Wildlife and Development Series No 1

THE LESSON FROM MAHENYE:

Rural Poverty, Democracy and Wildlife Conservation

Marshall
MURPHREE

IIED

In association with
The CAMPFIRE
Collaborative
Group

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.

Produced and Published by the International Institute for Environment and Development,
3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H ODD, UK.
Sub-editor: Dilys Roe
Design and Production: Eileen Higgins
Printed by Russell Press Ltd, Radford Mill, Norton Street, Nottingham NG7 3HN.
© Africa Resources Trust
ISSN 1361-8628

The full range of titles in this series are:

Number 1

The lesson from Mahenye: Rural poverty, democracy and wildlife conservation.

Marshall Murphree

Number 2

Share and share alike? Equity in CAMPFIRE

Stephen Thomas

Number 3

Lacking confidence?

A gender-sensitive analysis of CAMPFIRE in Masoka village

Nontokozo Nabane

Number 4

The legacy of dualism in decision-making within CAMPFIRE

Stephen Thomas

Number 5

Two views from CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe's Hurungwe District:

Training & motivation. Who benefits & who doesn't?

Cherry Bird and Simon Metcalfe

Number 6

Was Mrs Mutendi only joking?

Access to timber in Zimbabwe's communal areas

C Bird, J Clarke, J Moyo, J M Moyo, P Nyakunu and S Thomas

Number 7

Political ecologies of scale:

The multi-tiered co-management of Zimbabwean wildlife resources

Richard Hasler

Number 8

From liability to asset: Wildlife in the Omay Communal Land of Zimbabwe

Russel Taylor

In Harmony with Nature

Africa's people use a small fraction of the world's resources. They earn a tiny amount of the world's income. But they bear the brunt of its famine, poverty and disease. They also live in an area that is rich in wildlife, but where the wildlife is declining and the environment that sustains it is deteriorating.

This has not always been the case. In traditional, pre-colonial Africa, human populations lived in balance with their environment and in harmony with their wildlife. While they used wildlife, they used it sustainably, and managed it collectively for the common good.

By way of example, the Shona people of Zimbabwe have an axiom *"Nyama ye musango haigochwa"* literally *"the meat you get in the wild is never roasted"*. What it actually means is that if you are favoured by the spirits of your ancestors, who are guardians of the land and the resources on it, and they bring within the scope of your bow and arrow wild meat, be thankful but share it. Don't sit in the bush and eat it by yourself. Take it back to the village and share it with your neighbour. It was traditional rules like this that comprised collective management and ensured sustainability.

With the coming of colonialism, this ability to manage wildlife at community level for the collective benefit was largely destroyed. Ownership in the form of authority over wildlife was removed. British colonialists brought with them concepts evolved over a thousand years earlier in a different context: the concept of the king's game, the idea that wildlife did not belong to people or communities, but to the crown or state. Furthermore, many colonised communities had their land alienated by settlers. In other words they suffered double expropriation. They lost much of their land and they also lost their wildlife.

Since colonisation in 1890, Zimbabwe's population has grown from 800,000 to 10 million. This has resulted in the increased exploitation of marginal land for subsistence agriculture which would have been better suited for wildlife. The outcome is decreased productivity. At another level, the division of land into farms has seen the exploitation of wildlife by individuals. The resource has been individualised by what may be called entrepreneurs, rather than collectively managed. The result generally has been household poverty in Zimbabwe's peasant sector and a shift from long- to short-term management concerns; a culture of poverty in which the individual is preoccupied with survival in the present and where any effective concern for the future is missing. A culture of poverty is one in which the future is discounted at a very high rate.

This is a recipe for accelerated environmental degradation because poverty is both the cause and effect of environmental degradation. The two interact in a vicious spiral of mutual reinforcement. The developed world has an understandable concern with the link between poverty and environmental degradation in developing countries. But the solutions the developed world propounds have their own inconsistencies.

For instance, we are told by development agencies and donor governments that Africa should strive to achieve food self-sufficiency through better agricultural methods improved by new technology. At the same time, this kind of advice seems to ignore the possibility that what Africa really needs is the kind of economic self-sufficiency which becomes the basis of self-sufficiency in food. Since certain types of land use may be more economically productive by using it for wildlife than for marginal agricultural cropping, there is clearly a basis for reconsideration of many of the basic assumptions of "development".

Again, when international agencies do accept the importance of economic productivity, they tend to stress the importance of cash cropping and export of traditional agricultural primary products into highly competitive markets, such as the export of Zimbabwe's beef to the European Union, rather than focusing on markets where Zimbabwe has a competitive edge, such as is the case with wildlife.

Free trade is propounded by the developed world as an engine for economic productivity. But when it comes to trade in commodities where Africa enjoys a comparative advantage, such as wildlife, the same proponents become highly restrictive. The operations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species [CITES] reflect this anomaly.

But the most serious defect of international prescriptions is that they are primarily devices of economic or technological engineering and tend to ignore the institutional structures that compound poverty among the rural poor.

Rights and Responsibilities

Democracy can be defined as an accountable system in which people effectively govern relationships between themselves, and relationships between themselves and resources such as nature for mutual, sustainable benefit. What are the motivational dynamics and institutional structures which make up such a system?

First of all such a system requires territoriality, and membership must be clearly defined. You have first to define the boundary, the area of jurisdiction. Then you define the membership within that territory with a clearly stipulated composition. This is an institutional requirement for proper resource management.

Secondly, you need a system where responsibility and authority are linked. If you assign responsibility to people without authority, you are asking them to do a job without the essential tool to do it. It is no good exhorting the rural poor of Africa to take better care of their resources and giving them the responsibility of doing so, without at the same time providing the authority, the power to do so. However, on the other hand, if you have authority without responsibility, you create a situation in which laws and regulations are made which are often unenforceable.

Thirdly, for institutions that work in resource management, responsibility and authority, or government, must be linked with economic productivity. Economic and political processes must be interconnected. This may appear axiomatic, but there are too many instances in Africa and the world of environmentalism where people are asked to govern relationships among themselves, but are not given the authority to govern, to control and benefit from the relationships between themselves and their resources. People govern themselves effectively when it is in their interests to do so. Thus, there must be a tight relationship between cost and benefit, between resources and representation, between the quality of management input and the quantity of economic input.

Fourthly, there must be long-term security for these institutional arrangements. This is necessary to motivate the resource management and opportunity cost required for sustainability. In other words, the high discount rate of the future which characterises the culture of poverty must be altered. And it is altered to a large degree by institutional stability. Put another way, people will plant a tree and tend it if they know that they and their children will have the right to pick its fruit.

This constitutes what can be called ownership, or perhaps more appropriately, proprietorship: a bundle of rights and responsibilities which allow a unit of government to use a resource, to determine the motive behind that use, to benefit fully from it, and to make it accountable to the constituency of collective interests that it represents. This is a workable manifestation of democracy, defined earlier as a system governing relationships between people and their resources.

But in any discussion of proprietorship there must be a definition of scale. Unfortunately, the matter of scale is frequently forgotten in debates on environment and resource use. There are two important considerations here. Firstly, institutional dynamics suggest that the smaller the unit of proprietorship the better. Increasing numbers introduce increasing possibilities for misunderstanding, an increasing necessity to delegate and increasing scope for malfunctions, including corruption and escalating costs. These can be enormous.

Further, large agencies are less efficient than smaller ones. The reasons for this are quite simple. Self-interest leads individuals to care for what is their direct responsibility. The more distant the monitor, the more feasible evasion becomes.

The rise of global environmentalism has led to a demand for global control of all problems, great or small, extensive or localised. It may sound good but it distances the monitor. Globalism encourages evasion. Certain resources are clearly international common property. The atmosphere is one example and it demands an international regime of management. Other resources such as migratory birds or certain marine species may also be part of the global or regional common property requiring global or regional management. This applies to certain terrestrial migratory species such as those which use the common habitat of the Serengeti and Masai Mara in Tanzania and Kenya.

But most terrestrial wildlife species in Africa exist in relatively fixed habitats and their proprietorship can be fixed to specific farms, communities, or regional habitats. For these it makes institutional nonsense to assign proprietorship to units larger than their range. It would therefore be sensible to apply the maxim: never nationalise management for resources which are owned locally; never regionalise management for resources that are owned nationally; and never globalise management for resources that are owned, because of their nature, regionally. This can be called a rule-of-scale parsimony in the strategy of resource management.

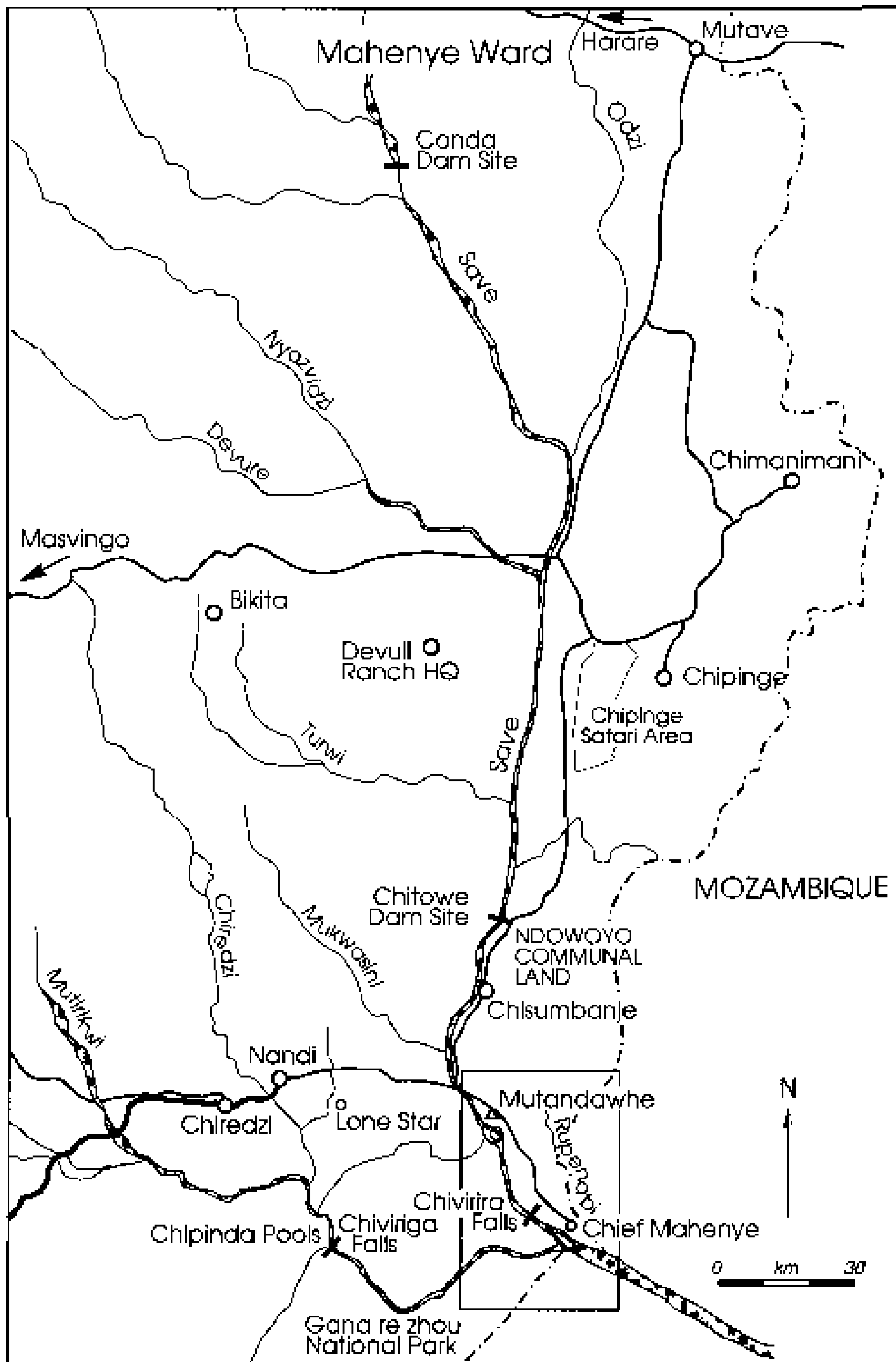
Sustainable Use

African wildlife is a renewable resource. Used at the appropriate level, it is a sustainable resource of value to combat rural poverty. It is also one of the best vehicles for promoting democracy since it is a common property resource demanding collective management at the various levels already defined. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most clear-cut examples of mismanagement that Africa can produce.

Zimbabwe's case demonstrates an example of past failure to take cognisance of the motivational and institutional issues raised here. But, more recently it also offers an example of the possibilities of community involvement and management.

As already indicated, colonialism destroyed a traditional system of wildlife utilisation. The ownership or proprietorship of wildlife was expropriated so that it no longer belonged to rural communities, but to the state. What was the result? First of all, the link between authority and responsibility was broken. The state claimed the authority, and made laws on use, laws which it could not enforce. Communities and local leadership were told to exercise responsibility for the enforcement of these laws but had no real authority to do so. Nor did they have the motivation. Since they were no longer owners or proprietors, there was no economic motivation for collective management. There was no linkage between governance and economic potential of the resource. Furthermore, these communities had no security of tenure. Many had a history of having been moved by government, not once but several times. Under these circumstances, where there was little security of tenure and little effective concern for the future, no investment in the future of wildlife could be made.

The result was opportunistic individualised use of wildlife with no thought of the future - what we usually call poaching. Ownership had given way to open access. Then in the mid-1970s, the government of the day took a hard and realistic look at the situation and decided to take a gamble. It decided to confer genuine proprietorship of wildlife resources on private landowners: the rights and responsibilities to manage and use these resources for their own benefit. After Independence in 1980, this proprietorship was extended to the representatives of people in communal lands under the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) programme. Thus today, outside the national parks and wildlife estate which is managed by the state in trust for the nation, most wildlife is managed by local proprietors, individually or collectively. As a result, the numbers of most species have risen dramatically and, since their value has made them a more competitive form of land use, their range has also expanded significantly.


Mahenye Ward
Harare
Mutave
Odzi
Conda
Dam Site
Save
Nyazvidzi
Devure
Chimanimani
Masvingo
Bikita
Devuli
Ranch HQ
Chipinge
Chipinge
Safari Area
Turwi
Save
Chitowe
Dam Site
MOZAMBIQUE
Mukwasini
Chiredzi
NDOWOYO
COMMUNAL
LAND
Chisumbanje
Mutirikwi
Nandi
Chiredzi
Lone Star
Mutandawhe
Rupembi
N
Chivirira
Falls
Chief Mahenye
Chipinda Pools
Chivirigα
Falls
0
km
30
Gona re zhou
National Park

The Mahenye Prototype

Mahenye is a collection of villages that constitute a ward of about 600 sq. km on the border of the Gonarezhou National Park in the south-east of Zimbabwe. Most of the people were relocated there to make room for the national park. At Independence in 1980, Mahenye provided an example of rural people who were desperately poor, who poached as often as they dared, and who were extremely hostile to the wildlife, and in particular elephants, which raided their fields.

As a result, in 1984 the government permitted safari hunting within Mahenye ward of elephant and buffalo migrating out of the park. The dividends of safari hunting were channelled into the local community which was given security of tenure and the right to management of its wildlife resource in the long-term. Today, the people have their own committees and structures to regulate their own internal relationships, and they make responsible and sustainable decisions. Ten years after the scheme was initiated, there is a welcome resident population of over 300 elephants in Mahenye.

At a meeting of the Mahenye community recently, attention was drawn to the fact that a man from the neighbouring community, a successful entrepreneur who owned 500 head of cattle, was in the habit of grazing his cattle on Mahenye land that had not been used for anything else. What were they to do? They could charge him a nominal rent, or ask him to take his cattle elsewhere and put that land under wildlife. They unanimously decided to put it under wildlife.

Mahenye is an example of how democratic decision-making in responsible resource management can lead to the sustainable use of wildlife to alleviate rural poverty. International policy and regulatory tools such as CITES have a role to play here. Mahenye's continued success will depend to a large extent on finding international clients for its animal products. While CITES may argue that it is only concerned with the trade in endangered species and has nothing against the sustainable use of wildlife, there may be a vast difference between broad statements of intent and their impact on local communities when filtered through cultural perspectives, regulatory procedures, and bureaucratic mechanisms for their implementation.

There is, first of all, an acquisitive bias reflected in the views of a significant segment of the CITES constituency which seeks to reinstate the notion of the king's game in a new, broader proprietorship of wildlife. The North has been accused, in its negotiations on biodiversity, of wanting to turn the natural resources of the South into a global commons with free access for all. This charge is not without foundation. If the proponents of global ownership are successful, the people of Mahenye will discover that the wildlife they lost to colonialists and regained after Independence, has once again been expropriated in the name of global environmentalism or protectionism.

Secondly, despite protestations to the contrary, there is a fundamental reactional pessimism towards wildlife utilisation to

be found in certain elements of CITES. Born of a distrust of the practical judgement of people like those in Mahenye and a sense of technical and philosophical superiority which parallels earlier colonial concepts of ethnocentric moral superiority, this view sees animal utilisation as the thin end of the wedge. Once you let people take impala, they will want to take elephant. Once you allow them to take one buffalo, they will want to take more, this reasoning goes. But an excessive application of the thin end of the wedge argument may lead to moral absolutism and to conservation of the most inflexible kind. Certainly, if it had been followed by the Zimbabwean authorities, the people of Mahenye would never have achieved the sort of success they now enjoy.

Thirdly, there is a bias in CITES towards technicism: the belief in the ability of technocrats to provide viable programmes of action. Unfortunately, however, the effect is not usually action but bureaucratic constipation and implementational paralysis. Some may conclude CITES is more interested in documenting the decline and disappearance of species than in practical action to prevent their extinction.

Solutions

How can these problems of perception and implementation be resolved? The best place to start is with the people themselves. Listen to what they think, what they say, what they want. This is where wildlife management begins and where it ends. Ninety per cent of wildlife management is really people management, or rather, people's self-management. If people are opposed to the presence of wildlife, listen to them seriously and, perhaps, do not even waste your resources and time on protection. It is likely to be a losing battle. If national biodiversity concerns are of overriding importance, then the nation will have to buy out resources and their habitats at full market value - and be prepared to pay the management and political costs. Impoverished peasants can never be expected to bear that burden.

If people are interested in regaining the use of their wildlife, then they must be given some credit for common-sense, trusted and given proprietorship. This can be done progressively if necessary, but expeditiously and with the minimum of regulatory control. Let them devise their own management plans. They will be better than anybody else's, and probably more conservative. In one CAMPFIRE programme in Zimbabwe, for instance, the local management consistently cut their off-take quotas below those set by the national wildlife authority.

The new proprietors of wildlife must be helped to develop their managerial capacity, not through imposed controls, but through constructive extension. Management authorities for wildlife should shift from being policemen to being effective extension agencies.

Certainly, they can help communities in their control requirements when this is needed. This goes back to scale parsimony and resource management. When enforcement can be handled at local levels, let it be handled by local authorities. But when enforcement requirements spill over into the national, regional, or perhaps rarely, international contexts, let it be handled at the appropriate level with greater efficiency. It is possible to be tough as long as the mandate to be so arises democratically from the wildlife proprietors themselves and not from some extraneous concern which does not bear the cost of, or hold the ultimate responsibility for, the wildlife in question.

This is a description of representative owner-driven democracy in action in the field of sustainable wildlife use. This is the arena in which CITES can find a genuine role in harmony with the responsibilities of national sovereignty. This is the way in which the voice of millions of Africa's rural poor can be heard in the deliberations of CITES.

The development of sustainable wildlife use must be regarded as an evolving process, not as a fixed project with a single formula. It involves a variety of experimentation which will throw up both failures and success. Its essence must be that it is a self-evaluating system, self-correcting through feedback. Its objective should not be to meet formal requirements of abstract planning, but to

do the job right, however many adjustments this may require.

The needs of Africa's wildlife proprietors must be fitted to the mechanisms of international trade. Where control mechanisms are mandated by the needs of these proprietors, our task is then to encourage rather than inhibit international trade in wildlife products. Since this is the central component for the success of their use, such a trade, far from being evil, becomes a positive good for the conservation of wildlife.

In the final analysis, while conservationists can advise and help local communities, they should recognise that their role is essentially a subsidiary one. It is after all not them but the people of Mahenye and many others like them, who will determine the fate of Africa's magnificent wildlife.

The Wildlife and Development Series is produced by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) to highlight key topics in the field of sustainable wildlife use. The Series is aimed at policy makers, researchers, planners and extension workers in government and non-government organisations world-wide. This Series arises from two sources. First by invitation of IIED to others working in this field. Secondly from IIED's own work.

This is an invitation paper. It is one of a series that reviews a selected feature of contemporary importance from Zimbabwe's Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). It was arranged and edited by the Africa Resources Trust on behalf of the CAMPFIRE Collaborative Group supported by the Biodiversity Support Programme (a consortium of the World Wildlife Fund, the Nature Conservancy and the World Resources Institute) with funding by the United States Agency for International Development.

Author

Professor Marshall Murphree is Director of the Centre for Applied Social Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe, P O Box MP167, Mount Pleasant, Harare, and Chairman of the Board of the Department of National Parks and Wild Life Management of Zimbabwe. The Centre has been involved in CAMPFIRE through socio-economic surveys and research on institutional and policy issues which assist with implementation of the programme. An earlier version of this paper was prepared for the Symposium on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wildlife, 'Kyoto Forum: In Harmony with Wildlife', held in Kyoto, Japan, on 7 March 1992.

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 Wild Life Management has been referred to as the Wild Life Department in this series of papers.

1995

IIED

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

3 Endsleigh Street,
London WC1H ODD, UK

Telephone: +44 (0)171-388 2117
Facsimile: +44 (0)171-388 2826
E-mail: iieduk@gn.apc.org