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Natural Resources and Sustainable Livelihoods in Mozambique: Livelihoods and Local Institutions in Zambézia Province

Introduction

This briefing describes the different institutions that govern access to and use of land, forest and wild resources in two study sites in the central Mozambican province of Zambézia and an assessment of the importance of these resources to local livelihood strategies.

Research was carried out in two study sites. The first, in the district of Morrumbala, is located in the central forest belt running across the province from west to east and allowed the researchers to examine the natural resource aspects of the livelihoods of forest-dwelling communities. The research was concentrated in the administrative post of Derre (population of 57,000 people).

The second study site, in the district of Maganja da Costa, is located on the coastal strip in the northern part of the province in an area where there has been a long history of conflict regarding natural resource use, particularly between large land holding private sector entities and the local communities. Research here focussed on the administrative post of Bajone (population of 55,000 people).

Key issues

- How do people gain access to and control over land, forests, wildlife, etc. and what are the benefits from the exploitation of local natural resources?
- What are the arrangements between the new institutions emerging in the context of the decentralisation and older institutions, and how do these affect access to natural resources?
- What are the livelihood strategies used by local people?

Local livelihoods

Livelihood strategies in both study areas were overwhelmingly oriented towards the use of local natural resources. Agriculture as a means of survival

was closely followed in importance by hunting and fishing and all artesanal work (pottery, basketry, carpentry, etc.) was also dependent upon local supplies of natural raw materials. Agriculturally, those families that have been able to clear sufficient land, adopt a fallow system that leaves fields to rest for a period of two years. Some families keep small stock which are gradually being re-introduced, but very few have access to traction animals, such as oxen or cattle.

Two particular strategies for diversifying the survival base of families were identified. These were migration of (mostly) young men to the cities and the operation of a system known as *ganho-ganho*. This system of providing labour in the fields to other families in return for payment, functioned mostly as a form of barter trade, whereby payment was made predominantly in manufactured items rather than cash or local produce. Men have more possibilities to move out to other areas to earn *ganho-ganho* for their families than women, who stay at home to take care to the children and to farm. However, there are also some women labourers, mainly widows with family responsibilities, because families headed by women are the poorest and the most vulnerable.

Certainly, youth emigration to the cities to get employment is an important strategy to help their parents and relatives living in rural areas. Families with members working in the cities were identified as having more financial resources than others, as were those who had established small-scale trading activities on the informal market. These families were more often able to employ outside labour to assist in the development of their *machambas*.

The production of traditional alcoholic drinks and the sale of domestic animals and medicinal plants were also identified by the groups as important livelihood strategies and are widely practised.

In Morrumbala, there has been a proliferation in illegal harvesting activities of forest products and, although low paid, this had provided a level of employment for men, hence contributing some cash to the household.

In Maganja da Costa commercial agricultural employment on the plantations had in the past been an important source of employment, although now its is much decreased. Bankruptcy, war and other economic hardships created a mass of unemployed and poorer families.

In both districts a lack of market infrastructure impairs the sale of local crop surpluses, although people have developed trading links with neighbours, such as the province of Nampula or, in the case of Morrumbala, with Malawi. These links serve for the acquisition of manufactured goods as well, and are strengthened by the fact that many people had spent time in these areas as refugees during the war.

There was no evidence of the exploitation of wildlife for income generation, even though this contributes significantly to home consumption. Fishing is though is an important source of livelihood, providing income, as well as providing protein for the family. However, the use of poisonous plants for fishing was identified as one of the main problems contributing to the reduction of fish stocks.

Finally, although not quantified, the contribution of non-timber forest products to household consumption is important. Mushrooms, wild fruits, roots, honey, etc. play an important note in balancing the diet, and also offer some food in periods of hardship (arising from drought, floods, or other natural or man-made phenomena.)

Understanding the contribution of natural resources to sustainable livelihoods requires an understanding of the macro policies and state institutions governing access to these resources (see Research Brief 1) and also the workings of formal and informal institutions at lower levels, and how both regulate access to resources. The following section examines some of these local institutions and their role in governing natural resource access and use.

Decentralised local institutions

In addition to the formal administrative structures of the state at a district level there are also so-called informal structures. The most important is the traditional leadership of the area, but traditional healers and religious leaders are also significant. Formal and informal institutions co-exist in Maganja da Costa and Morrumbala districts, as in other parts of the country.

The district council is led by the district administrator (DA) who is nominated by the governor and is a political appointee. The administrative posts and

localities, which are part of district administrative divisions at lower levels, are headed by 'heads' of posts (*Chefes dos Postos*) and presidents of localities (*Presidentes das Localidades*) that are either appointed by the district administrator or elected by the community.

Apart from the DA, directors of various sectoral ministries compose the district administration. This includes district directors of Education, Health, Agriculture & Rural Development, Social Affairs, State Security and the police. However, these are linked to respective ministries and not only to the district administration. Generally, a team of six or seven employees supports the Administrator and takes care of day-to-day state administrative functions. As regards communication, co-ordination, and interaction both inter and intra department, there is a strong relationship between different ministerial departments represented at district level in Maganja da Costa, but not in Morrumbala district headquarters.

Village committees are accompanied by a series of (usually smaller) organisations such as the local branch of the Mozambican Women's Organization (OMM), neighbourhood chiefs, production chiefs and co-operatives, all tied into smaller groups of people around the village president. There are also secretaries of mass organisations such as the OMM and the Mozambican Youth Organization (OJM). The village has a president and a small number of chiefs who constitute the village council (sometimes called dynamising groups or village committees). A number of these structures have co-ordinating roles.

There is, however, poor communication, co-ordination and Cupertino within the locality structures and with district headquarter levels. The nearer the leaders are to the administration structures, the better the communication is. The problem of co-ordination is compounded by the existence of poor channels of communication within the district headquarters and locality structures. The channels of communication are not structured in a manner that ensures quick, precise and extensive delivery of decisions, inputs and outputs.

Associated with the issue of poor communication is the problem of inadequate capacity for exercising authority. The system lacks the organisational mechanisms for exercising the designated authority at its various levels. Local authorities' directive, supervisory and co-ordinating capacities are circumscribed by a lack of leverage over sectoral ministries. The central government controls the administrative resources, particularly finance and human resources. Invariably central government in Mozambique has monopolised

the most productive revenue sources and has left the local authorities with relatively inflexible and unproductive sources of revenue. These revenues have not only been difficult to mobilise, but also insufficient for the local management needs. This also happens at the district levels in relation to administrative posts at community level.

Further down the hierarchy, the administrative units become rather diffuse after the locality level. Central state institutions are totally absent. In these areas we find communities or *povoações*, which are organised according to lineage or family ties and other community bonds.

Traditional authorities

In both of the study areas the most visible structures are the traditional authorities. Traditional leaders have royal lineage and hold tribal authority. They are accepted in many places, although their legitimacy in some areas is questioned. This situation arises from the existence of a significant number of so-called traditional leaders who were elevated by the colonial government or RENAMO to this status, but who do not actually have royal lineage. In addition, there are a number of headmen and sub-headmen, who were imposed by the government or RENAMO, instead of being chosen by the clan, as it was customary to do in the times before colonialism.

The traditional leaders appear to have greater authority over resource use and control than local government structures. The local government structures have no power over management of indigenous resources. Very few people said that they approach the '*grupos dinamizadores*', secretaries and president of locality looking for land. Only few secretaries or '*grupos dinamizadores*' who have close relationships with traditional leaders or are part of his family appear to have some authority over resource use and control. But before they allocate land to the community they must speak to his chiefs.

In both study areas, the chief that "owned" the land carries out transmission of land rights through the institutions of family, marriage, with oversight. It is commonly accepted that all the land belongs to the chief, who may make the rules regarding allocation and pass them down to the villagers. The issue of ownership of land is complex. The chief can take binding decisions on any matters related to natural resources, which exist in the area of his control, without the need to consult the wider community. However, in principle, the chief is not the owner of the land in the sense of individual and exclusive

rights to it, and cannot alienate it without consulting his council or community. Once land is allocated to members, neither the chief nor council can claim it.

Traditional authorities are thus accessible to their people. The fact that local government structures are often not available in most areas of our study means that people continue to use traditional chiefs in management of their livelihoods. Some NGOs operating in Maganja da Costa and Morrumbala find it easier and more fruitful to work through traditional chiefs in calling meetings and doing development work, for example.

Many of the species-related controls in operation are based on traditional religion, and they include both totem-related taboos and species that are connected to ancestral worship or witchcraft. Other controls are more pragmatic: for example, the widely mentioned norm that trees producing edible fruits should not be cut.

The space-related controls in the study areas are traditionally protected forest and woodlands, mostly prominent areas, including graveyards, propitiation sites, and places of historical importance. All these are somehow linked to beliefs in ancestral spirits. These are held to be alive, and no resource extraction is allowed from places to which they are closely linked. Apart from burial sites, protected forest and woodlands, in Morrumbala-Derre, trees such as *nhatsegua* and *nhamiguadicua* are still not used for building houses, as they are believed to cause family disputes, divorce or illness. In other parts of Mozambique, the cutting of live trees or branches thereof, the setting of fires and clearing of fields are forbidden. Other rules prohibit the use of indecent language, the wearing of the colour red, and some other behaviour-related prohibitions. On the other hand, collecting dead wood fruits and mushrooms, grazing cattle and even extracting clay are permitted outside most sacred areas.

Other rules prohibit the use of some lakes for fishing without traditional ceremonies. For example, in Maganja da Costa if someone want to fish in Morla, Nadji and Dadamela lakes it is necessary to speak with traditional leaders or their relatives because only specific individuals are allowed to make fishing ceremonies. In contrast, in Morrumbala-Derre, in the lakes called Mantendela and Seatepa, villagers do traditional ceremonies when they want to fish.

Some initial findings

The use and benefit from natural resources is an extremely important facet of the livelihoods of local people in the study areas. People sustain themselves almost exclusively on the basis of agricultural activities,

hunting and fishing. Other natural resources provided by the forests and the sea play important secondary roles in subsistence and provide opportunities for small-scale commercial activities.

The role played by traditional leadership figures prominently in the allocation of use rights for natural resources is certainly of greater significance than the role played by State administrative structures or government departments. Kinship and friendship networks are also widely used to obtain access. Traditional taboos and the role of traditional healers and leaders in the control of natural resource use are also strongly apparent.

The authority of these institutions has diminished over time, however, partly as a result of growing confusion over the multiplicity of authorities involved, and partly due to the erosion of traditional beliefs.

Accountability of the local State structures to the populations of the study areas is almost non-existent and in Bajone particularly there is a deeply held scepticism regarding the government's capacity and will to undertake reforms to natural resource management practices.

The policy objectives of the government's programme regarding the exploitation of land and forest resources are not being realised as yet. There is little evidence of community involvement in decisions regarding the award of concession rights to the private sector as envisaged by the relevant legislation.

The creation of local level consultative bodies involving traditional leaders is being implemented in the study areas as a result of the promulgation of Decree 15/2000 and is directed towards the mobilisation of local people in support of local government programmes. However, sector specific approaches for the establishment of consultative and management bodies, such as that envisaged in the Forest and Wildlife Law, are not in evidence as yet in the study areas.

The private sector in both the study areas is dominated by entities that control large land holdings but have no capital with which to develop their activities (Bajone) or (semi) illegal operations that are interested in utilising the present licensing systems for short term extractive activities (Derre).

Future research

The next phase of the research will address the following key issues:

- How has implementation of the land law, in particular the recognition of community rights and the establishment of community level land rights-holding institutions, impacted upon the livelihoods of rural people in Zambézia? [Case study of the land tenure component of the Zambézia Agricultural Development Project]
- What is the impact of the new approach of the Mozambican government to the management of forest resources and can this realise the full potential of the community based natural resource management approach? [Case study of Derre Forest Reserve]
- How has the overall process of decentralisation affected local access to and use of natural resources? What type of powers are being allocated to whom, and what impact does this have on the emergence of new institutions? [Case study of decentralisation processes in Derre and Bajone]

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONS AND POLICY PROCESSES (SLSA)

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