

Abstract

This study focused on a conflict over wildlife resources between Imire Safari Ranch and the surrounding community that has been resettled on former large scale commercial farms in Watershed East Ward of Hwedza District which is in Mashonaland east province of Zimbabwe. Imire safari ranch remains the only piece of land that has not been taken up for resettlement under the Governments Accelerated Land Reform Programme within Watershed East Ward. Of the 10 farms surrounding the ranch 8 were allocated to farmers under the A1 resettlement model and 2 were allocated under the A2 model. Since the ranch was not designated for resettlement, there is need to come up with appropriate conflict management strategies so that the ranch and the wildlife it aims to protect can survive the current political and socio-economic changes.

The study focused on understanding the nature and dynamics of the conflict, identifying internal and external limiting factors to its resolution as well as make recommendations as to how the conflict can be successfully managed. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methodologies were employed to obtain primary data (questionnaires, key informant interviews and secondary data reviews). A general guide to the conflict study was provided by the Hocker-Wilmot Conflict Assessment Guide (Hocker and Wilmot, 1997) and by Wehr's Conflict Map (Wehr, 1979) and the conflict escalation stage was determined by Glasl's Nine-Stage Model of Conflict Escalation (Glasl, 1997).

Although the problem of poaching has existed at Imire Safari Ranch since its establishment, the frequency increased after the farm occupations of 2000. The primary conflicting parties in this conflict were identified as the local community poachers and Imire Safari Ranch. Secondary parties include the PWMA, ZRP, local political leadership represented by the councillor and the Hwedza RDC. There are low levels of awareness of conflict management issues within the community and the RDC are slow reactions to the problem by the RDC and the PWMA. There is a situation of bipolarisation amongst the different stakeholders with Imire, the PWMA and the ZRP on the one hand and the councillor and the local community on the other. There is an increase in frequency of the use of more dangerous weapons like guns as well as increased direct confrontations between the two primary parties.

Other than the local community all the other stakeholders trivialised the contribution of cultural and historical factors to the conflict. No practical steps towards the management of the conflict have been taken except for an informal agreement between the ranch and the councillor in which the ranch is to support agricultural activities in the ward. There are some external factors that can be linked to the conflict, which include the current economic depression in the country and recurrent droughts. After an analysis of the results of this study, the conflict can be categorised into Glasl's seventh stage of conflict escalation. The study then concluded that the conflict was still manageable and recommended the initiation of dialogue, education and consultation, greater recognition of historical and cultural factors in the conflict and a quick reaction to the conflict situation between Imire Safari Ranch and its surrounding community.

Dedication

To my mother, Mrs V Muhwati

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A1-	Government of Zimbabwe resettlement model based on villages
A2-	Government of Zimbabwe resettlement model based on self contained units
ACM-	Alternative Conflict Management
ADMAGE	Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas
AREX-	Agricultural Rural Extension Services Department (Ministry of Agriculture)
CAMPFIRE-	Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous Resources
CBNRM-	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
CMAAs-	Conflict Management Assessments
DNR	Department of Natural Resources (Ministry of Environment and Tourism)
ESAP-	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FAO-UN-	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
ICC-	Intensive Conservation Committee
ISR-	Imire Safari Ranch
IUCN-ROSA-	World Conservation Union-Regional Office for Southern Africa
LIFE	Life in a Finite Earth
NGOs-	Non-governmental Organisations
PRA-	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PWMA-	Parks and Wildlife Management Authority
RDC-	Rural District Council
SADC-	Southern Africa Development Community
UNDP-	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP-	United Nations Environment Programme
WWF-	World Wide Fund for Nature
ZRP-	Zimbabwe Republic Police