

Sustainable Development and Natural Resources Management in Southern Zimbabwe

- ▶ ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
- ▶ TRANS-BOUNDARY ECOSYSTEM
- ▶ POVERTY ALLEVIATION
- ▶ CAPACITY BUILDING





Background and rationale

In Zimbabwe, since the second half of the 1980s, it has been progressively acknowledged that stability and socio-economic development are closely linked to the rational and sustainable use of renewable natural resources. In fact, in the Country's economy natural renewable resources play a fundamental role: they support food security at household, local and national levels and generate foreign currency earnings through export-oriented agricultural production, tourism and related economic activities.

Within this context, in 1991 Italy and Zimbabwe agreed to concentrate their collaboration on a few relevant specific sectors, among which the sustainable use and conservation of environmental resources. In particular, attention was focused on wildlife utilisation for income generation and the more appropriate use of natural resources, the promotion of environmentally sustainable technologies and



development strategies and the promotion of interventions aimed at reducing conflicts over the use of natural resources. Subsequent appraisals by the Italian Cooperation identified the communal lands in Southern Zimbabwe, adjacent to the international borders, as priority areas. These areas had been historically disadvantaged and marginalised, due to the combined effects of widespread poverty and lack of economic development and employment opportunities. The region is adjacent to areas of important biodiversity value: national parks, hunting and wildlife tourism areas. However, the lack of harmonisation in land use policies, habitat fragmentation and artificial barriers to ecological fluxes and functions, such as those between regions with different land use or international borders, did not allow the local ecological and economic potential to be developed. On the contrary, the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the communal lands were worsening. Two severe droughts had hit the region and severely undermined local food security networks, which were mainly reliant upon the traditional farming systems. In turn, worsening living conditions were exerting unsustainable pressure on the natural environment. There was a clear need to identify opportunities to improve the local livelihood system, by taking advantage of sustainable options for natural resources management. Zimbabwe had an important track record in the implementation of community-based natural resources management, particularly through the leading experience of CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources). However, evaluations in the early 1990s pointed out that such initiatives were significantly limited in the Southern region, mostly due to the following weaknesses:



- ❶ lack of an exhaustive information base on the environmental resources of semi-arid areas of Southern Africa and in particular of Southern Zimbabwe;
- ❷ lack of a specific agricultural and environmental know-how for the management of semi-arid zones;
- ❸ lack of a single land management policy, to meet the environmental and socio-economic requirements of communal lands, Protected Areas and commercial farms;
- ❹ lack of resources, and in particular, lack of advanced technologies for carrying out territorial planning, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS);
- ❺ low involvement and participation of local communities' leaders and Authorities in planning processes for sustainable use of land and of renewable natural resources;
- ❻ low planning capacity of local Authorities for system management at the different levels - ecosystem, services and users - and across districts and national borders.

More specifically, the following problems were identified in the proposed intervention area:

- ❶ the arbitrary obstacles opposed by national and international borders to ecosystem fluxes/functions and the lack of a proper framework to coordinate and integrate environmental and land use planning;

- the prevailing poverty conditions and the lack of economic development opportunities, linked to conventional forms of land-use (agriculture, livestock breeding, forestry);
- the environmental degradation compounded by unsustainable agricultural practices in arid and semi-arid environment, as well as the erratic climatic-environmental patterns which exacerbate “normal” seasonal stress.

Consistently, the Project has been developed as part of a larger trans-national conservation policy, promoted by international organisations such as the World Conservation Union (IUCN), UNESCO, UNEP, FAO, WWF and the World Bank. The approach and activities pursued also address central points of the recent political debate regarding Zimbabwe’s development: economic productivity and ecological sustainability. The Project is implemented under the framework of the Italian Cooperation support to the Transfrontier Natural Resources Management/Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) Programme. Direct links are also established with the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) and the Shashe-Limpopo TFCA. The executing and implementing agency is the Italian non governmental organisation (NGO) CESVI. The total budget amounts to 2 million euros.



Goal, objectives and expected outputs

The development goal of the Project is to improve the standards of living of the people and the status of the natural resources of communal lands in the Limpopo/Save catchment basins encompassing the border of Zimbabwe with Botswana, Mozambique and South Africa. The Project is structured in three components and the specific objectives are the following.

Research component

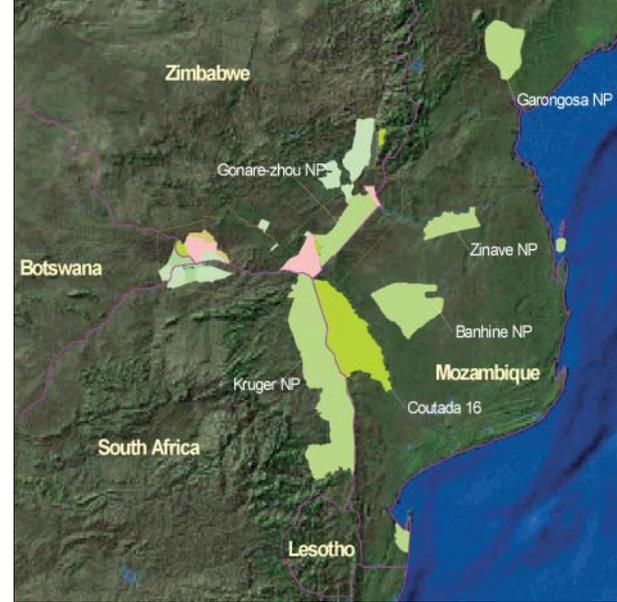
- Draw-up an analytical framework for the past and present environmental, historical and socio-economic situation in the target areas.
- Provide geo-referenced data and mapping of the target areas.
- Contribute to improve the current models for the management of natural resources and monitor any change in biodiversity resulting from the application of more sustainable management solutions.
- Elaborate a long-term plan for the sustainable management of natural resources in the target areas.

Environmental conservation component

- Protect and restore the wildlife resources in the target areas by creating buffer zones and wildlife corridors.

Sustainable ecosystem management will allow the reduction of fences and barriers

*Top of the page:
Map of the Project intervention Area*



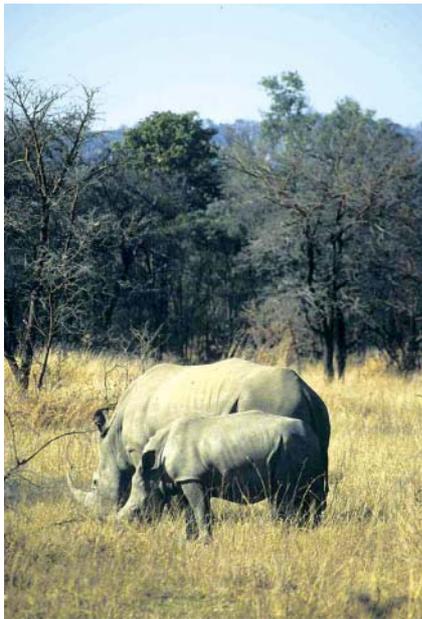
- Coordinate and promote wildlife management activities by setting up Management Development Units in the target areas.

Socio-economic component

- Improve living conditions in the target areas through sustainable economic activities.
- Strengthen human resources by introducing appropriate technologies and reinforcing traditional sustainable use of natural resources.

The Project’s approach is based upon the following principles:

- participatory planning involving relevant stakeholders at all levels;
- capacity building for beneficiary local authorities;
- linkages with neighbouring areas, both within and outside Zimbabwe;
- sound technical information;
- sound understanding and sharing of information on socio-economic and institutional situations and structures;
- monitoring, feedback and adjustment of Project’s activities and outputs.



The Project acts at different geographical levels:

- level 1 covers the four neighbouring countries, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique and South Africa; it includes communal lands, Protected Areas and private commercial land;
- level 2 is the Maramani Target Area, Sengwe-Beit Bridge East Target Area, Mahenye Target Area, each containing communal land, Protected Area and, in some cases, commercial land;
- level 3 covers three areas and each consists of one or more wards within selected communal land;
- level 4 are the areas within the wards identified for pilot field projects.

A fundamental aspect of the Project is the development of research aimed at defining an ecosystem management and conservation plan, as well as participatory monitoring aimed at improving activities under implementation. In this context, a multidisciplinary scientific committee is to monitor and backstop overall implementation.

Implementation and results

Project implementation started in May 1998 and is due to be completed by 2003.

Activities carried out and results include:

- Integrated multidisciplinary natural resources and socio-economic assessment.
- Development of GIS.
- Strengthening of Rural District Council functions in natural resources management.
- Establishment of local level forums for community-based natural resources management.
- Formulation of natural resources management plans for target areas.
- Establishment of legally recognised community institutions for resources management.
- Direct support to community entrepreneurial activities (eco-tourism/agriculture).
- Support to the Great Limpopo Trans-frontier Park, through the elaboration of a natural resources management plan for Sengwe corridor based on: technical assessment; consultative and participatory processes; support

to local and national authorities; participation of communities in GL-TFP stakeholder forums; establishment of Sengwe Community Trust.

Building upon the successful results of the present Zimbabwean component of the Trans-national Programme, and willing to consolidate its participation to the Trans-boundary Conservation Area Process, the Italian Cooperation is now formulating the Mozambique and South Africa components of the Trans-national Programme, which will be further boosted through a Type II Partnership under elaboration. All these initiatives share the overall goal of supporting the participation of populations adjacent to Protected Areas in resources management and livelihood enhancement opportunities. The latter are expected to stem from the establishment of the TFCAs. At the same time, each initiative addresses specific local problems such as water resources management, range-land rehabilitation and restocking, biodiversity conservation and the impact of these factors on poverty alleviation. Synergies stemming from this approach will also contribute to improve common management issues such as fire control, fight against poaching, animal diseases and exotic species control.



Livonde river

