

# conservation

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## In this issue

**Problems with the bushmeat trade in Africa**

**Environmental protection across borders in southern Africa**

**Wildlife conservation in Kenya**

**Linking conservation and livelihoods in the MDGs**

**Can resettlement schemes be successful?**

## Can wildlife-based development be combined with land reform?

**L**and-use policies are controversial throughout southern Africa, particularly Zimbabwe. Land redistribution is potentially important for supporting smallholder livelihoods and many large farms in Zimbabwe are being divided into smaller areas. At the same time wildlife ranching, which requires large areas of land, is being promoted as a way to earn foreign exchange.

Both land uses have benefits: dividing farms provides more people with land, whilst wildlife management is better for the environment and generates income from tourists and hunters. Wildlife ranching is not so beneficial to the rural poor, however. Managing the problems caused by these contrasting uses is difficult, but important for rural development in the region.

Previous developments, such as the CAMPFIRE scheme, have identified wildlife management as the most suitable land use for south-eastern Zimbabwe. These developments show that dryland agriculture is not always feasible, which supports the case for wildlife-based approaches. Research from the Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa Programme examines a new approach that aims to combine wildlife-based development and land reform.

Arguments supporting wildlife approaches are based on misunderstandings of farming systems, however, and ignore the importance of smallholder livestock-based farming as a livelihood strategy. Wildlife management schemes are usually promoted by white farmers looking to diversify, indigenous elites looking to capitalise on their new land resources, and environmental groups. These groups often ignore the needs of the rural poor.

The research argues that:

- Wildlife ranching does not work well with other land uses, particularly those associated with poor local people.
- Poor rural communities receive few benefits from large-scale wildlife management schemes and very few jobs are created by such schemes.

- Alternatives to wildlife management, such as beef ranching, are also unlikely to benefit smallholders.

Managing different land uses is complicated further by the changing politics in Zimbabwe, which has included land invasions and resettlement schemes. To reduce tensions, attempts are being made to combine wildlife management with land reform, such as in the Save Valley conservancy (a large commercial wildlife scheme) and the Gonarezhou National Park. These projects can increase the involvement of local people in wildlife

management. Smallholder-based wildlife schemes potentially offer greater benefits to the poor than existing large-scale systems.

Wildlife management is a controversial issue in Zimbabwe. There are many

different groups involved, with very different levels of political support and power. Policymakers need to:

- balance long-term goals, such as increasing earnings from foreign exchange, with the immediate interests of the rural poor
- negotiate between the different groups who are pushing for very different forms of land use
- experiment with programmes that offer more opportunities for poor people to benefit through employment or revenue sharing.

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'Wildlife Management and Land Reform in Southeastern Zimbabwe: A Compatible Pairing or a Contradiction in Terms?' IDS Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa Research Paper Number 1, 2003  
[www.ids.ac.uk/ids/env/PDFs/wRP01.pdf](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/env/PDFs/wRP01.pdf)



## Problems with the bushmeat trade in Africa

**B**ushmeat – wildlife hunted for human consumption – is important to the livelihoods of many people in central and west Africa. An increasing number of researchers and campaigners are asking if the bushmeat trade is sustainable.

Bushmeat is an important source of income for hunters, traders and their communities. It is also a source of protein and an important safety net against crop failure and other threats to wellbeing and income. The bushmeat trade is expanding however. It has an increasingly global dimension, particularly bushmeat being bought by people of African origin living overseas. Wildlife hunting is changing from a subsistence activity to a commercial industry. Although accurate data is difficult to obtain, the researchers argue that this growth is unsustainable. Prices are increasing, and several key wildlife species – mainly primates – are threatened with extinction.

Finding successful solutions to this problem will need to engage all stakeholders involved in the production and consumption of bushmeat. A key problem is that the current policy debate is driven by international environmental campaign groups. Their arguments often fail to consider the different cultural perspectives of people involved in the bushmeat trade. Some people in Africa feel their values and preferences are being ignored for the sake of wildlife conservation.

The research shows:

- Excluding local people completely from protected areas can be expensive, difficult to enforce and damaging to rural livelihoods.

Some people in Africa feel their values and preferences are being ignored for the sake of wildlife conservation

- An alternative is to encourage selective hunting of less-threatened species, although this can also be hard to introduce successfully.
  - The logging industry, which often supplies bushmeat to employees, needs to be included in discussions. Traders are another entry point, but they are more difficult to control.
- Another approach is to reduce demand amongst consumer groups. Urban consumers, who pay high prices for bushmeat, need to be encouraged to choose alternatives to endangered species. Poor rural consumers will need access to alternative protein sources, which must be cheap and easily available. This is not always easy; the rarest species are often the most valuable and sometimes there are few alternative protein sources or livelihood strategies.

Given the challenges associated with each of these approaches, the researchers argue for an integrated policy and institutional framework. The following recommendations are made:

- All the different stakeholders involved in the trade need to be identified and involved in discussions.
- The bushmeat trade should be legalised to enable more open discussions.
- An improved policy environment is required, engaging forestry, environment and finance ministries, with the aim of producing national action plans.
- Connected hunting and non-hunting zones may help to conserve species: in 'sink' areas hunting is allowed, with nearby 'source' areas protected to allow species recovery.

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'Economic commodity or environmental crisis? An interdisciplinary approach to analysing the bushmeat trade in central and west Africa', *Area*, 35 (4), 2003

## Environmental protection across borders in southern Africa

**T**ransfrontier conservation initiatives are environmental management programmes that cross political boundaries and national borders. The aim is for a combined management approach to produce positive environmental outcomes, increased revenue from ecotourism and benefits for local communities.

The benefits to communities living in or alongside conservation areas are variable, however, and often they are not treated as equal stakeholders. Research from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, looks at community-based approaches to transfrontier conservation across southern Africa.

Namibia has a long history of community-based conservation projects, strengthened in recent years by strong national policy commitments and legal frameworks. A project run by the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation organisation distributed tourist revenues to communities, supported markets for people to sell their products to tourists and created a labour pool of local

people for conservation work. The guiding principles of this project – returning the control of local wildlife to communities – came to determine national policy. Another successful project was the creation of conservancies, groups of commercial farms where neighbouring land owners have pooled resources to conserve and use wildlife sustainably.

Legislation has since passed to support group-owned wildlife businesses.

South Africa's transfrontier initiatives, meanwhile, give economic considerations equal importance to conservation. Community involvement in conservation is added into transfrontier initiatives, rather than forming the basis for them. They are far less clear about specifying who will benefit. Particular challenges are raised in the proposed Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, which straddles the borders of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The history of war in these areas and current tensions about land tenure and distribution in Zimbabwe mean the prospects for community participation are not good.

Projects in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe aim to build on the successes of local-level conservancies in border areas. Communities share common cultural and historical ties even if they are separated by national borders. Strengthening these ties may lead to greater co-operation, and the re-establishment of wildlife migration patterns.

Transfrontier initiatives that enable the

participation of local communities reflect a desire to manage resources across borders, rather than a desire to create large international protected areas. While these initiatives are complex and challenging, they also make it clear that local people and wildlife should both benefit from conservation.

The research warns that:

- The lack of consultation in South Africa may make donors and non-governmental organisations unwilling to support transfrontier park initiatives.
- This may have negative consequences for the communities which live within the boundaries of such initiatives.
- The underlying principles of some models seem more concerned with expanding national parks without having to make investments in land purchase. As long as this situation prevails, there is a strong chance that transfrontier conservation initiatives will not benefit the livelihoods of local people.

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'Placing the Local in the Transnational: Communities and Conservation Across Borders in Southern Africa' in 'African Environment and Development: Rhetoric, Programs and Realities', edited by W. Moseley and B. Ikubolajeh Logan, Ashgate Publishing, 2004

## Linking conservation and livelihoods in the MDGs

**A**lthough poor communities are often closely connected to natural resources, conservation efforts are often separate from poverty reduction and livelihood programmes. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) could provide a framework to integrate poverty reduction efforts and natural resource conservation. Yet, the current state of the MDGs enhances this divide.

Conservation and development practitioners often work with different priorities: many people see environmental sustainability as a separate issue from development, despite recognition over 30 years ago of the need to integrate the two. Research from the International Institute for Environment and Development, UK, examines the links between natural resource conservation and poverty reduction in the MDGs.

MDG 7, which aims to 'ensure environmental sustainability', considers conservation in association with development but is not included in other goals. Within MDG 7 there are references to land covered by natural forests (indicator 25) and biodiversity (indicator 26). However, these refer to 'quantity' measurements, such as the area of land and the number of species conserved. They ignore other important conservation indicators.

- The focus on quantity measurements ignores the rights of the people living in and around protected areas and the different costs and benefits of these areas.
- The indicators overlook the environmental value of many natural ecosystems, such as agricultural land and agro-forestry areas.

**Many people see conservation as a separate issue from development and the current state of the MDGs enhances this**

- The focus on state-run conservation areas excludes other types of community conservation, such as areas designated for protection by indigenous people and local communities and those under private ownership. Including conservation-related indicators only in MDG 7 reinforces the distinction between conservation and poverty reduction efforts. Given the high dependence of many poor communities on natural resources, expanding the MDG indicators to link conservation and poverty concerns explicitly would provide a framework that could achieve the combined aims of poverty reduction and sustainable development. The MDGs could better reflect this potential in several ways by:

case study


### Wildlife conservation in Kenya

The Maendeleo kwa Uhifadhi (MKU) in Kenya is taking a new approach to wildlife conservation. MKU is a community-led project which aims to provide economic incentives for local Maasai to manage their land in ways that support both wildlife and cattle. In exchange, landowners receive a share of benefits from visiting tourists. Originally a conservation programme on a single piece of land, MKU has expanded to include neighbouring landowners. A Landowners Association has been launched, which allows members to become shareholders in conservation businesses.

The case study shows:

- The 'community' is a group of neighbouring landholders who have chosen to participate in a particular programme. This is an important contrast with other conservation projects which are started by outsiders.
- Local people were initially suspicious of MKU. It was only after a boundary dispute between the directors of the project and local landowners that tensions were reduced.
- Before MKU, many Maasai lost land because they did not have the correct documentation to support their claims to that land. MKU's existence relies on increasing recognition of the importance of paper documents, such as land surveys, contractual agreements and meeting minutes. These have become essential to the lives of the Maasai participating in the project.

MKU has succeeded in promoting community conservation by enabling people to stay where they are. Their lifestyles have changed, however, and so have relationships within the community. Pastoral people have come to rely much more on their landholdings than before. The emphasis on conservation means that they have had to become accountable for what they are not doing to their land. People are being paid to abandon strategies – like mining, agriculture, charcoal production – that were formerly part of their livelihoods. For a project like MKU, this approach is working at present, but questions remain about the long-term sustainability of conservation as a means of economic development.



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- integrating environmental considerations into all MDGs
- considering a wider range of land uses and resource types
- including indicators that reflect local perceptions of the environment as well as global conservation and development priorities
- focusing less on quantity objectives and more on the quality of resources being conserved
- encouraging different types of management structures, such as community-conserved or co-managed areas, which build on the knowledge and management practices of local communities

- including local values, rights and responsibilities and involving indigenous and marginalised groups in state-run protected areas.

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'The MDGs and natural resources management: reconciling sustainable livelihoods and resource conservation or fuelling the divide?' in 'The MDGs and local processes', edited by David Satterthwaite, IIED, 2004  
[www.iied.org/docs/mdg/MDG-booklet.pdf](http://www.iied.org/docs/mdg/MDG-booklet.pdf)



## Can resettlement schemes be successful?

**M**any national parks and nature reserves in Central Africa are created for the interests of scientists and tourists from developed countries. Local populations are being removed and forced to resettle elsewhere. Their needs are ignored and there have been limited efforts to assist the resettling process. As a result, few programmes have been successful in their aims of protecting the environment.

People have been forcibly removed from all the areas protected for conservation in the Congo River Basin and denied any opportunities to challenge their resettlement. Resettlement programmes create many risks for the people involved. Moving to a new area can create health risks, food insecurity and homelessness. It can also reduce job security and income. Language and cultural barriers can marginalise groups and existing populations in resettlement areas may resent their arrival.

Research shows that:

- Many officials feel they have the right to move any groups they choose. Officials believe they own the land, not the people who live there.
- Central Africa's governments have no consideration for the fate of ethnic

minorities, which they view as backward.

- These governments have not acknowledged that biodiversity protection is possible without forcible removals (this has occurred in other parts of Africa).
- Many policy-makers and conservationists consider inhabitants of national parks as hunter-gatherers who are unable to participate in successful models of conservation.
- International conservation agencies ignore the fact that removing indigenous people and excluding them from an area without compensation violates both international law and African Union directives.

Few parks have an official programme to protect the interests of local people. Only one park, the Korup National Park in Cameroon, has any measures to help resettlement. However, ignoring the needs of local people can disrupt conservation efforts. Displaced people often return to parks, resulting in conflict with authorities and sometimes leading to violence and deaths. People removed from their homes will often resent conservation programmes, and be less inclined to hunt in a sustainable way. They will often increase their hunting to supply markets in their new destinations. Greater dependence on agriculture also affects the environment in a region, with large areas of natural vegetation cleared for crops and livestock.

If resettlement programmes are to be successful, international conservationists and policy-makers in the region must

recognise that:

- attempts to protect biodiversity in parks are unworkable if wider social and political issues are ignored
- resettlement programmes that do not consider issues of ownership and traditional land rights are unlikely to succeed
- conservation projects must offer resettled people areas of primary rainforest as a source of non-timber forest products and for hunting and fishing non-endangered species
- persuading people to farm livestock as replacements for bush-meat is difficult as people are reluctant to change their dietary habits
- forests often represent

more than simply a source of food; ethnic groups will often have strong spiritual connections to the forest that cannot be recreated elsewhere.

Resettling people is a difficult process. People cannot simply be moved to a new location and expected to adapt. They need considerable support to ensure the process is successful in protecting both the environment and interests of these people. To achieve this, policy makers and conservationists must make greater efforts to consider the needs of local people.

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'Conservation-related resettlement in Central African Republic' by Kai Schmidt-Soltau, Development and Change, 34 (3), pp525-551, 2003

**People have been forcibly removed from all the areas protected for conservation in the Congo River Basin**

## useful websites

International Institute for Environment and Development - Biodiversity and Livelihoods Group  
[www.iied.org/blg/index.html](http://www.iied.org/blg/index.html)

Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa  
[www.ids.ac.uk/slsa](http://www.ids.ac.uk/slsa)

Food and Agriculture Organization – Biological Diversity  
[www.fao.org/biodiversity](http://www.fao.org/biodiversity)

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)  
[www.worldwildlife.org](http://www.worldwildlife.org)

Eldis – biodiversity  
[www.eldis.org/biodiversity](http://www.eldis.org/biodiversity)

Earth Trends  
<http://earthtrends.wri.org>

The Wild Foundation  
[www.wild.org](http://www.wild.org)

Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation  
[www.irdnc.org.na](http://www.irdnc.org.na)

TRAFFIC  
[www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)

Fauna & Flora International  
[www.fauna-flora.org](http://www.fauna-flora.org)

Bushmeat Crisis Task Force  
[www.bushmeat.org](http://www.bushmeat.org)

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