

Rural Resources, Rural Livelihoods Working Paper 11

LOCAL GOVERNANCE, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES{PRIVATE }

by
Philip Woodhouse and Gervase Maipose

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1. Introduction

Following the precedent of Agenda 21, the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) emphasizes action at local level. This is manifest in key aspects of the CCD Principles, which, in addition to integration of environmental with developmental goals, and of poverty eradication objectives into efforts to combat desertification also call for:

- promotion of local participation in the design and implementation of measures to combat desertification, and
- provision of "an enabling environment by strengthening, as appropriate, relevant existing legislation and, where they do not exist, enacting new laws and establishing long-term policies and action programmes".

This is further emphasized within the African context (Regional Implementation Annex for Africa), the stated priority for CCD implementation, in which NAPs shall:

- "emphasize integrated local development programmes... based on participatory mechanisms and on integration of strategies for poverty eradication into efforts to combat desertification...." and
- "aim at strengthening the capacity of local authorities and ensuring the active involvement of local populations, communities and groups, with emphasis on education and learning, mobilization of non-governmental organizations with proven expertise and strengthening of decentralized governmental structures."

Consequently, NAPs in Africa are anticipated to include measures which will improve institutional organization, identified more specifically as:

- "defining the roles and responsibilities of central government and local authorities within the framework of a land use planning policy,
- encouraging a policy of active decentralization, devolving responsibility for management and decision-making to local authorities, and encouraging initiatives and the assumption of responsibility by local communities and the establishment of local structures, and
- adjusting, as appropriate, the institutional and regulatory framework of natural resource management to provide security of land tenure for local populations."

These themes, of government decentralization, community resource management, and property rights place local governance at the centre of implementation of the CCD. This paper reviews recent debate on decentralization of government and its relationship to the regulation and management of natural resource use, and identifies issues that are relevant to preparing and implementing National Action Plans (NAP) and Local Area Development Programmes (LADP).

2. Decentralization for LADP

Decentralizing government

Preparation of LADPs will need to take account of how power is shared at central and local levels. The public administration literature commonly distinguishes two distinct goals in decentralisation: to improve administrative efficiency, and to promote participatory democracy.

From the standpoint of administrative efficiency, it is argued that decentralisation of decision-making makes it easier for decision-makers to obtain information relevant to specific local circumstances and produces faster, more timely decisions which are more responsive to local needs. This is argued to be of particular advantage where conditions vary from one local area to another. From the standpoint of participatory democracy, decentralisation is believed to allow improved public access to decision-makers, producing a greater sense of public ownership of the resulting decisions and more direct accountability of decision-makers to the public.

The relative importance given to these goals will affect the “key variables” (Conyers, 1991) of decentralisation: the types of activities over which power or authority is transferred,

- the types of power or authority which are transferred;
- the levels to which authority is transferred;
- the individuals or organisations to which they are transferred; and
- the political, administrative, or legal machinery used to effect the authority transfer.

While these variables offer a potentially huge range of forms of decentralized governance, the most commonly distinguished are “deconcentration” and “devolution”. The former refers to the operation at local level of central state executive agencies, whose local officials have delegated authority but are accountable to their superiors at national level. The latter refers to a decentralisation of legislative government, by which central government shares power with (elected) representatives of local interests. Effective devolution is often considered to require that local representative bodies share a significant part of government power to allocate financial and human (staff) resources in relation to a range of functions (Mawhood, 1993; UNDP, 1993; Manor, 1995), where possible through sharing revenue-raising powers (ARD, 1992; Carney, 1995).

Interest in more devolutionary versions of decentralization forms part of the “good governance” agenda recently adopted by many multilateral and bilateral development funding agencies and has accompanied movements towards democratisation in many parts of Africa since the late 1980s. Interpretations of this agenda have varied, some agencies emphasising financial accountability and administrative efficiency, while others were concerned with democracy, human rights and participation (Robinson, 1995). However, there has been a degree of convergence through acknowledgement that participatory democracy has a role in encouraging transparency and accountability in public administration and vice versa. In this form the “good

governance” agenda has much in common with the devolutionary “active decentralization” sought by the CCD.

However, there is little experience of devolved government in Africa on which such aspirations can draw (see Box 1). Government has usually been strongly centralized, although often in deconcentrated forms. Studies in Zimbabwe (Metcalf, 1994), Zambia (Tordoff and Young, 1994), Botswana (Clayton, 1995), and Kenya (Southgate and Hulme, 1996) suggest that although deconcentrated systems may improve information flow between local and central levels of government, horizontal contacts between line ministries at local level are much weaker than vertical lines of management, with the result that poor coordination at local level remains an obstacle to intersectoral approaches required for environmental management. Further, where local elected government has been maintained, central government has tended to keep control of revenue-raising and expenditure allocation, and dominate the planning process through the prefectorial system and the functional field service. Instances of institutional rivalry, duplication and lack of co-ordination have been attributed to this arrangement (Tordoff, 1989; Chikubo, 1985; Anangwe, 1994; Smith, 1980; Fesler, 1968; Wraith, 1972).

The prevalence of this condition implies that preparation and implementation of LADPs will need to seek ways of making local officers of central government departments more responsive and accountable to local interests, and, similarly, more open to opportunities for local coordination and partnership. The development of locally-based organisations capable of articulating and promoting local priorities and monitoring the performance of government functional departments must therefore be a central goal of LADPs, and one which must be fully accepted by central government agencies involved in preparing NAPs and LADPs.

An important question that must be addressed in the preparation of LADPs is how much emphasis to place on institutional reform, for example the devolution of resource-mobilization and allocation powers to elected local government, on the one hand, and the promotion of non-government organisations to represent local interest groups on the other. This is particularly significant in the many African states subject to structural adjustment programmes, where decentralization to meet the “good governance” agenda comes after a decade of retrenchment of public expenditure, making it even less likely that cash-starved central government will devolve a share of control over resources to local government. In many instances public sector retrenchment has resulted in weakening of central-local links and a reduction of central government resources at local level. The resulting *de facto* decentralisation has been termed “disengagement” (Kasfir, 1993), or a means by which central governments transfer to local communities the burden of both organizing and funding service provision - “*responsabilisation paysanne*”. There is an element of this in formal processes of decentralization currently underway, for example, in Mali where reorganised local government in the form of *communes rurales* will have to support existing social services substantially from the local revenue base.

Many of these decentralization programmes are so recent that there has been insufficient time to evaluate outcomes. However, some cautionary findings of a study of devolved local government in South Asia and West Africa concluded:

- devolution was unlikely to improve bottom-up planning due to the lack of trained staff at local level, which compounds the tendency of upper levels in the planning system to resist proposals from below.
- devolved government had proved unwilling to increase revenue through greater local taxation.
- devolution to elected local government fostered electoral participation and increased responsiveness of government agencies, but it is “unrealistic to expect decentralization to enhance the effectiveness of government institutions in alleviating poverty and assisting vulnerable groups.” (Manor, 1995 p84).

This rather bleak finding is shared by a number of other studies: “Effective decentralization is not possible without the reform of existing power structures. If power remains concentrated in the hands of elites...decentralization might further empower the elites rather than the people.” (UNDP, 1993 p79). Similar observations have been made by Carney (1995).

Decentralization from Government to Governance

Some have argued that for reform of existing power structures the more important decentralization is to non-government agencies of “civil society” (UNDP, 1993): the professional associations, community associations, trade unions, resource users groups, customary entities, womens groups etc by which interest groups pursue shared goals. The significance of this “pluralist institutional structure” is seen in its political role, as the most important source of “countervailing power” to the influence of central government, and also a means of service delivery. It is, for example, central to the World Bank’s agenda for poverty reduction through providing the poor with more opportunities to participate in community-level management, thereby enhancing the capacity of local communities to provide social services which the state has not managed effectively (Goetz and O’Brien, 1995). Devolution to community organisations is also widely advocated in relation to natural resource management (ARD, 1992). The idea of regulation through a “pluralist” institutional framework is expressed through the term “governance”: the structures and processes of power and authority, cooperation and conflict, that govern decision-making and dispute resolution concerning resource allocation and use, through the interaction of organisations and social institutions (government and non-government, formal and non-formal).

{PRIVATE }Box 1: African Local Government

Local administration in Africa usually consists of two or more co-existing structures inherited from colonial administration. These may be:

Local government: semi-autonomous or legally constituted representative bodies with legislative powers to discharge specific functions and raising part or much of their revenue, and employing their own staff within their respective geographical jurisdiction. This ideal of devolved government was the model for various municipal, township, and rural councils established in British African colonies in the 1950s. Perceived as inefficient and encouraging divisive ethnic and regional rivalry, they were progressively abandoned after independence in favour of centralisation which, by concentrating human resources, was believed to improve the quality of planning and resource allocation and promote national unity (Kasfir, 1993). The model has been revived in decentralization proposals in the 1990s, for example in Mali where the smallest administrative division (arrondissement) is being replaced by communes rurales with an elected mayor and revenue raising powers. Devolution of financial control is also a central element of the Rural District Councils Act amalgamating local government in “white” and “black” areas of Zimbabwe (Roe, 1995).

Functional or line field services: agencies or employees of central government ministries or departments operating at regional or field level. Characteristic of centralised, or (where significant decision-making authority is delegated to the field level) deconcentrated systems, functional departments have dominated local administration in Africa. Where they co-exist with elected local government (eg Botswana, Kenya, Zimbabwe), they tend to limit the scope of local government action.

Prefectorial system: representative at local level of the central state executive, often an appointee of the state president, with authority over local officers of central government departments. The prefectorial systems inherited from both anglophone (District Commissioner etc) and francophone (Préfet, Commandante etc) colonial regimes have continued largely unchanged. Customary authorities (chiefs) may be incorporated as the lowest level of prefectorial systems, sometimes (eg in Botswana) as paid state employees. Deconcentrated versions of the prefectorial system set up in the 1980s to redress overcentralisation typically involved delegation of local planning to Development Committees chaired at district and subordinate (ward, location, village etc) levels by the relevant prefectorial representative and made up of both local representatives (councillors) and local officials of central government executive departments.

Parastatals: Delegation of natural resource planning and management authority to semi-autonomous agencies financed or owned by the state. Examples include wildlife and national parks management organisations (KWS in Kenya), river valley development authorities (SAED in Senegal, Office du Niger in Mali), and Land Boards (in Botswana).

3. Local Governance and Dryland Natural Resource Management

Natural resource management (NRM) has been one of the most important fields of exploration of theory and practice of decentralised participatory development over the past decade. This has resulted in significant shifts in understanding of dryland ecology, and hence the nature of the resource base, and of social institutions for managing shared resources, that is the means by which resource use can be regulated. This section reviews a number of the principle strands of this experience.

Range management

Work on rangeland ecology over the past decade has prompted a reassessment of rangeland degradation. In the conditions of extreme rainfall variability of many pastoral areas the ecology was observed to be not in “equilibrium”, but subject to large fluctuations in vegetation cover, caused more by rainfall than by livestock (Behnke et al, 1993). These studies concluded that, where productivity was determined by total livestock biomass (as against commercial criteria of beef quality), “opportunistic” or “tracking” strategies used by many African pastoralists were more productive than ranching.

These arguments have been developed to mount a challenge to land privatisation policies in arid and semi-arid Africa (Scoones, 1994) on *efficiency* and *sustainability* grounds. These join long-standing arguments against privatisation on *equity* grounds: that pastoralists have been marginalised and discriminated against politically; and have become impoverished as a result of exclusion from resources to which they historically had access; and have consequently become more vulnerable to destitution by drought.

As an alternative to land privatisation and ranching, it is proposed (Swift, 1994) that resource management systems must be:

- local, following the principle of subsidiarity, and shaped by local knowledge and local interests
- flexible, to allow contingent or opportunistic management of fluctuating environmental factors
- non-exclusive, to permit overlapping access rights, which do not penalise the mobility of pastoralists.

It is further argued that such systems are necessarily communal or collective, and should seek to build on traditional tenure systems, where feasible.

Institutional Analysis and Design

Stemming largely from the work of Ostrom (1990) on the management of common property resources, a theoretical framework has been developed for the analysis of decision-making by resource users, and in particular for identifying conditions under which users of the same

resource may decide to evolve sets of rules (institutions) which will regulate individuals' use of the resource in such a way that resource productivity is maintained in the long term.

This approach has greatly clarified analysis of natural resource use by distinguishing *institutions* - the sets of rules- from the *organisations* through which groups of individuals carry out activities. It has been used to identify the following interrelated conditions that have been used as criteria to analyse the potential for sustainable resource management by resource users in African drylands (ARD, 1992). The conditions used are:

- Incentives: users obtain enough benefits from the natural resource in question, and have recognized capacity to control access and membership of the user group, to make it worth their while managing the resource to maintain its long-term productivity.
- Local knowledge, which may include knowledge adapted from external sources, is the basis of resource management.
- Self-governing institutions exist as the basis of local natural resource management, and provide resource users with a voice in decision-making on natural resource management.
- Conflict resolution mechanisms should be accessible to all, and perceived to be fair.
- Resource governance and management institutions are able to reconcile all the diverse legitimate interests using the resources in question.
- An “enabling environment” must be provided by government at both national and local levels, including a legal framework which guarantees property rights, including land and tree tenure,
- recognises the legal status of local self-governing institutions, supports them in resolving conflicts, and provides them with technical and other advice.

Key issues underlying these conditions include legislative measures to ensure the legal authority of community based institutions, and decentralisation of government so as to more effectively support them. A third issue underlying this framework is the idea of “social capital” - the shared culture and social values which enhance the likelihood that local communities can agree on the rules which should govern resource management.

Aménagement/Gestion de Terroirs Villageois

The approach known commonly as “gestion de terroirs” (GT) emerged from a series of national and regional conferences promoted in the mid 1980s by Club du Sahel and CILSS to seek a consensus on frameworks for rural development. It has subsequently been promoted by nearly all the major development agencies working in the Sahel. This account is based on a review by Evers (1994).

Translated in English as Village Land Management, the GT approach is usually conceived as a six-step procedure building on preliminary diagnostic work with villagers using Participatory Rural Appraisal, and proceeding through the election of a village committee, mapping the village terroir, designing a management plan, and implementing, monitoring, and evaluating planned activities. It emphasizes the following features:

- “global”referring to the need to link the improvement of agricultural production with desertification control measures through local-level management of natural resources.
- “multi-sectoral” meant a move away from narrow sectors (forestry, agriculture, water and livestock) in problem solving.
- “participative” encompassed the voluntary engagement of local populations in project conceptualisation, implementation and follow-up.
- “long-term” entailed recognition that 10-20 years was the time frame required for planning NRM projects.
- “Security of land rights” was accepted as a prerequisite for local investment in natural resource management.

While experience with the outcome of GT is still relatively sparsely documented, there are indications that projects which have adopted GT have benefitted from its multisectoral approach which can focus more easily on activities reflecting local priorities than those with predetermined narrower sectoral scope. GT has also legitimised the idea of village-level resource management, and the longer-term participatory “rolling programming” which would be required to carry forward activities envisaged under CCD. However, the status and future development of village NRM organisations is uncertain at best because GT has been operating in a legislative vacuum. In Mali, for example, this is increased by the as yet incomplete moves towards government decentralisation and reform of land tenure. The nature of decentralised government and its relationship to village NRM organisations need to be defined before there can be any prospect of creating the “enabling environment” required to support the long-term development of “self-governing” local NRM organisations.

There are also important conceptual flaws in the GT approach. These stem from the way GT regards the terroir boundaries as coinciding with boundaries of economic activity, and from the lack of attention to the differentiated and hierarchical nature of rural society. As a result GT fails to take account of resources to which villagers do not have exclusive rights, and which may be shared with neighbouring villages, it fails to take account of the non-farm earnings that villagers in the Sahel often obtain from activities outside the village, and it fails to deal with the seasonal use of resources within the terroir by mobile groups (eg fishers and herders) from outside the village. Failure to fully understand the differentiation within communities according to age, gender, lineage, wealth, religion, and ethnicity risks seriously misunderstanding the nature of “participation” (who does what, who gains what, who is excluded). Women and pastoralists have both been observed as poorly represented in village resource management committees. It is perhaps significant in this regard that GT experience reviewed by Evers (1994) indicated that while soil conservation activities on private land were popular, activities requiring communal effort (eg grazing management of grazing) had proved difficult.

Proposals for LADP (Lazarev, 1996) have evidently been formulated in response to the shortcomings of GT. The “petite region” allows much greater scope to address the ecological, economic, and social linkages beyond and between the *terroirs villageois*.

Governance and changing natural resource use

Exploitation of opportunities offered by better market access, new markets, or access to new production methods are all envisaged as integral to the improvement of rural economies under LADPs. However, changes in resource use pose questions about changing rights of access and ownership to which local governance must be able to respond if it is to meet the goals of CCD. Dryland resources most immediately subject to conflicts over rights of access are those offering high immediate financial returns: wildlife, woodland, and water.

Experience in Zimbabwe (box 2) has shown that the growth of tourist revenue associated with wildlife management offers an important avenue by which people in the poorer dryland areas can diversify their income, as well as contributing to more general ecological conservation. However, the longer term prospects of such programmes appear to depend on defining and enforcing clearer and more exclusive boundaries to the “community” and its property.

<p>{PRIVATE } Box 2. The CAMPFIRE programme (Metcalf, 1994).</p> <p>Proposals to involve local people in wildlife conservation have been developed furthest in the CAMPFIRE programme begun in Zimbabwe in 1989. This extends to communal (smallholder farming) areas the ownership of wildlife, and hence revenue from hunting and tourism, which was first conferred on private landowners by legislation in 1975. By 1993 the programme was active in at least half the 25 Districts in Zimbabwe and involved a quarter of a million people.</p> <p>Although “communities” own the wildlife on their land, authority for management of wildlife is formally vested in the elected District Council. In practice, in some districts the Council acts as the management unit, while in others management is devolved to the communities, to whom the District Council directly transfers cash revenue derived from wildlife on their land. Technical aspects of wildlife management are governed by guidelines, including hunting quotas, from the central government’s Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. In addition the programme of each community is advised by the relevant District Council, an NGO Collaborative Group which was instrumental in establishing the CAMPFIRE programme, and the commercial safari operators. The CAMPFIRE experience has raised a number of critical issues in relation to decentralized resource management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The need for community boundaries, not only in terms of area, but also in terms of membership, particularly in a context of widespread intercommunal migration.The need for greater strengthening of ownership rights of communities, particularly in relation to their right to exclude settlers.The need for support from local and central government in enforcing ownership rights, particularly in the face of commercial poaching interests.The need to evolve appropriate complementary roles for local government and “communities” in resource management.The potential to extend the decentralization to all community resources, including land, which faces barriers from central government ministries currently responsible for land use planning.

Woodland resources are under increasing pressure for construction and fuel use. In the Sahel, democratization has included reform of oppressive state forestry services and moves

to increase the control of forest resources by local communities. Studies of management of woodland by villages in Mali (ARD, 1992) emphasises the high degree of commercial pressure on woodland by woodcutters and charcoal-makers, and also the great variability which characterises communities in relation to their “environmentalist” tradition, the economic value they attach to woodland exploitation relative to other pursuits, and their capacity when faced with new conditions to design and enforce rules to regulate wood harvesting.

Resources subject to most rapid changes in use in dryland areas are those associated with water and woodland, which are coming under increasing pressure for commercial exploitation. Recent research on the governance of small-scale “wetland” resources in drylands in Kenya (Box 3) and Botswana (Box 4) shows that, despite strong contrasts in governance of natural resources in these traditionally cattle economies, outcomes are similar in that in both cases many rural people are no longer able to support themselves through drought years. In southern Kenya, security of pastoralists’ property rights in the form of group ranches has not prevented the effective privatization of key water resources by a minority of pastoralists. As a result, although local resource users have significant control over natural resource management, benefits from commercial horticulture and tourism development have been very unevenly spread among group ranch members, and also between “upstream” and “downstream” users of the water resource. In the Botswanan case, government policy favours privatization of grazing resources, with consequent increasing pressure on common grazing land. The relatively poor livelihood prospects of those unable to re-enter the cattle economy are mitigated by the Botswanan government’s capacity to fund rural welfare schemes.

{PRIVATE } **Box 3. Small wetland development in Southern Kenya** (Southgate and Hulme, 1996)

In Kajiado District, Kenya, Kimana swamp was traditionally used by Ilkisongo Maasai pastoralists as a seasonal grazing area. It is also an important water source for wildlife from neighbouring Amboseli National Park. Since the 1970s all land has been adjudicated to private or group title, with Kimana swamp shared between three Maasai group ranches.

The past two decades has seen strong commercial development based on irrigated vegetable farming using water diverted from streams feeding Kimana swamp, and on tourist lodges in and around the swamp. Both developments have involved decisions by the group ranch committees to lease group ranch land to non-Maasai interests. In the case of irrigation, group ranch land was first allocated to individual Maasai who then entered lease or share cropping arrangements, mainly with non-Maasai immigrants.

Local government is “deconcentrated” and planning in the District Development Committee is dominated by local officers of central government, who even approve the District Council’s own budget proposals. However, inadequate budgets severely restrict operational capacity of government agencies, so that the main agencies of the state at the most local level are the locational Chief, appointed by the Office of the President, and the parastatal Kenya Wildlife Service. Strong self-governing groups have a large measure of control over the group ranches and the irrigation channels. However, management of these organisations is subject to factionalism between Maasai and non-Maasai (in irrigation groups) and between Maasai clans and age-sets (in group ranches), further compounded by party politicians and commercial tourist interests seeking local alliances.

Although there is a large degree of local control of the wetland, resource management is characterized by growing competition and there is evidence that the heavy upstream water use is causing Kimana swamp to shrink. In contrast to the considerable wealth being generated for some by irrigated farming and tourism, many group ranch members have no access to irrigated land and up to half of Kimana location’s population required emergency famine relief in 1994.

{PRIVATE } Box 4. Rural Livelihoods state welfare in Botswana (Clayton, 1995)

In Botswana, local government is through a deconcentration of power to district administrators and field officers of central ministries, and limited devolution of decision-making to elected local councils subject to central government control of finance and staff recruitment. Customary authority forms part of government at village level, through a customary court presided over by a chief or headman, who is a paid official of the “tribal administration”. All grazing land in Botswana is “open access” communal land, with private usufruct rights granted for arable land. In practice access to grazing land is controlled by access to water. In significant areas of grazing, notably in the sandveld, the only water supplies are private boreholes. Arable land allocation and borehole permits are controlled by district-level Land Boards. Land Board members are elected by villagers in the area under its jurisdiction, although up to half may be appointed by central government. The 1991 Agricultural Development Policy, as yet only implemented on a pilot scale, allows farmers to fence grazing land as individuals, groups or communities “to allow improve productivity and ensure sustainable use of range resources”. This will effectively allow privatization of sandveld grazing by wealthier cattle owners who own the boreholes.

In Mmutlane village in the Shoshong Hills, eastern Botswana, population has remained fairly static for the past decade as a result of outmigration, in comparison with the 3.5% growth per year of Mahalapye, an urban settlement 30km distant. Villagers traditionally grow rainfed millet on their lands close to the village and pasture cattle at cattle-posts in the drier sandveld to the west. Repeated drought years during the 1980s resulted in the complete loss of cattle by 45% of households in Mmutlane, and most households with cattle now keep them closer to the village to provide better management. Consequently, although cattle ownership has declined, herding animals close to village and cultivated areas has increased. Although there is not yet a shortage of arable land in the Shoshong Hills, and little hard evidence of land degradation, greater pressure on water resources is evident in moves to fence previously “open access” village dams.

Government policy has encouraged farmers to extend the area of arable cultivation rather than to re-enter the cattle economy. However, the high frequency of drought means that crop failure is frequent and few households can grow enough to meet their requirements. In practice, wealthier farmers are diversifying into borehole-based enterprises: irrigated vegetable production and selling water to livestock herders. They are also able to earn substantial sums in ploughing subsidies paid by the central government’s drought relief programme to owners of tractors or draught animals. Other subsidies support row planting and free seed. Poorer farmers, without draught animals, obtain cash through the Labour Based Relief Programme managed by the District Council, which pays wages for work on social infrastructure projects proposed and managed by the village development committees. Effectively the strong state revenues from minerals in Botswana enable the funding of a welfare scheme for the large number of households for whom the traditional cattle economy of rural Botswana has become increasingly remote.

4. Implications of Governance and NRM for NAP and LADP processes and vice versa.

Local Knowledge and Sustainable Resource Use

The different bodies of work on the governance of natural resources summarized in the preceding section indicate a large measure of agreement on certain aspects, such as the importance of local knowledge, including locally-adapted external knowledge, as the basis of natural resource management. Devolution of resource management to resource users may therefore be expected to achieve the CCD objective of integrating development and conservation goals, through resource users' detailed understanding of local ecology. The challenge for LADPs is firstly to ensure that local knowledge is used as the starting point for resource management proposals, secondly to facilitate exchange of local experience between different areas with similar conditions or problems to promote wider and faster learning, and thirdly to supplement local knowledge with outside information through adaptive research, where there appears to be a need to do so.

An early goal of LADPs must therefore be the establishment of a functional dialogue between those preparing or implementing the LADP and local resource users. This will involve identifying different resource users and encouraging their organization in groups so their interests can be represented more effectively. The GT experience has much to offer here, and shows particularly that extra effort needs to be made to ensure the interests of less powerful social groups and those with "secondary" resource use rights (eg for seasonal grazing) are not marginalized. This will often involve working with subgroups within communities, and could be combined with a process of education and research by which government or non-government technical staff develop an understanding and engagement with local resource use strategies. This activity will need to take account of priorities established by the poverty eradication measures of the NAP.

Property Rights

There is also agreement on the importance of "incentive", that is, some confidence on the part of the resource users that they will benefit from their management of the resource in question. In addition to the productivity of the resource, which is dependent on the quality of management, a key element of "incentive" is the ability to control access to the resource. Thus the central concern of the CCD NAPs with improving security of property rights, addresses a major unresolved issue in the examples of community management of natural resources reviewed earlier.

LADP proposals advocate improved security of tenure while at the same time retaining customary resource allocation. This would imply ownership of resources is effectively allocated to "communities", as collective entities, as suggested by CAMPFIRE and "gestion de terroir". One immediate problem arises with the need to establish geographical boundaries to the community. In some cases, such as grazing land in Botswana, and for many crop-growing villages in less densely populated areas of the Sahel, the territorial limits of a village's jurisdiction over resources may never have been mapped and are in fact

subject to negotiation as the need arises. For such communities, physical mapping may be perceived as an unwelcome closure of options. Yet at the same time legal recognition and support of a community's rights by government does require some fixed definition of those rights. For agricultural communities this could apply to the "terroir villageois", but would need allow scope to enshrine formal secondary rights of other "communities" (eg pastoralists, or neighbouring villages) to use specified resources in the area concerned.

Vesting property ownership in a "community" may also raise issues concerning the balance of rights *within* the community, where customary control of land often rests with the founding lineages. Formalizing property rights for the "community" may conflict with power exercised through customary hierarchy, while formalizing the property rights of the founding lineages might threaten the rights of those whose customary rights are subordinate to them. It must be asked whether this is an unresolvable contradiction. The most likely course is that followed for group ranches in Kenya, where formal title was granted to the membership of a customary entity. The risks of inequitable outcome, of the kind documented in box 3, mean that it may be necessary to register formally membership of the community, and to place restrictions on sale or leasing arrangements with parties who are not members of the community.

An alternative to exclusive property rights may be the formal recognition (and possibly registration) of rights to *manage* specified resources. Such rights would include the right to regulate access to the resource. These rights, allocated to individuals, groups or communities, could closely follow customary practice but would be formally registered at an appropriate (village or *petite region*) level.

Resource Management

Allocation of property rights to "communities" does not mean that all decision-making about resource management takes place at the level of the community. Customary tenure arrangements devolve management of certain resources to subgroups of the community, most obviously to "household" units who allocate land and other resources among household members. However, other groupings may also be formed specifically to manage a resource, such as the irrigation groups formed to manage irrigation channels in Kimana Group Ranch. In these cases resource management is undertaken by self-governing institutions on a scale smaller than that of the "community". Conversely, other resources, such as grazing used by transhumant groups may require management at a scale larger than that of the property of individual communities.

Water is a resource commonly shared between many communities, whether or not individual communities have property rights to part of the resource. Water in drylands is subject to increasing intensity of use, and the case of Kimana swamp indicates the potential for conflict between users. The preparation of NAPs will need to define what role central government should take in establishing rules governing water use, possibly prioritising certain types of use over others (domestic use over irrigation use, for example). At all levels, however, the principle of representation of users seems an important way of maintaining the application of local resource users' knowledge in decision-making on natural resource management. Some form of federated structure will need to be convened to

manage the resource at an appropriate scale, allowing for representation of different interests.

A major role is indicated here for LADPs. For example at intercommunity (*petite region*) level LADPs need to promote a broadening of representation in the process of natural resource planning and management. In particular, representation should go beyond government technical officers and elected representatives to include representatives of all those (“stakeholders”) with an interest in exploiting a particular resource. Actions will need to ensure:

- formal recognition and registration of users rights by government, which may require physical mapping of territorial boundaries (eg for villages);
- users’ representation in resource use planning.

Procedures for formal recognition will need to be accessible but will require a minimum of systematic administration. By comparison, increasing users’ representation in planning may need to avoid rigid bureaucratic institutional procedure in favour of the creation of more ad hoc assemblies of stakeholders. This emphasises that planning exercises should be related to the needs of resource management, not of administrative routine. One way of maintaining this emphasis would be for LADPs to assist local government to seek out conflicts over resources with the aim of transforming them into partnerships for managing shared resources. To achieve this, LADPs must help to:

- identify areas of conflict or competition over resource use and endeavour to bring together those who share an interest in the resource concerned,
- build a consensus about shared goals among the different resource users,
- Promote the identification of actions to meet those goals,
- bring the different interests together regularly to evaluate progress towards the goals identified, and
- ensure government is a party to the goals and actions undertaken

The focus on conflict resolution could build a clear role for local government in local governance, which, if successfully undertaken, may lay the foundations for legitimacy in the eyes of its electors and taxpayers, which, in turn, may improve prospects for strengthening the local revenue base for the provision of services.

Decentralized Government

While most view decentralized government as an essential support for “community” natural resource management, it is not clear that elected local authorities are considered necessary. Some benefits of elected local government have been noted in terms of responsiveness to local demands, the key question is whether it has adequate human and financial resources. At present it seems unlikely these will be available from either central or local sources (with the possible exception of Botswana). There is a risk that devolution of revenue-raising powers to local government in areas with a weak economic base will result in their inability

to maintain existing services and a lack of capacity to support effective resource management by local resource users.

Experience of local taxation has been greater in urban areas, since revenue-raising powers have been more commonly devolved to urban municipalities than to rural authorities. Local urban municipalities in Mali, for example, raise revenue from a poll tax, from tax retained from the income of government employees, and from taxes on markets, business and transport. Rural government would be able to tax the same sources of revenue, but with probably much lower returns. Sources of additional tax revenue will be needed but elected local government in Africa is notoriously unwilling to raise tax rates. Two possible approaches may offer a way round this. Firstly, rural people are often prepared to mobilize resources in order to achieve specific goals, which offers the possibility of levying taxes where they can be “hypothecated” to particular valued services. This may be relevant to services such as registration or issuing of licences to resource users, where this means those users’ rights will be defended by local government. Secondly, government may be able to tax new activities or higher levels of income (achieved through changes in markets or production methods) from existing activities. The LADPs need to seek ways of incorporating revenue-raising aspects, for example, by attaching them to new activities that have been facilitated by local government officers. As noted above, an effective role for local authorities in conflict resolution may offer scope in this regard.

Poverty Eradication

An important conclusion from past experience, which apparently contradicts widespread expectations, is that redistributive policies need to be driven by central, rather than local, government. This is evidently true of action to redistribute resources between richer and poorer local areas. But it appears also true of measures to combat poverty more generally. This conflicts with the assumption, implicit in much advocacy of community control of natural resource management, that “social capital” that promotes the evolution of “self-governing” institutions capable of sustainable natural resource management also promotes equity and the welfare of disadvantaged community members.

Although widespread, this assumption is clearly questionable. It does not generally hold, for example, with regard to women’s property rights. Indeed Lazarev (1996) suggests that in the short term a reduction in equity may be an inevitable price to be paid for longer term democratization through devolution. Evidence from southern Kenya (box 3), however, indicates that in a strongly commercial environment it is possible for privileged members of customary hierarchy to turn their status to material advantage as participants in the market. In this situation, security of tenure, instead of protecting local interests against outside encroachment, may encourage local elites to profit from selling access to outsiders. This is not an argument against using LADPs to strengthen the property rights of local communities over the resources they use. It is however a caution against relying on devolution of governance over resources to community level to achieve anti-poverty objectives.

One lesson for the preparation of LADPs is the need to assess critically any assumptions about the nature of social and economic relationships within communities. Goetz and O’Brien (1995) have pointed out that policies seeking poverty alleviation through

community participation often assume the participatory effort to provide services is driven by communitarian values of social solidarity, that is, a different “set of rules” from those of the market which are expected to prevail elsewhere. It is a mistake to assume that dryland areas are always remote and inaccessible to markets. Evidence noted above indicates that the more valuable resources (eg trees, water) in drylands are subject to intense commercial pressure. To the extent that the poor depend on these resources, it is unrealistic to expect their interests to be defended by local communitarian values alone.

Neglect of this point risks natural resource management policy directed at recuperating (possibly romanticised) past patterns of resource management, rather than towards strategies for the future. NAPs will need to spell out clearly the role of resource management in both economic growth and measures aimed at poverty eradication. This may call into question existing policy. Should it be questioned, for example, whether cattle production, which provides only 3.5% of Botswana’s export earnings, and, on the evidence (box 4) above, has ceased to be relevant to the livelihoods of almost half of rural people, has such a central role in land tenure policy. The framework for natural resource use established by NAP is therefore critical to how successfully LADPs will ensure that both state and non-government agencies work to increase the representation and economic opportunities of disadvantaged groups at local level.

5. Issues for Discussion : LADPs and local governance

LADPs and Local Government

Although implementation of the CCD calls for a process of “active decentralization”, the relationship between LADP and local government needs further examination. In some formulations, design of LADPs incorporates the local state as a key agency: the “local area” (“petite region”) is the interface of the smallest unit of state administration with rural communities and civil society (Lazarev, 1996). Elsewhere, as reviewed above, there is greater faith in the non-government institutions of “civil society” as the means of carrying forward actions of the kind LADPs will require, and of prompting government reform as a consequence. This may be a particularly relevant where local government is a “deconcentrated” form. In this latter case, articulation of LADPs with government administrative structures may be a secondary element of the programme, at least in the short term. To some extent, the issue here is: are LADPs likely to draw strength from existing government structure or be confined by it. Decisions on this question will be reflected in the relative priority within LADPs of bringing local resource users’ groups together to achieve specific resource management goals, and the longer-term “institution-building” that articulates local resource management with the state.

Processes of Democratization

A similar set of questions arises in relation to promoting local participation in measures to combat desertification. What institutions offer the most hope of achieving this? Elected local government is widely advocated but suffers from high risks of inadequate resourcing, domination by central government functional departments, and “capture” by local elites.

Promoting local resource users' organizations to represent their members' interests may suffer from lack of formal recognition and unresolved conflicts with competing interests. Encouraging participation through greater recognition of customary resource management institutions may make good use of existing cohesion, or "social capital", but participation may be conditioned by exploitative customary hierarchies. Is the only realistic course, as Lazarev (1996) argues, to hope that participation by local elites in decision making will bring local development that in turn will generate progressive forces for social change?

Mobilizing Financial Resources

There is consensus that devolved fiscal control is an essential component of effective decentralization. It was also suggested above that, within an appropriate institutional framework, local revenue generation in rural areas could be improved, and that strategies to develop new sources of revenue need to form part of local governance measures within LADPs. However, it is less clear how far LADPs should be based on generation of revenue from local sources. The CCD incorporates commitments by developed country Parties to mobilize financial resources to implement LADPs. How are these two sources of funding to be combined, and, in particular, how can external funding stimulate, rather than inhibit, local revenue collection?

Recognizing and Securing Rights of Resource Users

A major unresolved issue concerns how best to provide greater security of tenure to existing resource users. Evidence considered earlier suggests that property rights in the form of exclusive land titles are susceptible to appropriation by some existing resource users at the expense of others. On the other hand, individuals' customary tenure rights may become insecure where production patterns change radically, especially as a result of changes in water management. A number of related questions need to be considered: Is modern property law inappropriate to secure rights of access to shared resources? Would a more appropriate procedure be to designate areas for management under specified customary entities? Is there a need for (government, or constitutional) measures to protect tenure rights of individuals in areas governed by customary entities? Should the state recognise (and thus be committed to defend) the rights of individuals or of collective entities? How far should customary entities be empowered to exclude and sanction outsiders wishing to use resources under their jurisdiction? Are there ways that LADPs should assist the evolution of customary resource tenure so as to meet new challenges posed by growing pressure for commercial development of natural resources such as woodland and water?

Market Development and Poverty Eradication

The experience of local governance in natural resource management reviewed here shows that measures to combat desertification must often be undertaken in strongly commercial environments where competition for access to resources is the norm and the potential for conflict and increasing inequity and poverty is high. It has to be recognised that proposals under NAPs to promote market access and higher value production as strategies to increase

rural incomes may intensify these aspects. Moreover, decentralization of natural resource management is unlikely, by itself, to reduce risks of increasing inequity. There is thus a potential conflict between measures taken to develop the rural economy and poverty eradication goals. An issue in the preparation of NAPs and LADPs is, therefore, what strategies to adopt to ensure that LADPs achieve an adequate integration of economic development and poverty eradication.

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