

Analysis

Voices from the village on trophy hunting in Hwange district, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

There is a general scarcity of information on local community perspectives regarding trophy hunting in Zimbabwe. This information chasm is undesirable to the country, scientists and trophy hunting market participants given that major Western customer markets require evidence of benefits by local communities in order to support trophy hunting. This study contributes to closing the knowledge gap by discussing the community perspectives of the dominant trophy hunting market for ecosystem services (the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) programme) in Zimbabwe. In bringing this viewpoint to light, the study uses perspectives of communities in Hwange district, Matabeleland north with a particular focus on attributes and attitudes towards CAMPFIRE. A qualitative research design obtained in depth information on current CAMPFIRE issues. Data was collected through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Results show that the contribution of CAMPFIRE to local economic development has been hampered by market challenges and the exclusion of the local communities who are the producer constituency.

1. Introduction

The 1st of July 2015 set in play a chain of events that once again brought issues of natural resource conservation to the forefront of academic debate. A Zimbabwean wild lion affectionately known as Cecil was wounded by an American recreational big game hunter (Walter Palmer) who tracked, and reportedly killed Cecil with a rifle approximately 40 h later (Di Minin et al., 2016a). Cecil was killed in the absence of appropriate permits with the help of a local professional hunter resulting in an unprecedented global public media reaction against Cecil's killers (Lindsey et al., 2016). Ultimately, the international media portrayed Cecil's death at the mercy of the hunters as an utmost evil.

Killing Cecil the Lion added to the inferno on the trophy hunting moral debate (Descubes et al., 2018; Dickman et al., 2018). Trophy hunting by its nature demonstrates a market for ecosystem services (MES) where the supply side is given by the natural environment as the core producer together with human communities that live within the biodiversity areas (Frost and Bond, 2008). The demand side in the trophy hunting MES (THMES) is given by the trophy hunters who Descubes et al., (2018) described as predominantly Westerners seeking to maximise utility through a consumer experience with a strong experiential element related to hunters demonstrating virility, prowess and dominance by killing an animal (apparently, the more fierce/rare the better (Di Minin et al., 2016a)). The regulation of the THMES is often left to the State that grants safari operator permits to conduct

sanctioned hunts in protected areas. The State may also grant communities rights to manage communal wildlife resources in communal lands for common benefit (Angula et al., 2018; Frost and Bond, 2008). In cases where rural communities hold rights to wildlife resources, THMES become highly significant rural development programmes (Frost and Bond, 2008).

According to Angula et al. (2018), trophy hunting is part of the controversial goods and services industry characterised by trade in goods and services that for reasons of delicacy, decency, morality or even fear, tend to elicit reactions of distaste, disgust, offense, or outrage when mentioned or openly presented. This disgust (though not necessarily ubiquitous) is often from the demand side (Western countries) as shown in the case of demonstrations against Walter Palmer in America. The responses to the Western narrative against trophy hunting (Descubes et al., 2018; Dickman et al., 2018; Di Minin et al., 2016b) predominantly point to the profits derived through safari operators which are said to also promote local economic development of rural communities that live alongside the wildlife. These rural communities are often referred to as producer communities in recognition of their role in allowing wildlife populations to flourish on their communal lands (Frost and Bond, 2008). Also, in the same vein, hunters often refer to the fact that trophy hunting adds value in the form of substantive contributions to gross domestic product, and are generally of the opinion that governments should promote rather than curb this activity (Gunn, 2001).

Angula et al. (2018) cautioned against the profitability argument for

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THMES explaining that THMES seldom solicited the views of local communities. In this regard, [Angula et al. \(2018\)](#) went further than profitability showing that local communities in Namibia supported trophy hunting as it augmented their livelihoods. Nonetheless, the situation obtaining in Namibia may not be assumed to be ubiquitous in southern Africa or Africa at large. [Di Minin et al. \(2016a\)](#) argued that save for Namibia other African countries lacked clarity on what proportions of hunting-permit revenue were directed to local community-development. Thus, if local African communities manage the land and dictate the fate of conservation efforts outside of protected areas then, the absence of their perspectives in the THMES may result in disastrous policies that exclude them and lack community buy-in ([Angula et al., 2018](#)).

Zimbabwe has policies that support sustainable wildlife use, facilitate formation THMES (as shown in the case of Cecil) and assuming a degree of similarity in Zimbabwean and Namibian conditions,¹ then the unprecedented reaction against THMES from Western countries would translate to livelihood disadvantages for local communities in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately information on local community perspectives regarding THMES is scarce in Zimbabwe ([Dube and Duve, 2015](#); [Frost and Bond, 2008](#); [Murombedzi, 1996](#)). The information chasm is undesirable to scientists, THMES market participants (producer communities, safari operators, clients, etc.) and Zimbabwe at large. Moreover, major Western market regulators in countries such as the USA (e.g. U.S. Endangered Species Act, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)) and the globe at large (e.g. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)) require evidence of benefits by local communities and conservation in order to support THMES ([Di Minin et al., 2016a](#); [Dickman et al., 2018](#)). In this regard, this study contributes to closing the knowledge gap by discussing the community perspectives of the dominant THMSE the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) programme in Zimbabwe. In bringing this viewpoint to light, the discussion uses the perspectives of communities in Hwange district, Matabeleland north with a particular focus on attitudes and attributes of CAMPFIRE.

2. The CAMPFIRE programme in Zimbabwe

CAMPFIRE was largely developed around the wildlife and wildlife habitat management concept in communal lands of Zimbabwe for the benefit resident communities ([Martin, 1986](#)). Furthermore, the CAMPFIRE programme was designed to decentralize the management of natural resources in communal areas of Zimbabwe ([Balint and Mashinya, 2008](#)). The principle of wildlife production as a recognised form of land use outside protected areas was established by the 1975 Parks and Wild Life Act. This granted private landholders the right to use the wildlife on their land for their own benefit, including through safari hunting and the capture and sale of animals ([Frost and Bond, 2008](#)). The guiding principle was that those individuals and ‘communities’ who bore the costs of resource management become the resource managers for their own direct benefit ([Gandiwa et al., 2013](#); [Frost and Bond, 2008](#)).

[Murombedzi \(1996\)](#) noted that CAMPFIRE was first implemented in November 1988, when the first two rural district councils (RDCs), Nyaminyami and Gurove, were granted Appropriate Authority (AA) status by the Department of National Parks and Wild Life Management (DNPWLM). [Frost and Bond \(2008\)](#) further explained that the CAMPFIRE foundations were established in the 1960s when moves to commercialize wildlife production were first made (e.g. Project WINDFALL²

– Wildlife Industries for All) given that farmers at the time viewed wildlife as pests thereby undermining future availability. The DNPWLM explored CAMPFIRE as an integrated land use plan for the communal lands bordering a number of national parks and safari areas in northern Zimbabwe ([Frost and Bond, 2008](#)). However, with time, CAMPFIRE became more focused on wildlife given its profitability. Justifying the bias towards wildlife (rather than other natural resources), [Lindsey et al. \(2016\)](#) showed that trophy hunting represented 90% of the CAMPFIRE income proceeds with the remainder coming from photographic tourism, hide and ivory sales and other activities.

Given the inherent high set up costs observed by [Frost and Bond \(2008\)](#) in a programme like CAMPFIRE, the support by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international development agencies³ discussed by [Murombedzi \(1996\)](#) was pivotal if any success was to be realised in the programme. Nonetheless, [Murombedzi \(1996\)](#) lamented the operational procedures of these support organisations who primarily worked through the AA (RDC) ultimately producing complex and costly administrative structures modelled on typical Western systems that limited community participation in wildlife management processes. This perpetuated the colonially rooted and less democratic paternalistic view of the native African (see [Mamdani, 1996](#)) by the RDC shown in literature as having an overbearing influence in the utilisation of proceeds from the wildlife industry ([Frost and Bond, 2008](#); [Khumalo, 2003](#); [Murphree, 1997](#); [Murombedzi, 1996, 1992](#); [Child and Peterson, 1991](#)). As such, USAID (over 20 years ago) warned that CAMPFIRE risked becoming a welfare programme that only produced wildlife dividends for communities without instituting any viable mechanisms of community participation in decision making and resource management ([Murombedzi, 1996](#)).

Nonetheless, CAMPFIRE (a Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme) through the CAMPFIRE Association (CA)⁴ promised a financial reward to the villagers for active

(footnote continued)

wildlife. It failed in this regard mostly because it failed to promote a positive attitude towards wildlife within the adjacent communities, but it highlighted a need to devolve proprietorship over wildlife, to enable those living with wildlife to receive direct and sustained benefits from it ([Frost and Bond, 2008](#)).

³ Zimbabwe Trust, Worldwide fund for nature (WWF), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the CAMPFIRE Association.

⁴ The CAMPFIRE Association works with local communities to help them to manage their land and their wildlife for future generations and to help them realise financial benefits from effective resource stewardship. The association provides the following services to local communities:

- i. **Institutional development:** Organisation of individual households (producer communities) in CAMPFIRE districts into various committees to manage their natural resources. Producer communities receive help with project proposal development, forming organisations and project management, and help them to ensure that the revenues generated are managed in a democratic, transparent and accountable manner.
- ii. **Law enforcement:** Training and financial support to “Resource Monitors” or “Game Scouts”, who monitor and apprehend those persons breaking the national, district or locally developed rules designed to protect natural resources.
- Contracting and monitoring of commercial activities:** Work with private tourism and safari operators in liaison with Local Authorities to broker contracts and ensure that producer communities are fairly compensated for access to their wildlife resources.
- iii. **Managing human-wildlife conflict:** Provision of technical support and funding for local projects that reduce human-wildlife conflict.
- iv. **Fire management:** The reduction of incidences of uncontrolled veld fires and associated environmental damage through training, purchase and maintenance of equipment.
- v. **Counting wildlife and quota setting:** Knowledge of the number of animals in a given area and where they are found using ground-based methods for effective management (“CAMPFIRE Association Zimbabwe”, 2018).

¹ The countries are in the same geographical region and share similar socio-economic histories.

² In project WINDFALL, meat from elephant culling and some revenue from trophy fees was occasionally paid to rural communities adjacent to state-managed protected areas, with the aim of encouraging a positive attitude to

conservation of wildlife resources in particular. In this regard, CAMPFIRE is a platform/market-place where the producers of wildlife resources (communities through conservation) met the consumers of such resources who were principally trophy hunters, photographic safari tourists and general wildlife researchers.

3. CBNRM beyond Zimbabwe

In pursuit of environmental conservation and local economic development (LED), other African countries adapted and replicated the THMES based CAMPFIRE programme in their communal lands. The contrasting cases of Namibia and Tanzania assist in showing the benefits of THMES under various management regimes.

Namibia put in place policy and legal measures, starting in the mid 1990s, which devolved user rights over wildlife to local landholders (Nelson et al., 2013). As such, communities in Namibia are able to establish 'communal conservancies' where local residents can legally hunt wildlife for their own consumption or sell a quota to a hunting operator, keeping 100% of the revenue. The programme has seen significant wildlife populations recover and the local communities actively nurturing the recovery (Naidoo et al., 2016).

Tanzania also adopted a similar THMES platform using 5-year operator leases that allow revenues from trophy hunting to accrue to hunting operators and central government, largely bypassing the communities and landholders who live with and bear costs from wildlife (Booth, 2010; Hurt and Ravn, 2000; Leader-Williams et al., 2009). Unlike Namibia, in Tanzania local communities are not directly involved in negotiations or authorization of hunting concession allocations on their village lands and no revenue is paid directly by hunting operators to communities except through mandatory, but poorly defined and inconsistently applied, contributions to local development projects (Kissui, 2008).

The two cases of Namibia and Tanzania represent THMES given that they both monetise the conservation wildlife as a means for community development. In Namibia the results seem relatively positive in comparison to Tanzania. Evidently the governance structures result in differing levels of community participation in and perceptions towards THMES. Thus, in line with the overall objective to shed light on community perceptions in THMES, this study highlights and links contemporary CAMPFIRE/THMES perceptions in Zimbabwe to governance issues raised by studies such as Murombedzi (1996) over 20 years ago.

4. Methodology

The study was conducted in Hwange district (Matabeleland north province, Zimbabwe) within communal wards located in and bordering national protected wildlife areas (see Fig. 1). Hwange district was purposively selected given that it houses the largest state protected area for wildlife conservation in Zimbabwe (Hwange national park). Matabeleland north is predominantly semi-arid (receiving an average of < 650 mm of rainfall annually) with a population of approximately 743,871 people and 163,966 households (ZimStats, 2012).

The 20 communal wards of Hwange district were split into those in the west, east and central parts of the district in order to have a wide coverage of the entire district given that CAMPFIRE proceeds were shared by all wards. Despite benefits sharing to all wards, secondary data from the Hwange district CAMPFIRE office revealed that the main wildlife producer wards were Mabale (17), Sidinde (8) and Silewu (15). These 3 wards received 50% of the community proceeds while the rest of the wards shared the remaining 50%. Given the significance of the producer wards to this study, they were all purposively sampled. Three other communal wards were then selected using stratified random sampling with respect to the strata given by the previously explained divisions of the district. In this regard, one ward was sampled in each part at random while 2 villages were also randomly selected in each ward sampled (see Fig. 2). The major livelihood strategies in the study

area are rooted in subsistence agriculture (crop and livestock production), remittances and support from NGOs, CSOs and government (Dube et al., 2018).

The study was largely qualitative and made use of focus group discussions FGDs followed by key informant interviews (KIIs) to collect primary data thereby allowing for triangulation of data collected from the two separate sources. One FGD was held in each village and key informant interviews conducted with the requisite senior village head. Other key informants were the ward councillors from the RDC, the resident RDC CAMPFIRE coordinator and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)/civil society organisations (CSOs) personnel. FGD participants were purposively sampled with the assistance of community leaders and were representative of age and gender dynamics of the area. FGDs were conducted in the local indigenous languages (TjiNabya and isiNdebele) and moderated with the help of resident agricultural extension officers who had extensive experience in the area to ensure contribution by all participants. The FGDs were guided discussions and reassurance that there are no wrong answers was given to the participants. Furthermore, the facilitators balanced power (Based on Coad, 2007) between researcher and participant using the following guidelines:

- Adopting role of naive curiosity - open, honest and understanding but not patronising.
- Avoiding being judgemental, but accept the participant's view as different to the facilitator.
- Allowing the participants to present views
- Being creative and flexible to reduce boredom.

Facilitators also ensured that all participants were free to make their contribution while guarding against negative group dynamic hazards such as gender barriers, age barriers and the dominant member syndrome. Data was recorded verbatim and later transcribed in order to guarantee collection of maximum and accurate information. Table 1 shows the distribution of study respondents.

Following Attride-Stirling (2001), elements of arguments (warrants, backings, qualifiers, rebuttals and alternative claims) raised by community members were used as a means of exploring the connections between explicit statements and implicit meanings in FGD conversations. According to this formulation, a claim is the conclusion to an argument, the merits of which are to be established while warrants are principles and premises upon which the arguments in support of the claim are constructed. However, claims do not necessarily follow logically from the data and the warrants at hand, and for this reason there are backings (supportive arguments for warrants), qualifiers (elements of doubt in claims), rebuttals (conditions which falsify the claim), and alternative claims (Attride-Stirling, 2001). With these essential components, arguments were disentangled and presented intelligibly, thereby facilitating the process of negotiation in decision-making and problem solving. In this regard, the statements by FGD participants created thematic networks that sought to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels. The thematic networks facilitated the structuring and depiction of emergent themes.

Data was analysed using thematic analysis with specific focus on local community attitudes and attributes towards wildlife. According to Selge et al. (2011), decisions about the management of natural environment by humans always involve value judgements and individual perceptions of and attitudes towards the issue at hand (in this case wildlife). Psychological research on biodiversity structures individual perceptions using the concepts of 'attributes' and 'attitudes' (Fischer et al., 2011). Milfont and Duckitt (2010) defined 'attitudes' as the result of an individual's evaluation of their environment with some degree of favour or disfavour. As such, people's attitudes towards species are believed to depend on the attributes associated with the species (Fischer et al., 2011). Therefore, to understand how people develop attitudes towards animal species and their management, it is necessary to

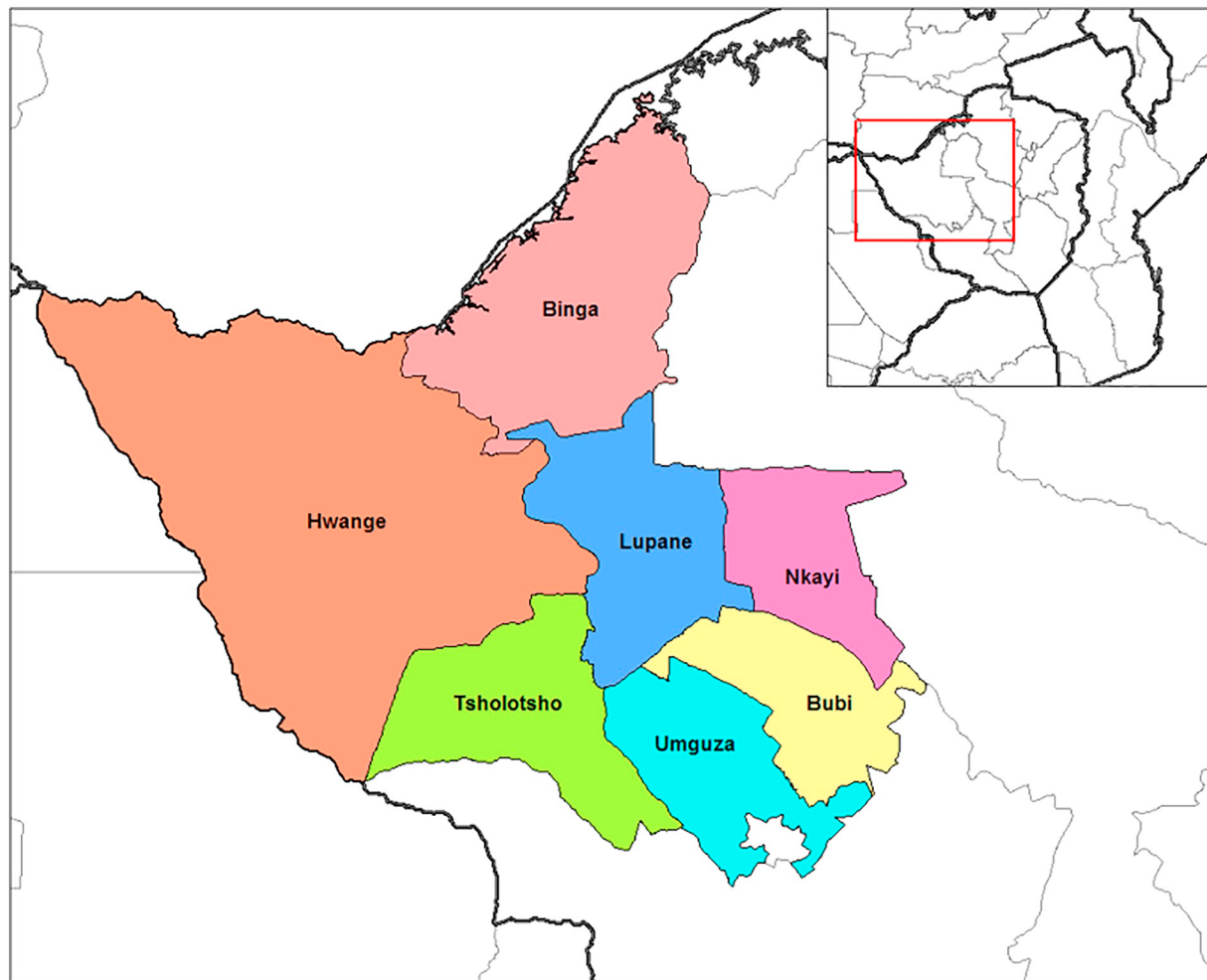


Fig. 1. Map of districts in Matabeleland north province including Hwange district.
Source: [ZimStats, 2012](#).

identify the attributes that people use to describe such species and how these are linked to attitudes towards species and their management. Attributes in this case are characteristics associated with a species, such as its usefulness, harmfulness or attractiveness ([Selge et al., 2011](#)).

Regarding research ethics in the study, permission was sought to undertake the study from national and district authorities while information was voluntarily given after obtaining the respondent's consent. Data collected was safely kept and used for the purposes of the study only.

5. Findings: community perception on attributes of wildlife

Villagers perceived wildlife populations in the district to be high and that some wildlife species were a menace to society as they attacked household crops and killed livestock. Key informants also emphasised the villager perspectives stating that the negative attitude towards wildlife was rooted in the fact that some animal species shattered the main livelihood strategies in the district (crop production and livestock rearing). Further explaining the negative attributes of wildlife, villagers complained that local grazing patterns had become unfavourable for livestock (cattle, goats, sheep, etc.) as they were forced to graze only during the day when temperatures were uncomfortably high, or risk being devoured by nocturnal carnivores at night. As a result, households protested that they had been forced to invest in relatively expensive livestock pens strong and high enough to keep out powerful predators.

Wildlife was also considered directly responsible for increased labour strains on the households as villagers noted that it had become a requirement to guard fields from small and large grazing wild animals. The guarding of the fields was conducted at the cost of individual households and with limited self-protection despite the dangers associated with large wild grazing animals such as elephants. Women also complained that during the farming season they were deprived from having their husbands at home during the night as the men had to sleep in the fields guarding crops against grazing wildlife. The major wild animals singled out as destroyers of the core village livelihood strategies in order of severity were elephants, baboons, warthogs and kudu (for crop production) and lions, hyenas and leopards (for livestock production). Evidently, the villagers generally perceive wildlife in a bad light due to its negative impact on local livelihood strategies. The negative perspective of carnivorous wildlife (and wildlife in general) is captured in some of the village responses when asked to comment on the killing of Cecil the Lion ([Box 1](#)). The responses recorded are almost in direct contrast to those highly publicised in the mainstream global media on the death of Cecil the lion.

In an attempt to understand broader relations with nature, villagers were asked what they cherished in the natural environment. In response, almost all mentioned the goods they harvested from the natural environment first (limited perspectives on conservation motivated by intrinsic value of the wildlife were noted). In this regard, village perception of the natural environment in Hwange seemed to be that of utilisation first rather than conservation. In an attempt to explain the

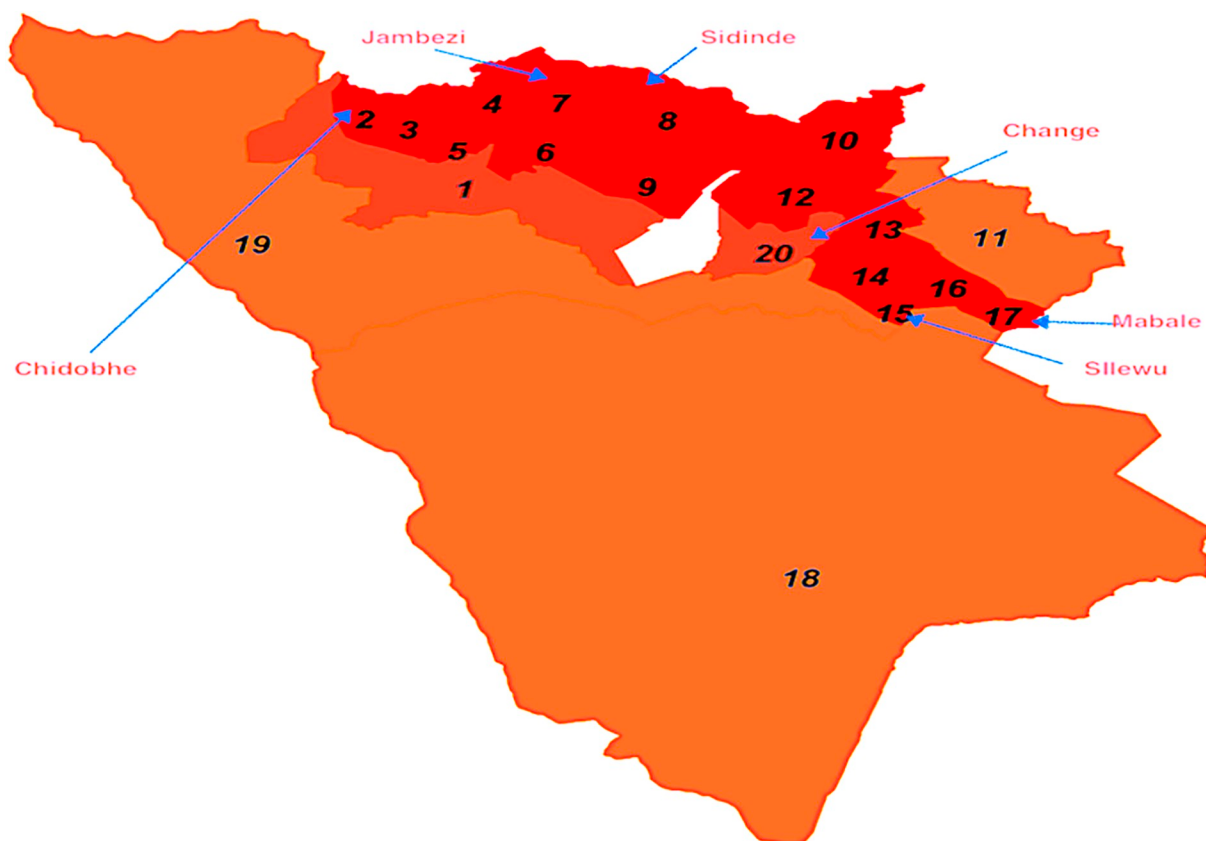


Fig. 2. Map of the wards in Hwange district.
Source: [ZimStats, 2012](#).

limited conservationist perspectives in some parts of rural Zimbabwe, (Mawere, 2013) argued that the proliferation of Christianity and capitalism in most of rural Zimbabwe had undermined traditional knowledge on environmental conservation which was intertwined with the increasingly unpopular African traditional religion. Thus, the

combination of the inherent negative perceptions towards wildlife and a pro-utilisation attitude of the natural environment pointed to a recipe for plunder of wildlife and the loss of biodiversity. As a protective wall against the possible plunder CAMPFIRE was founded to encourage otherwise utilisation centred individuals to conserve natural resources

Table 1
Study participants.

Ward	Village	FGD	All participants (bold font) (Male/Female)	Senior village head	Ward councillor	NGOs/CSOs	RDC CAMPFIRE coordinator
(17) Mabale (EAST)	Mabale boundary with ivory	1	12 (7/6)	1	1	1	1
	Mathuthu	1	11 (5/6)	1			
(15) Silewu (EAST)	Dingani	1	18 (8/10)	1	1		
	Chezhou	1	14 (9/5)	1			
(8) Sidinda (CENTRAL)	Sidinda	1	18 (9/9)	1	1		
	Lumbora	1	15 (7/8)	1			
(20) Change (CENTRAL)	Mupongola	1	11 (8/3)	1	1	2	
	Lubwelidili	1	15 (9/6)	1			
(7) Jambezi (WEST)	Bupenyu bamangwana	1	13 (6/7)	1	1		
	Chenjiri	1	15 (6/9)	1			
(2) Chidobe (WEST)	Chisuma	1	11 (5/6)	1	1	1	
	Sizinda	1	14 (7/7)	1			
Total		12	167	12	6	4	1

Box 1**Village response to the killing of Cecil the Lion.**

1. "Wild animals are more of a menace than help to us. Thus, we were very happy to hear that Cecil the Lion was shot down because these animals are keeping us in poverty'. Our livestock is forced to spend all nights locked behind kraals, depriving them of potential grazing time and chance at gaining weight." Bupenyu bamangwana FGD, general perspective.
2. "We were very happy to hear of the death of Cecil the Lion. We actually wish the shooter had killed more of Cecil's cousin and brothers because we are suffering in this area." Mathuthu village FGD, general perspective.
3. "Shooting of Cecil the Lion was great news. It showed us that at least someone was on our side. Animals have become more important than people in this district." Mabale village FGD, General perspective.
4. "Killing of Cecil the lion was a blessing we hoped it would bring more hunters who would kill more carnivores especially hyenas but to our surprise the authorities were trying to arrest this man who had done us such a favour." Sidinda village FGD, general perspective.

(particularly wildlife) in their locale on the promise of receiving monetary compensation for their troubles. As such, CAMPFIRE is a method that frames the natural environment based on utility (measured in monetary terms) it provides humans. In this regard, CAMPFIRE uses the satisfaction of receiving financial reward based on a monetary value assigned to wildlife to encourage environmental management.

However, utilitarian framing of the natural environment has been shown to have multiple challenges that include *inter-alia* evaluation errors, omissions of environmental components that have no known human value at the time and an ethical paradox (Parks and Gowdy, 2013). The responses in Box 1 (particularly response 4) show that environmental conservation (which is a globally desired behaviour) was not a major issue in the eyes of the villagers. Thus, in the absence of the reward (for conservation of wildlife), the views of environmental conservation are quickly jettisoned for pro-plunder views (killing of Cecil the Lion). Therefore, programmes framed on utilitarian lines such as CAMPFIRE tend to act as protective walls that keep bad behaviour out without necessarily attempting to sanitize the environmentally bad behaviour. This presents an ethical problem to those in favour of utilitarian framing of the natural environment. Instead of encouraging environmental management, CAMPFIRE participants tend to count monetary profits not portions of the environment conserved. As such, responses in Box 1 clearly show that the protective wall (CAMPFIRE) against bad behaviour (pro-wildlife plunder attitudes) has been steadily fragmenting in Zimbabwe. Some of the reasons for the demolition of the wall include protestation by the powerless in the market THMES/CAMPFIRE.

In order for CAMPFIRE to be successful, the villagers have to agree not to hunt the wildlife in communal lands. In this regard, the villagers form a significant part of the production or supply-side component of the ecosystem good (Wildlife safaris). The immediate authorities with AA (i.e. Rural District Council) create a connection between the supply side and the demand side for wildlife safaris while the parks and wildlife department through CA guarantee harmony between villagers and wildlife through numerous protective measures for both parties.

According to CA key informants within Hwange district, the remittances for the year 2017 were made to all 20 wards in Hwange district at a rate of 55% of the proceeds received by the RDC in accordance with regulations. However, from the responses in Box 1, it is evident that the village producer base considers itself excluded from the final cash proceeds of the THMES which is perceived as benefiting the demand side and the moderating institutions only. This market disequilibrium means that the suppliers (villagers) are not deriving the expected utility from the supply of activities but rather disutility that according to Box 1 is rooted in *inter-alia* the loss of crops and livestock, family time and general safety. The disutility is similar to negative production externalities that are normally corrected through the compensation of injured parties in modern markets. However, that is not the case in the contemporary THMES/CAMPFIRE programme. In this

case, the high perpetual negative externalities and disutility than utility from wildlife for the villagers explains the dominant perspective against the conservation of wildlife amongst the rural communities of Hwange district.

Therefore, the general perspectives portrayed in Box 1 glorifies trophy hunting not at a MES that adds to livelihood diversification but rather as a method that protects existing agricultural-based livelihoods (i.e. reduces negative externalities of THMES). This perspective is in direct contrast with the fundamental roots of THMES/CAMPFIRE whose foundational pillar is to promote a positive attitude towards wildlife and habitat conservation based on the benefits derived from such management efforts.

5.1. Relevance of CAMPFIRE to the villagers

Regarding the THMES/CAMPFIRE programme, villagers argued that CAMPFIRE had become a programme run by people without direct community interests as it benefited a few individuals who themselves did not reside in the villages where the wildlife was found. The foreign satellite perspective of CAMPFIRE seemingly made it an insignificant component in local development issues. Villagers argued that they gradually had to seek development solutions (primarily from NGOs and other CSOs) outside the CAMPFIRE programme. Box 2 captures the local perspectives regarding the relevance of CAMPFIRE to local economic development.

Considering the perspectives summarised in Box 2, one notes challenging fissures in production and marketing of ecosystem goods (wildlife) within the CAMPFIRE programme. In the THMES, the villagers are encouraged to conserve wildlife and trade conservation efforts with wildlife safari operators through the RDC. In this case, the mandatory RDC Avenue markets the output without full participation from the producer group thereby creating a perception of the RDC piggy-backing on villager conservation efforts for disproportionately large gains. This has ultimately created a village productive segment and an RDC sales segment. These two supply side segments seemingly have different perspectives on the utility created by the THMES and the negative externalities suffered. From the perspective of the RDC producer (sales) segment, the negative externalities are much lower than the benefits realised from CAMPFIRE at council level given the limited interactions with wildlife by council officials. On the other hand, the negative externalities are higher than the CAMPFIRE benefits in the productive village market segment that regularly interfaces with wildlife. These contradictory positions leave the weaker villagers who are not the designated AA at the mercy of the stronger RDC (designated AA). According to the village key informants, this state of affairs facilitates corruption (e.g. response 1 Box 2) given that the people who are the custodians of the wildlife (the villagers) may not always get the projects they would prefer financed (also noted by Murombedzi, 1996).

The above situation has seen perennial villager complaints against

Box 2

Village perspectives on the relevance of CAMPFIRE to local economic development.

1. "As we speak, we were recently addressed by the Chief who told us that Nejamezi Secondary School is about to be closed due to lack of toilets yet the dysfunctional CAMPFIRE concept and its funds are there lying idle or being misappropriated, if CAMPFIRE has funds, why not use them and stop the closing of closing the only secondary school here." Jambezi village key informant.
2. "The campfire project is useless we need to be given power to shoot these animals ourselves. These CAMPFIRE people would rather protect buildings instead of the farmers and their livestock. It seems all these people care about is wild animals not the people." Chezhou village key informant.
3. "We don't even know how this CAMPFIRE thing came about but we hear it was agreed by our elders a long time ago. We honestly see no benefit from it regarding village/district development, so it should be closed down and the animals removed from the villages because surely as human beings, we should be more important than wild animals." Dingani village key informant.
4. "We hear CAMPFIRE has built some structures in wards closest to the main camp of the national park and in areas with high resident wildlife populations. Despite these positive our friends in those wards still complain that the benefits do not cover the costs they incur. Furthermore, the benefits don't get to us even though the very same resident wildlife move through our wards as well wreaking havoc. We should remember that wild animals are always on the move." Tjijuma village key informant.
4. "CAMPFIRE is one useless project that has never assisted us in any manner, we only hear of benefits from neighbouring wards despite the fact that these rampaging wild animals have cost us a fortune in terms of the damage caused to crops and livestock." Mupongola village key informant.

authorities who allegedly had become the sole decision makers in CAMPFIRE. For instance, villagers argued that problem animals were only shot if the authorities (council) located a buyer. Furthermore, it was rarely a group of problem animals but one animal that was shot leaving the other problem animals to roam free. Also, villagers argued that animals were shot when they killed people or when aged while young animals were rarely shot even though they were destructive at village level.

Summarising the attitudes towards THMES encapsulated in the CAMPFIRE programme, FGD participants complained that the THMES in Hwange district were managed in an opaque manner with benefits rarely realised by the villagers who lived side by side with the wildlife. First, the villagers noted that the payment structure was misaligned with the damage caused by the livestock given that the damage was often at individual household level while the payments promised were always at community or village level. In this regard, the private losses incurred by households were often ignored so long as community projects were supported by the CAMPFIRE programme. This situation meant that some villagers (e.g. those without private losses) tended to benefit more than those who incurred private losses because the community benefits give positives for all while the wildlife destruction results in negatives for specific victims.

Second, the villagers argued that they were often excluded in the intricate dealings of CAMPFIRE and almost treated like children who did not know what was good for them. As a result, they often had decisions made for them without them in the CAMPFIRE programme. Villagers explained that they had no say in who consumed the wildlife, the revenue sharing model and the management of the wildlife. As

such, FGD participants felt they were at the mercy of external parties who stood to benefit from the community's involuntary actions of conserving wildlife. The participants reaffirmed that they did not hunt the wildlife not because they were pro-conservations but rather in fear of the retributive measures that had been put in place by authorities for the killing wildlife particularly big game with a high trophy hunting value.

Third, the FGD participants and village key informants complained that the fences that used to protect the villagers in the past had been vandalised or destroyed and no action had been taken to replace them. The villagers increasingly felt that the revenues from wildlife safaris and hunters were being directed away from those issues that affected them. Furthermore, respondents complained that authorities often responded slowly to wildlife encroachment on human livelihoods and often failed to act even if they did respond citing the age or sex of the animal. For instance, juvenile elephants were rarely killed even when they pillaged farms because they were likely to bring more revenue if they were hunted at an older age. Thus, despite the negatives brought by the wildlife, action was considered always subject to the financial value of killing the animal in the THMES. These issues have resulted in the villagers losing confidence in the management of the programme at village level. The perspectives in [Box 3](#) summarise the village feelings towards the management of CAMPFIRE.

The village productive segment ultimately perceived very limited LED related positives from CAMPFIRE. As such, the local community narrative regarding THMES/CAMPFIRE is that of a misfiring programme that has limited contributions towards LED of the district at village level. Ultimately, THMES/CAMPFIRE are increasingly losing

Box 3

Village perspectives on the management of CAMPFIRE.

1. "We once had some white people ask us not to kill a lion that had been wreaking havoc on our livestock because they were studying it. They promised big rewards for our patience with the animal but to this day, none of us here has ever been compensated for any wildlife-related losses of livestock." Mabale group discussion general perspective
2. "Elephants are sold then people are told the amount realised therefrom. Thereafter, we are told to identify viable projects for funding using that money and that is the usually the end of the issue. We apply for the project funding, but those applications never get any recognition. We feel our applications are used and eventually fatten the pockets of those who bring that CAMPFIRE." Chezhou group discussion general perspective
3. "Wild animals are constantly a menace to production processes with elephants devouring crops on the eve of the ripening, reports are made to the Department of Parks in vain. We would want a situation where the Department of Parks or whosoever is responsible takes action to our satisfaction for once." Chenjiri group discussion general perspective.
4. "If an individual kills an animal they are almost immediately arrested as rural communication networks quickly get such information to the authorities. However, when animals violate human possessions the information does not travel as fast and when it reaches the authorities appropriate action is rarely taken." Chenjiri village key informant.

relevance in the development agenda of Hwange district. Over the years of implementing the THMES known as CAMPFIRE, rural communities have been gradually alienated from the market despite forming a significant part of the supply side (also shown in Murombedzi, 1996). This failure to consider all components of the market is a noted challenge of framing the environment from a utilitarian perspective discussed in literature (Parks and Gowdy, 2013). (Norgaard and Bode, 1998) warned that MES and giving the environment a monetary value endangered the perpetuation of contemporary market behaviours such as alienation/capture of communal resources by the elite and powerful. In the case of CAMPFIRE, this is evident as the powerful RDC to a larger extent has alienated the weaker villagers from meaningful participation in the programme due to the perceived value of the proceeds from wildlife.

Village key informants argued that the unequal power dynamics that characterise the governance model of CAMPFIRE are to a larger extent rooted in the cosy relations between the RDC and the village representatives such as the traditional Chiefs and ward councillors. According to the Traditional Leaders Act, the president appoints the minister of Local Government and National Housing and the chiefs; the chiefs in turn nominate the headmen, whom the minister appoints; and the headmen nominate the village heads, whom the chief appoints. Traditional leaders are not elected, normally hold office for life and are appointed from hereditary lineages. The higher offices that appointed traditional leaders, and not the ordinary villagers, have the prerogative of removing them from power. Regarding the elected councillors, who are theoretically found in the lower participatory community structures, key informants argued that these owed allegiances to upward political parties/leaders, who endorsed their candidature not the grassroots' villagers. Consequently, the case observed in programmes such as CAMPFIRE is one where community based natural resource management is more representative of but not accountable to the grassroots.

From the information above, one observes numerous forms of community and individual disempowerment in the THMES/CAMPFIRE programme that allow for misinformation, exclusion and exploitation of the village communities who are the actual custodians of the wildlife resources. Due to the exclusion and other previously highlighted challenges, CAMPFIRE mirrors an institution that has suffered political decay and is in need of review, as it is increasingly irrelevant to the communities. The failure to align CAMPFIRE management to the reality on the ground has seen it fail to directly compensate those injured by negative externalities of the market and prioritise punitive measures for those actions that lower the utility (such as villagers hunting/killing wild animals) derived by the regulators and customers.

6. Conclusion

The continuous disempowerment of the local villagers in Zimbabwean THMES has normalised the abnormal (perpetual disutility) and allowed for the perpetration of a dualized producer base in the programme. The CAMPFIRE challenges discussed in this paper ultimately result in villagers actively participating in the destruction of wildlife as a method of gaining compensation for negative externalities in the THMES. The villagers have developed a negative perspective towards wildlife, see limited economic gain from wildlife and have lost faith in the management processes of the THMES. As such, the CAMPFIRE programme in Zimbabwe is going eastwards to Tanzania rather than remaining in the south in Namibia.

Such situations may have catalysed the illegal hunting iconic lions such as Cecil and other numerous cases of poaching. The villagers clearly weigh the cost of the action with the possible gain in incomes derived from the poachers and the advantage of less animal trouble (disutility factors: guarding fields, destroyed crops, human risk, wildlife fuelling corruption, etc.). Therefore, supporting wildlife plunder (Shooting Cecil the Lion, poaching elephants, rhinos etc.) brings

numerous immediate financial benefits to the villagers that live alongside the wildlife and may be considered a desperate unsung rebellion or protest towards THMES that disempower the villager. Unfortunately, the bold rebellion by the village hero who saves local livestock and crop produce from wildlife is often met with harsh punishment from the State that largely considers issues from the perspective of the powerful AA (the RDC). The crackdown on the village hero does not lead to a solution to the problem but rather uses state sanctioned violence, fear and threats to further disempower the villager who increasingly finds himself losing solid ground to stand on and with no choice but to cheer when they receive news of the death of lions like Cecil. This cheering however must not be confused with detestation of THMES but rather protestations towards failing THMES governance structures. In this regard, reviewing the institutional complex (governance, revenue sharing, property rights, technical capacity and fairness within communities etc.) of CAMPFIRE is of paramount importance if conservation of wildlife is to be fortified in Zimbabwe.

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