolution of responsibility and benefits. Under present circumstances, where the District Council has appropriate authority status, councils which meaningfully devolve responsibilities and benefits should ultimately gain and those which do not should lose because councils which are effective should attract district level donor funding or other benefits. However, CAMPFIRE must take care not to encourage a situation where resource-rich councils which devolve responsibility and benefits to local communities feel that they will lose since the value of the resources is high, while resource-poor councils feel that they will gain since the resource stakes are lower but potential donor funding is attractive. The value of donor funding for district projects should be attached to the value of benefits returned to producer

communities, the degree of participation in decision-making, and the institutional development at the lowest accountable levels.

In general, within CAMPFIRE there is a reluctance to devolve both benefits and responsibility to lower levels. As a result, CAMPFIRE is still basically a district level programme. In some cases benefits have been devolved without broadly consulting the community on the responsibilities associated with such benefits. Meaningful consultation between District Councils and the diverse interests within producer communities will make management easier for both, but in some areas it is clear that this devolution is not going to take place because District Councils cannot work meaningfully with their lower level co-managers. In this case, changing the law so that producer communities themselves can earn appropriate authority status would allow the shoe to be worn on the other foot. Producer communities would be at the locus of the programme, but District Councils would act as co-managers through the provision of services, such as technical training and liaison with NGOs in respect of donor funding, to these communities. The active participation of District Councils in the provision of services to producer communities would then be encouraged by providing funding for the provision of such services as needed on a pro rata basis.

The Implementation Ladder

A key player in the implementation ladder is the CAMPFIRE Association. The CAMPFIRE Association is an association of District Councils implementing the CAMPFIRE programme. It is also intended to be an alliance of producer communities which are expected to lobby for CAMPFIRE at district, provincial, and national level. If the CAMPFIRE Association remains dominated by district interests it may not be able to advocate successfully for producer communities at the various levels. A vital component of the co-management package is to advocate for producer communities at these levels by showing how all levels can stand to benefit if there is successful proprietorship of the resource at the lowest levels.

The CAMPFIRE Association has the potential to bring together political vested interests at all levels as co-managers and advocates of the proprietorship by local communities. However, the responsibility for advocacy of CAMPFIRE should not be the CAMPFIRE Association's alone. The Collaborative Group and the CAMPFIRE ombudsman, or ombudsmen, should also play an active role in this. However, all CAMPFIRE agents have to be careful about advocating for the lowest levels if this is grossly at the expense of other levels, as this would undermine the political sustainability of the programme. Consultation between levels can avoid this.

Conclusion

In response to the question, "what is the lowest accountable unit for CAMPFIRE?" this paper has taken the perspective that it is a matter of effective political and economic alliance between, and within, levels. The lowest accountable units, the institutions for local resource management, emerge situationally in response to a variety of factors including local cultural and political dynamics and the specifics of the ecological resource base. There is, therefore, no set formula for identifying the nature of these institutions in every ward and in every district, since they emerge as a result of both local and broader circumstances and they change over time.

Multiple jurisdictions in regard to wildlife and the ambiguity of overlapping rights, globally, nationally and locally, and the competing rights and vested interests within each of the domains, all need to be taken into account when we talk about devolving proprietorship to the lowest accountable units. In terms of co-management analyses, as presented in this paper, arrangements which involve both the state and the local community can be highly effective when mutual benefits are to be gained. CAMPFIRE should not be reduced to a prescribed formula. Instead, effective institutional arrangements including the formal structure, the traditional structure and natural resource co-operatives should be considered for integration into existing programmes.

Where one set of institutional arrangements is not effective, alternatives should be explored in liaison with existing political hierarchies. Co-management does not preclude the employment of local institutions, but it takes cognisance of the

stakes held by other institutional levels in the resource. Hypothetically it would, therefore, not be inconsistent to devolve appropriate status to ward or village level, while maintaining certain rights exercised by the Wild Life Department, District Council and private sector.

If such a devolution should, or could, take place it would have to be done in such a way that significant vested interests in wildlife by the state, at national and at district level, were maintained so that national and district level interests do not run counter to the programme.

Advocating for control, ownership, and management of wildlife resources at the local level, while simultaneously ignoring or antagonising district and national level interests in wildlife, such as those of the Wild Life Department or those of the district, is obviously counter-productive. Only good working relationships between the Wild Life Department, District Councils, and local communities can lead to positive outcomes.

This must obviously include political hierarchies. The successful lobbying for CAMPFIRE at various political levels can facilitate participation and good proprietorship at the lowest levels. In identifying the role and nature of the lowest accountable units, it is important to see them as part of this larger process. Dispute resolution and the formation of effective alliances within these institutions, and between them and other levels, is an integral part of the CAMPFIRE process.

Reference

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Please note that:

- With the introduction of the Rural District Councils Act in 1988, all Rural Councils and District Councils in Zimbabwe were amalgamated to form Rural District Councils. The two terms are interchangeable in the CAMPFIRE papers.
- The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management has been referred to as the Wild Life Department in this series of papers.

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