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TITLE: Exploring community-based ecotourism development in land reform communities in Zimbabwe: A case study of Masera community in Beitbridge district.

Authors: Mtulisi Moyo

Institution: Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST)

Email address: moyomthulisi@gmail.com

Co-author: Doctor Brian Boshoff

Institution: University of the Witwatersrand

Email address brian.boshoff@wits.ac.za

Presenting Author: Mtulisi Moyo (PhD Student NUST)

Email address moyomthulisi@gmail.com

+264 814666702 cell phone

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to review empirical evidence concerning community-based land use in Zimbabwe and its potential to contribute to alleviate poverty in communal areas. This paper explores how community-based ecotourism was developed and managed as a strategy to alleviate poverty in Masera community, Beitbridge district. The paper identified key players, analyzed their role in the management of the farm under community-based ecotourism, particular attention was focused on the contribution of the project on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries. The paper identified both monetary and non-monetary benefits of the project. Qualitative analysis was deemed the most appropriate, given the exploratory and evaluative nature of the research. A combination of observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and document review were used to collect data for this research. Secondary data was derived from textbooks, journals, reports, magazines, wildlife survey reports and newspapers among others. The data collected was centred on the sources of revenue from wildlife land use, total revenue collected, sharing of project benefits and general problems encountered from wildlife land use. The findings of the study confirmed that community-based ecotourism can bring financial benefits for households as well as biodiversity conservation, although economic growth for the community has been very limited. The study is envisaged to be valuable to a variety of institutions, such as the central government, land policy-makers, land use and other planners, environmental awareness groups, civic organizations, researchers and tourism operators. Findings and recommendations are expected to be utilized in reviewing and re-thinking land reform and rural development approaches in agricultural marginal areas.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Prior to independence, much of the agricultural land in the Zimbabwe was alienated by the colonial administration and gazetted as private land, leaving much of the poor quality land as communal land (Williams et al., 2016). The shortage of farmland and dwindling agricultural output in Zimbabwe's communal areas, aggravated the need for land reform (Scoones, 2012). Land reform is defined as a process by which land may be redistributed, for example to the landless and rural poor to help alleviate poverty and foster economic development of poor communities (Hall, 2007). There has always been the need to link the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) and conservation to ensure a sustainable approach to development. Very few attempts have been made to understand the extent to which wildlife income can help to augment rural livelihoods (Williams et al., 2016). This study seeks to examine the practice of community-based ecotourism as a vehicle for economic development, poverty alleviation as well as nature conservation. The study will use a case study approach with Sentinel Ranch in Masera community purposively identified to holistically explore the potential of ecotourism development as a sustainable land use and economic development option in Zimbabwe's drier regions. Ceballo-Lascurian (1996:34) defined community based ecotourism as "the travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying its scenery, wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in these areas". Taylor (2009) concedes that community-based ecotourism is a long-term programmatic approach to rural development that uses wildlife and other natural resources for promoting devolved rural institutions and improved governance and livelihoods. This paper will describe how the ecotourism project has changed the livelihood of land reform beneficiaries in Masera community. The attraction of community-based ecotourism is the prospect of linking nature conservation, local livelihoods and preserving biodiversity, whilst simultaneously reducing rural poverty (Reid, 1999).

2.0 THE STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in Masera community in Beitbridge district, which is located in Matabeleland South province in the southern part of the country. The district is under the jurisdiction of Beitbridge Rural District Council (BRDC), which is the local authority that creates an enabling environment for development of the district and its people. Masera community is located 60km west of Beitbridge town, which is the administrative centre of the district (see figure 1).The community is a place where ecotourism can flourish. The area has beautiful natural landscape, diverse African wildlife species and rich archaeological resources, making the area's ecological and cultural resources exceptional (GMTFCA, 2010).

The community consists of three wards (ward 7, 8 and 9) and 1300 households with a total population of approximately 11000 people (Beitbridge Development Plan, 2014). The community is predominantly a Venda speaking society with a few Sotho speaking people who migrated from the west in Gwanda district. The community was offered Sentinel Ranch farm

(measuring 34 000 hectares) during the implementation of the FTLRP in 2000. The rationale of the Government of Zimbabwe was to increase the grazing space for the villagers, as cattle rearing forms the major livelihood activity. The farm is located on the northern bank of the Limpopo River in south western Zimbabwe with a 17km frontage of the river (Institute of Rural Technologies, 2011).

Prior to the FTLRP, the farm was used as a private game park. Hence, the farm contains a substantial number of wild animal species, including commercially viable species such as the elephant, buffalo, leopard and rhinoceros. As part of the government’s land reform strategy, 150 beneficiaries were identified from Masera community to utilize the farm for grazing purposes under a three tier model. The model allows beneficiary household the right to grazing and thus increasing communal herd (Government of Zimbabwe, 1998). The main aim was to improve the livelihoods of the beneficiaries through livestock production.

The beneficiaries lost most of their livestock after moving them to the farm due to diseases from the wild animals such as foot and mouth, anthrax, black leg and bovine tuberculosis. To make matters worse, leopards and cheetahs preyed on their cattle and other small livestock.

Unfavourable conditions for grazing prompted the beneficiaries to re-think the land use pattern proposed by the land reform officials from the district. Some of the beneficiaries interviewed argued that the farm was hilly and rocky and could not support meaningful crop production and pastoralism. The community realised the potential of the land as a tourist attraction destination and thus used this as a vehicle for economic development and income generation.

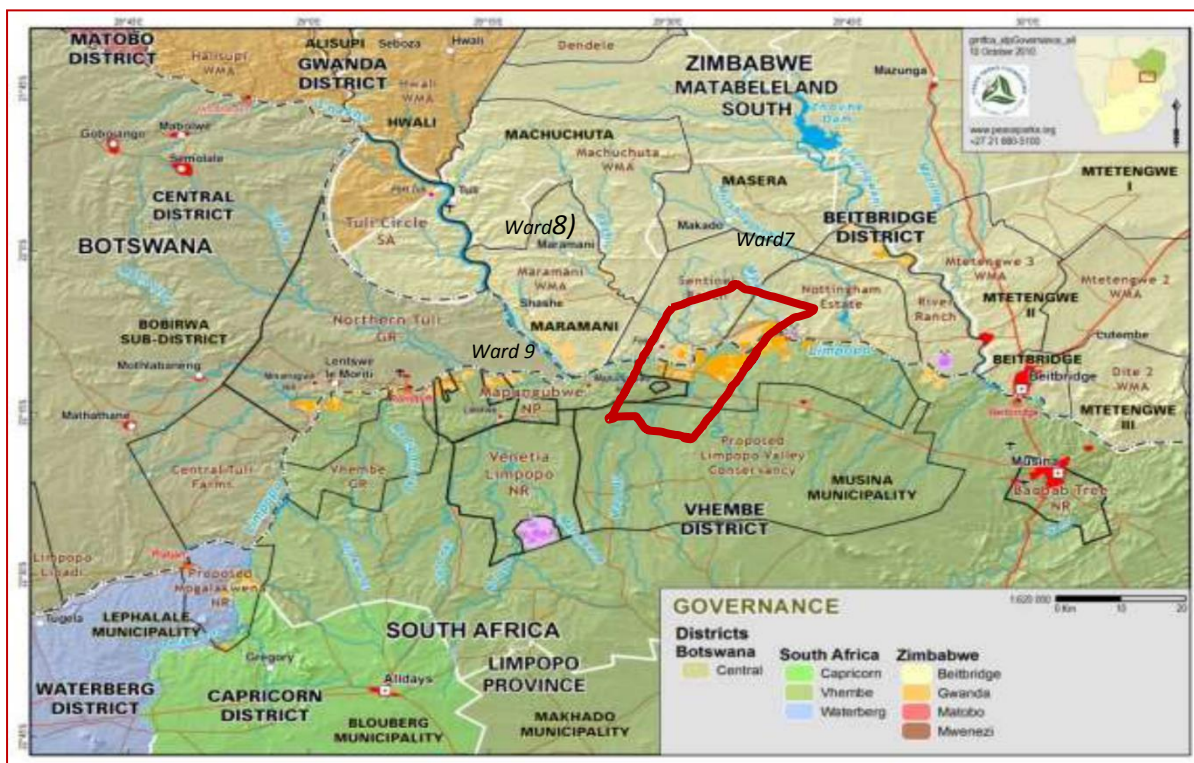


Figure 1: Map showing Sentinel Ranch and Masera community (Ward 7,8 9)

3.0 GROUND SETTING

The committee of seven approached the land authorities in the district on the possibility of change of land use model from three tier farming model based on pastoralism to wildlife management and ecotourism. Accordingly, several meetings and consultations were held with regard to the change of land use with the Beitbridge Rural District Council (BRDC), Department of National Parks and CESVI (a local Non-Governmental Organization). The resolution was concluded in 2004 leading to an agreement between beneficiaries and the former owner to implement new conservation policies in respect to the agreement.

According to the focus group discussion held in ward 8, the former owner (now private safari operator) played a significant role in introducing ideas for the joint management of the project. Both economic and ecological arguments were considered to justify the change of land use model proposed by the local government officials. The main ecological arguments were that wildlife management enabled a higher carrying capacity and hence was more productive, and that wildlife species were evolutionary adapted to dry land environments and thus more resilient in times of drought. The economic arguments were centered on foreign exchange raising potential of flora and fauna through hunting and ecotourism opportunities (Williams et al., 2016).

4.0 FARM MANAGEMENT

There are three partners involved in the management of the farm for the purposes of trophy hunting and eco-tourism and these are the 150 beneficiaries, BRDC and the safari operator. The community, under the auspices of the BRDC, partnered with a private safari operator, who advertises, organizes and manages hunting and other ecotourism activities in the farm. The beneficiaries are represented by a committee of seven chosen from among the beneficiaries. Each partner have its own roles as follows:

4.1 Beneficiaries

There are 150 beneficiaries who are the owners of the farm and all the natural resources in it. The beneficiaries are groomed under the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Recourses (CAMPFIRE). The beneficiaries elected a committee comprising of seven members as follows, Chairman, Vice chairman, Secretary, Vice secretary, Treasurer and two non-portfolio committee members. The committee runs the project on behalf of the community. The beneficiaries have a constitution that serves as an operational guideline on the day to day management of the farm. The beneficiaries plays the role of being partners in the management of the project and ensure that there is no poaching of the resources in the farm.

4.1.1 *Role played by the committee*

The main role of the committee is to assist in the management of the project, maintaining fences and controlling poaching. The committee is also vested with powers to enter into contracts and negotiations with other stakeholders on matters concerning the day to day running of the project. The committee decides on what projects to invest in through a meeting in which members vote for the various development projects. The committee's duties and roles are summarized as follows:

- Receiving and banking money from all transactions of the project;
- Arranging for annual and other meetings;
- Arranging the terms on which the business transactions of the project shall be conducted and ensuring the safe custody of all the property and assets of the project;

- Handling all contracts and legal matters on behalf of all the beneficiaries;
- keeping the register of all members correct and up to date;
- Financial management;
- Conducting game counts;
- Providing communication link between rest of beneficiaries and BRDC; and
- Assisting in organizing the operations of the safari operator.

4.2 Rural District Council

The BRDC is the local planning authority in the area and oversees all development initiatives. The local authority's involvement in the project is based on the perception that the beneficiaries lack sufficient conservation expertise and manpower to manage the ecotourism venture without assistance. The BRDC made an emphasis that it will be involved in the project for a short time and when communities develop enough expertise and institutional capacity to run the project, it will then pull out of the project.

4.2.1 Summary of roles played by council

- Ensures support for both the safari operator and the community;
- Training of beneficiaries on nature conservation, management, and tour guiding;
- Providing manpower to support the process whenever needed;
- Maintains an account of funds obtained from safari hunting;
- Reacts to problems especially where it concerns problem animal control; and
- Mobilizing the beneficiaries.

4.3 Safari operator

The safari operator has a management contract renewable after every five years and plays the responsibility for linking the site to the international markets. The operator also does the financing on advertisement and hunting quota application. Part of the lease agreement includes maintaining hunting tracks, water points and game viewing points. The operator alluded that the relationship with the beneficiaries is cordially and there are few incidences that can threaten the smooth running of the project.

4.3.1 Summary of Roles played by the operator

- Links the project to external markets;
- Assists in skills development for the beneficiaries;
- Provides employment opportunities;
- Engages in social responsibility programmes for the rest of the community; and
- Maintains access roads within the conservation site.

5.1 REVENUE GENERATION FROM THE FARM

Both consumptive and non-consumptive uses of wildlife are undertaken and form the major revenue generation from the farm (see table 1 below). Non-consumptive use of wildlife involves viewing and photographing wildlife, while consumptive use of wildlife involves hunting and fishing. The farm is ecologically rich and is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, including four of the "big five" (Elephant, leopard, rhinoceros and the buffalo). The presence of four of the big five has resulted in the promotion of sustainable trophy hunting and marketability of the ecotourism venture.

Most of the revenue from the project is generated from safari hunting and camping fees. Other activities that generate revenue include photographic safaris, sale of animal meat, ecotourism and live animal sale (see table 1).

Table 1: Total revenue generated from the project

Activity	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Safari hunting	13 440	19 375	21 508,33	33 105	37 459,17
Live animal sales	3 200	5 000	3 200	6 600	6 500
Photographic safaris	2 800	4 000	4 000	6 000	5 000
Sale of animal meat	1 017.44	1 718.31	2 459.11	4 053	3 545.7
Ecotourism	1 400	3 018	7 020	8 000	8 000
Camping fees	7000	8000	7 040	9 678	8 900
Total	28 857.44	36 611.31	45 227.44	67 436	69 404.87

Data collection for this study started in 2011 following the stabilization of the Zimbabwean economy and ended in 2015. From the figures in table 1 above, it can be noted that total revenue from the project increased every year. The total revenue from all project operations was US\$28 857.44 in 2011, US\$36 611.31 in 2012, US\$45 227.44 in 2013, US\$ 67 436 in 2014 and US\$69 404.87 in 2015. Figure 2 shows how the total revenue from the project improved on a yearly basis since 2011 when the data collection of this study started.

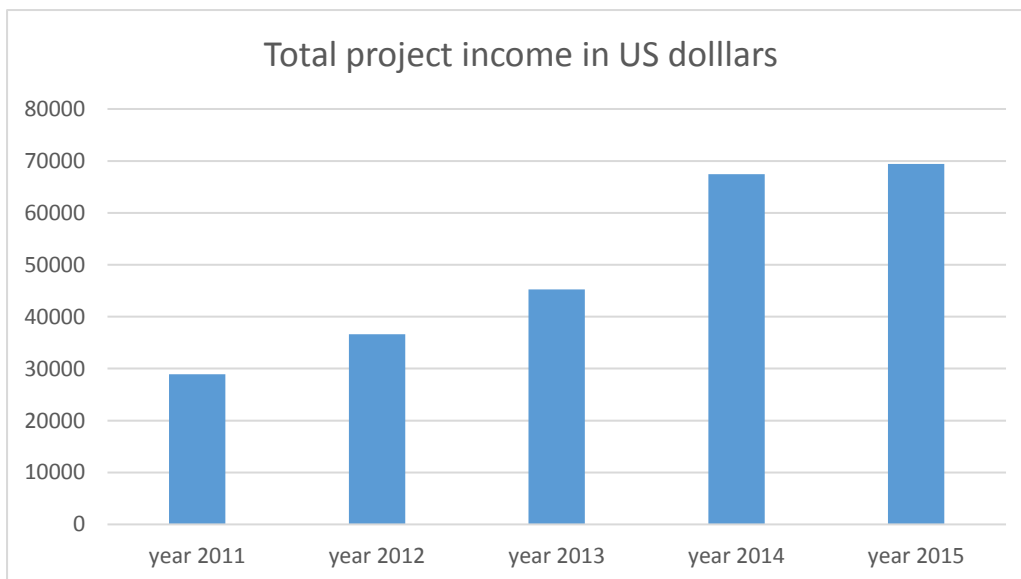


Figure 2: Total Revenue inflows Source: Beitbridge Rural District Council, 2016

The CAMPFIRE officer emphasized that the year on year increase of revenues is related to the improving awareness of the project and the initiation of the Greater Mapungubwe Trans Frontier Conservation Area. Revenue improvement is also credited to the general improvement of macro-economic conditions in the country and conservation expertise of the safari operator.

6.0 ECOTOURISM ACTIVITIES AT THE DESTINATION

The farm is located directly across the Limpopo River from the Mapungubwe National Park in South Africa, a UNESCO World heritage site of great Southern African cultural, historical and archeological importance. It is hoped that the world heritage site status will be extended to Sentinel Ranch once the GMTFCA is officially promulgated (Institute of Rural Technologies, 2011).

6.1 Historical features

There are numerous Mapungubwe archeological sites that have caught the interest of the ecotourists, particularly historians (Safari operator, interview). The area is bursting with fossil dinosaur sites dating back to 240-210 million years ago (see photograph 1). One fossil site in particular is considered of huge paleontological importance in the Southern African fossil record (Institute of Rural Technologies, 2011). There are also numerous Stone Age paintings dotted around the farm (see photograph 2).

6.2 Diverse vegetation communities

The varied geology, rugged landscape and low rainfall produce a fascinating botanical diversity from the Mopani trees to fig trees and nyala berry along the Limpopo valley.

There are also protected species in the area particularly the *Hoodia currorri lugardii* and the giant baobab tree (see photograph 3 and 4). The *Hoodia currorri lugardii* tree is a protected species in Masera community and is believed to be a medicinal plant that has the potential to suppress effects of HIV and Aids.

6.3 Accommodation

Visitors are accommodated in a stone and thatch camp surrounded by giant baobab trees. The camping site accommodates a total of 8 people in four thatched chalets (one double, three sharing). The chalets are all equipped with a bathroom en-suite with hot and cold running water and a shared veranda. The chalets are electrified and there is a generator on standby for the occasional load shading that is occasional experienced in the country.

6.4 Photographic safaris

The area features photographing wildlife services, clients will be travelling with photographers employed for that purpose, experiencing wildlife in their natural habitat and there is variety of wildlife to photograph. Birding is a big part of enjoyment of ecotourists on Sentinel Ranch where close to 400 species have been recorded. Bird watching is wonderful at any time of the year, but most migratory birds visit the locality during summer that include the secretive Olive tree Warbler and the ubiquitous summer Siren (Safari operator, Interview).

6.5 Cultural heritage

The Masera rural community around Sentinel Ranch is a vibrant microcosm of rural life. African cultural customs and traditions are alive and well. Visitors to the farm often experience an eye opening experience of undisturbed rural village environment. There are cultural attractions which are available in the community including local dances, storytelling and rain

making ceremonies. The safari operator asserts that most tourists who visit the area sample the Venda culture in terms of food and traditional dances (see photograph 9).

There are also ancient Venda caves in the area that harbor secrets of the Venda tribe. The Venda tribe gathers at the caves for rain making ceremonies mainly in October during the onset of the rain season (GMTFCA, 2010).

6.6 Other attractions

The area hosts the *Tour de Tuli* that has become an annual event in the international cycling calendar (see photograph 10). The cycling event dates back to history as it was a creation of the Pioneer column (Institute of Rural Technologies, 2011).

7.0 DISBURSEMENT OF PROJECT REVENUE

The BRDC handles all the proceeds from safari hunting and these are disbursed at the end of the hunting season, mainly in October of each year. Figure 3 shows the percentage of sharing project benefits. The RDC gets 48% of the total hunting package per season while the CAMPFIRE association gets 4% of the value per season. The remaining 48% is received by the beneficiaries.

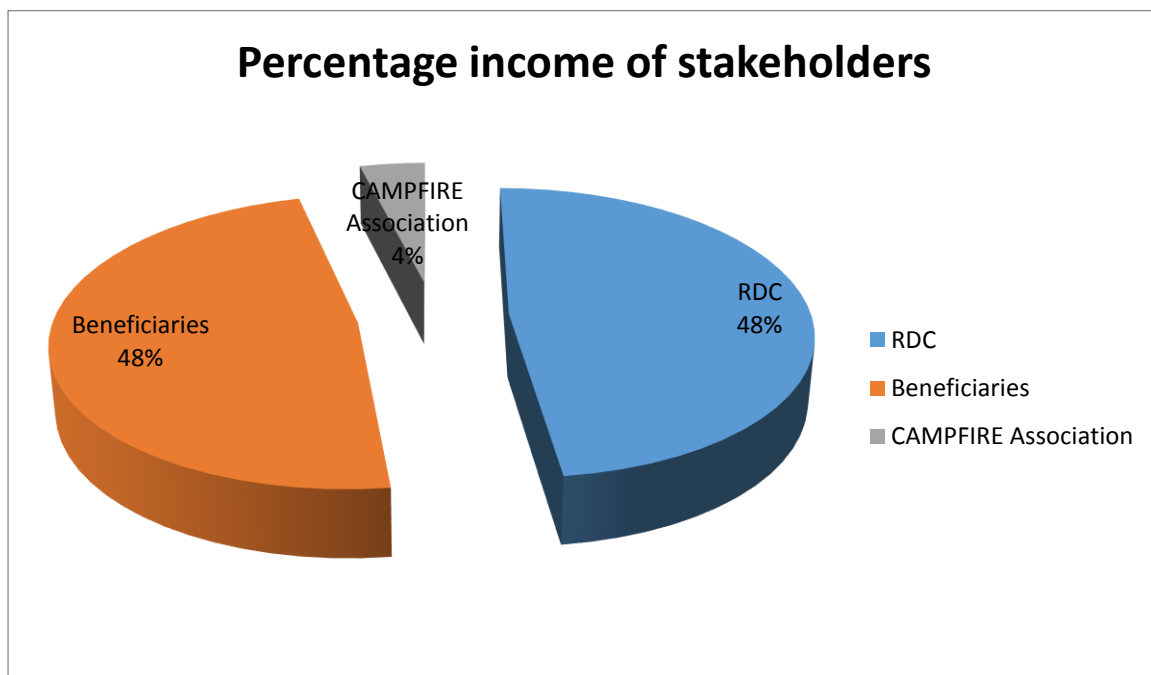


Figure 3: Sharing of revenue among project stakeholders

Apart from safari hunting revenue, the beneficiaries also get revenue from the sale of game meat and ecotourism. Proceeds from the sale of game meat are handled directly by the beneficiaries, whereas those from ecotourism are handled by the operator and are disbursed directly to the beneficiaries without involvement of the BRDC. The private operator does not get anything directly from safari hunting. In terms of the arrangement, the operator works on a fixed price of trophies set by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks. The operator then can charge extra charges from the clients for his own benefit. All the proceeds from live animal sale, photographic safaris and camping fees are for the operator.

8.0 BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

The project has become an eye-opener and the envy of most community members who did not benefit from the farm. Involvement of part of the community members in the management of natural resources has resulted in improved responsibility and custodianship, leading to sustainable utilization of the natural resources. A number of factors have contributed to the success of the ecotourism project, and these include, communal organization and social cohesiveness. The community's benefit of the farm and proprietorship over its natural resources provided the instrumental incentive for the broader set of land and resources use planning initiatives.

8.1 Employment opportunities

Most adult respondents applauded the project for creating employment opportunities for their children. Some of the community members have been employed as tour guides, game scouts and domestic staff (see table 2). In total, 30 community members were employed on various activities in the farm, and only 3 employees are from outside the community. The RDC employed 3 permanent workers who are stationed in the community. The operator employed the largest number of employees, with 14 males and 6 females who are serving as domestic workers and doubles as caretakers of the tourists. Interviews with the operator revealed that most males double as tour guides and cultivating a 20 hectare irrigation scheme in the adjacent farm owned by the operator.

Table 2: Number of people employed by the project

Employer	Female	Male	Total
Council	1	2	3
Safari operator	6	14	20
Beneficiaries	1	6	7
Total	8	22	30

8.2 Social development projects

Revenues from the project were used wisely in developing a number of community projects and reinvesting revenues to build material assets. The most striking benefit from this ecotourism initiative is the development of infrastructure, improved health sanitation and an improved learning environment for the school children. Projects developed since the inception of the programme include the construction of a classroom block in Limpopo primary school and school furniture for Masera primary school. In 2011, the management committee bought 25 desks for Masera primary school and text books at a cost of US\$ 1 200. During the same year the management committee also bought a deep freeze at a cost of US\$700 for easy storage of carcasses of game meat.

In 2012, the community dug a 60 meter borehole, rehabilitated a dip tank and built two teacher houses in Masera secondary school at a total cost of US\$6 000. In 2013 the management committee bought 50 bags of cement and 10 000 bricks at a cost of US\$2 500 for the construction of a classroom block in Limpopo primary school in ward 8 community. In 2014

each beneficiary received \$250 from the project funds. According to the interviewees, consultations and negotiations for funding community projects from the 2015 income were still underway.

These projects have contributed to the improvement of the general welfare in the community and the quality of the learning environment of school children. Most of the respondents appreciate the benefits when they target community projects such as rehabilitation of dip tanks, schools and clinics. It appears the ecotourism venture has a sustainable future and is more profitable than livestock ranching. However, general cash income from the project has proved not to be significant at household level, but can be substantial at community level.

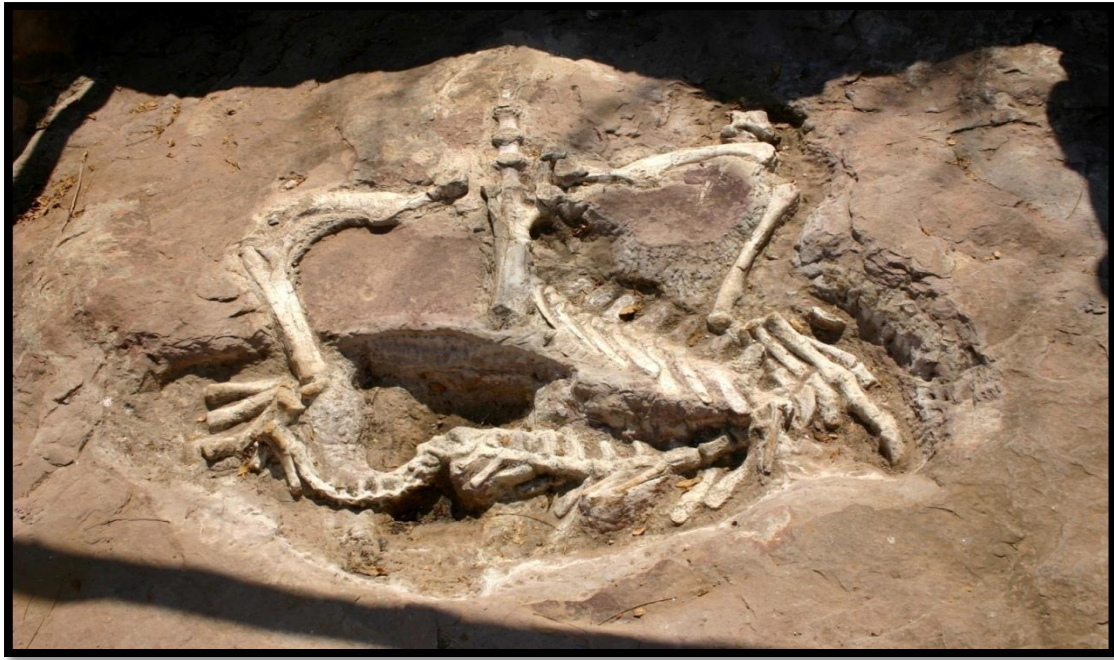
8.3 Benefits to the environment

The beneficiaries' preference for natural resource conservation has led to the sustainable exploitation of flora and fauna in the study area. The safari operator asserted that "Without these pristine wilderness areas, the world will be a much sadder place. If we lose the battle for conservation there will be nothing left for everybody".

The ecotourism project in Masera community gives the land reform beneficiaries custody and responsibility in managing wildlife and tourism activities in the area. The project brought a varying degree of benefits to the project stakeholders including financial, social and environmental. Ecological benefits include the reduction of poaching activities in the area. The local people began to see the park as a reservoir of wealth and became protective of their newly found natural asset. The CAMPFIRE officer reiterated that the farm is well conserved, as evidenced by the increasing number of wild animals on the farm. The officer emphasized that the major reason for the increase of wildlife in the area is the settlement of people in major wildlife farms around the district. The settlement of people in former wildlife farms has increased human/wildlife conflict and consequently wildlife has found its way to the study area where there is little human interference. The CAMPFIRE officer also emphasized that the Department of National Parks and Wildlife has recommended culling of the impala population to maintain the carrying capacity of the farm.

Most of the beneficiaries interviewed indicated that they have learnt a lot about trophy hunting and benefits of living in harmony with wildlife. Some of the interviewees indicated that the benefits that they are receiving from the ecotourism project are better compared to livestock ranching, where only those individuals with large herd of cattle benefit from grazing compared to those who do not have cattle. Revenues from ecotourism ensure that the whole community benefits through community social development projects.

The project is an important driver for rural development in the country and can serve as an example to other community-based ecotourism initiatives in the country. Most beneficiaries interviewed expressed interest in ecotourism development and wildlife management.



Picture 1: Dinosaur fossil: Picture by Vanessa Bristow.



Picture 2: Stone Age Rock paintings: Picture by Vanessa Bristow.



Picture 3: Hoodia currorri lugardii: Picture by Vanessa Bristow.



Picture 4: Baobab trees: Picture by Vanessa Bristow.



Picture 5: The Zebra family: Picture by Vanessa Bristow.



Picture 6: The Eland bull: Picture by Vanessa Bristow.



Picture 7: Lappet faced Vulture: Picture by Vanessa Bristow.



Picture 8: Part of the elephant herd: Picture by Vanessa Bristow.



Picture 9: Venda woman dances in traditional attire for the tourists: Picture by Vanessa Bristow.



Picture 10: 2010 Tour de Tuli biking event: Picture by Vanessa Bristow.

9.0 IMPACT OF THE PROJECT ON LIVELIHOODS

In the analysis of the existing economic activities, it was noted that the ecotourism project had varied effects on the livelihood activity of some of the beneficiaries. The evaluation of success or failure varied among stakeholders, most beneficiaries outside the management say they are fed up, they are not seeing benefits and would like to graze their animals, but the management committee says the development is highly successful.

At household level the project has only partly benefitted the management committee through payment of their services. According to the interviewees the management committee receives a substantial amount of money at the end of the hunting season as payment of their services that include fence maintenance and controlling poachers. Three beneficiaries interviewed who are members of the management committee indicated improvement of their livelihood as a result of the project. The respondents pointed out that they managed to send their children to school using the proceeds from the project.

One of the respondents outside the management argued that the initiative has the potential of improving livelihoods only at the community level, but benefits at household level are meager as dividends after sharing are too little.

At communal level, the community directly benefitted in many ways from the project's operations. The project has assisted various local schools in a variety of ways that include electrification, water reticulation, toilets (operator), desks, books and teacher accommodation (beneficiaries). The project through the operator has also created a Floating Trophy for Best Conservation Awareness for Beitbridge district high schools, to encourage awareness of relevant conservation issues in the district.

10.0 CHALLENGES FACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

- Benefits of the project are seasonal and beneficiaries receive reasonable income at the end of the hunting season in October. When the hunting season is over between November and April there will be very little income from the project.
- Sharing of benefits is the major problem threatening the smooth running of the project. The beneficiaries have no faith in the management committee and claim that the management committee appropriates the proceeds for their own use. In most cases, as the other beneficiaries argue, the management committee, donate as little as US\$1700 per season to schools and clinics. The rest of the money is diverted for their own use under the pretext of meeting other operational costs and payment of their services.
- The other challenge that threatens the sustainability of the project is that very few people from the community benefited from the ownership of this farm, whereas the burden associated with living with wildlife is faced by the whole community. There has always been some discontent from the non-beneficiaries claiming indirect involvement in wildlife protection.
- The appropriate level of authority is minimal for the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries of the farm appear not to be having full rights of proprietorship. Most beneficiaries kept on referring questions to the BRDC. For instance, when asked about future development plans, the beneficiaries had little knowledge about the GMTFCA, but the BRDC officer and the operator claimed negotiations are at an advanced stage.
- Hunting proceeds are handled by the BRDC who will then disburse them to the beneficiaries at the end of the hunting season. The district council takes the same percentage (48%) of benefits with the beneficiaries claiming that it provides roads and other forms of infrastructure to the community. Surprisingly, these developments

according to the interviewees are not implemented. Alternatively, the percentage levied by the BRDC needs to be reduced so that more benefits accrue to the beneficiaries and the community through community development projects such as drilling boreholes and buying furniture for schools and clinics.

- The other major problem is that wildlife management was not initially considered as a land use option during the implementation of the FTLRP. As a result, the project is often viewed as a clandestine arrangement by some sections of the society, particularly politicians who have little knowledge about wildlife and natural resources management.
- The community lacks sufficient knowledge regarding the management of the park, although efforts have been made to train the management committee. The level of illiteracy is very high, for instance most of the beneficiaries interviewed had primary level education. This threatens the improvement of the necessary expertise needed for the community to run the project without the assistance of the council.
- Indigenous and local knowledge are not tapped for greater diversification of cultural products. Cultural sites are not well documented and thus cannot be well packaged and marketed. Table 3 below summarizes some of the challenges and opportunities facing the development of the project.
- There are also other problems facing the development of the project, such as a poor road network, limited ecotourism activities, limited funds for tourism development and uncoordinated marketing and development strategies. Opportunities and threats pertaining to ecotourism development are summarized in table 3 below.

Table: 3: SWOT analysis of the ecotourism project

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The farm is well position for ecotourism development ▪ Unique flora and fauna ▪ Unique Venda and Sotho cultures ▪ Abundant wildlife species ▪ Existence of archeological sites ▪ Existence of 4 by 4 trial routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited funds to develop a coordinated ecotourism plan ▪ Limited packages offered to tourists ▪ Poor state of the road ▪ Poor infrastructure on the farm ▪ Minimal to no improvements on the livelihood of beneficiaries ▪ Too many stakeholders involved in disbursement of project benefits
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support from the local planning authority (BRDC) ▪ Linked to GMTFCA tourism development initiatives ▪ Complements national policy to support wildlife utilization ▪ Existence of a vibrant trophy hunting industry in the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High taxation from the BRDC ▪ Dwindling number of tourists inflow in the country ▪ Loss of investor confidence in the country ▪ Poor rainfall patterns in the area ▪ Existence of wildlife poachers within the community ▪ Too many petty politics involving BRDC, community, beneficiaries and the politicians

11.0 CONCLUSION

The Masera community conservation is a clear case of the potential for biodiversity conservation, providing sustainable benefits for land reform beneficiaries. The study revealed that there are several barriers that must be overcome in order to achieve socio-economic benefits associated with ecotourism development as well as to foster environmental conservation. The beneficiaries interviewed considered the project as a welcome development as it possesses the potential to improve livelihoods and at the same time protecting their valued natural resources.

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