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# The Conflict Between Food Security and Wildlife Conservation in Rural Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

Food security for rural populations in Zimbabwe is heavily dependent on the local natural resource base. Thus natural resource management programmes directly affect the livelihood strategies and food security of local households. The conflict between Zimbabwe's rural populations and wildlife mega fauna (especially elephants (*Loxodonta africana*), lions (*Panther leo*), and buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*)) motivated the creation of the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources Use (CAMPFIRE). CAMPFIRE, implemented officially in 1989, created what was seen as a novel approach to CBNRM which aimed to create an economic value for wildlife conservation for the benefit of local people involved in the resource use. These projects typically attempt to foster community development through the promotion of independent ventures on communal lands, typically linked to sport hunting or wildlife viewing and cultural tourism. Conservation gains are expected as local residents then have the financial incentives to limit poaching and to maintain the wildlife habitat on their territory.

Yet there has been little analysis of the influencing factors on these processes with a holistic perspective. It is imperative to not just understand the livelihood strategies undertaken given the capitals available, but to also understand the context and influencing factors that determine the access, rights and ability to use these capitals. This study assesses the different factors affecting rural household access to natural resources and thus their food security options in four villages in Zimbabwe within a context of the CAMPFIRE programme.

Ultimately this study concludes overall that due to the restrictive context of the institutional landscape and subsequent governance system surrounding conservation in Zimbabwe, the CBNRM discourse has reinforced the protectionist conservation regime it was trying to counter to the significant detriment of local food security and the subsequent dependence of local people on external food aid. Learning from these findings, key lessons are identified for use by the proponents of future natural resource management schemes that aim to satisfy not only conservation goals but development and adaptation too, through placing communities at the centre of their concerns.

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