

Ethnicity and Utilization of Natural Resources in the Okavango Delta, Botswana: A Historical Perspective of Conflict and Collaboration

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Abstract: Historically, the availability, selection and use of natural resources influenced settlement and migration patterns (including configuration of kinship networks) of different ethnic groups along the Okavango River in northwestern Botswana. Different ethnic groups in the Delta invariably use natural resources such as water, fish, wildlife, birds and non-timber forest products to sustain their livelihoods. Whereas international and regional instruments set a new agenda for sustainable utilization of biodiversity resources, different ethnic communities are impacted differently. This is synthesis paper based on state-of-the-art review of literature on the historical interactions between ethnicity and utilization of natural resources on the one hand, macro level governance (by international conventions, agreements and national policies) and on the other hand, local participation in community based natural resource management projects as a case study to demonstrate ethnicity, conflict and collaboration in utilization of natural resources in the Okavango Delta.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Community based natural resources management, Livelihoods, Okavango Delta

1 Introduction

Two thirds of Botswana's land is covered with the thick sand layers of the Kalahari desert. The area is semi-arid and severely lacking in surface water, rainfall is generally low (averaging between 300 and 400 mm per year), irregular and localized. Botswana's settlement pattern mostly concentrated in the country's eastern borders with South Africa, closely reflects these semi-arid and arid environments. There is considerable surface water in the northwest surrounding the Okavango River which originates from the Cubango River in the Central Angolan Highlands, entering Namibia at Katwitwi, and after a distance of 460 km, the river enters Botswana at Molembo in the North-western part of the country. Generally, the Okavango Delta can be divided into four main ecological regions, namely, the panhandle, the permanent swamps in the upper regions, the seasonal swamps in the lower regions, and a number of land masses which occur as large islands, which extend into the delta from the surrounding mainland areas and are referred to as sandveld tongues (Ellery and Ellery, 1997). The rich Okavango ecosystem and its natural resource diversity has partly determined human settlements along and around the Delta. Different ethnic groups in the area use natural resources found in the wetland differently to sustain their livelihoods. Natural resources include wildlife, veld products, soil, water, fish, forests, thatching grass, palm trees and so on. The main economic activities in the upper and lower Okavango Delta villages are rainfed and flood recession arable agriculture, livestock farming, fishing, hunting, gathering of veld products, small scale commercial enterprises like the production and sale of crafts (Kgathi et al 2004).

Generally, macro level social changes brought about by urbanization, inter-ethnic marriages, commercialization and expansion of government services in Botswana have influenced utilization of natural resources. Also, utilization of natural resources in the Okavango Delta in the upper and lower ecological zones has been governed by international conventions and protocols, and regional and national policies. If linked with government anti-poverty strategies in rural communities, these policies invariably affected ethnic resource access and utilization.

The objective of this paper is to give a historical overview of use of natural resource by the different ethnic groups living in the Okavango Delta in the context of international and regional conventions and protocols, and local policies and programs. The paper is divided into five sections. The first gives a concep-

tual framework, this is followed by the historical use of resources by ethnic groups; international conventions and agreements; local policies and strategies for resource use, inter-ethnic collaboration in utilization of natural resources. The paper ends with a conclusion.

2 Ethnicity in Botswana: Conceptual Issues

Botswana official policy does not sanction data collection that portrays ethnic affiliation. According to 2001 National Population Census 90% of the country's population claim to speak Setswana the language (CSO, 2002). There are at least 20 language groups in the country that can be grouped into 9 discernable classes of Bantu languages, and 10 or more Khoisan language group and 1 Indo-European. The San people, together with the Kwe (Khoi-Khoi), were the first to inhabit the southern Africa region dating back to over 20 000 years. Whereas the South-east and Kgatleng districts are regarded as least diverse, Ngamiland district (Okavango basin) is particularly rich in diversity of Bantu and Khoisan ethnic groups who have been in contact for the past one thousand years (Selolwane, 2004).

According to Botswana's Population Census of 2001, Ngamiland District has a human population of just over 122,000 people (CSO, 2002). It is estimated that roughly 8.3% of Ngamiland's population is San. Bantu speaking groups such as Hambukushu and Bayei in Ngamiland are also considered ethnic minorities in Botswana. Basarwa and the Bantu-speaking inter-ethnic group relations in contemporary Ngamiland are complex. It is thus also important to note the historical asymmetrical power relations' relationship between the San, Hambukushu and Wayei in Ngamiland in the context of to the Tswana majority (Taylor, 2000; Saugestad, 2001).

Ethnicity in post colonial Africa has often been perceived as problematic and a hindrance to economic development and political stability. There are good political reasons for wanting to avoid the concept of ethnicity because it is often associated with 'tribalism'. In particular, active organized ethnic groups are often viewed as either divisive or a threat to political unity. Ethnically motivated genocide in Rwanda is reminder of 'danger zones' of ethnicity. In southern Africa, ethnicity bears particular scrutiny because of the way the apartheid state manipulated and enforced it. The above caveats notwithstanding, as Bates (1999) aptly pointed out, ethnic tensions *per se* do not necessarily translate into political violence. In fact, sometimes the pressure could create a possibility for consensus seeking behaviors that can promote trade-offs, reconciliation and collaboration, rather than an inflammation of these differences. In Botswana, for instance, ethnic under-currents have historically informed public policy, decision making and modernization program since independence (Haug, 2007; Nyamnjoh, 2007; Werbner 2002; Taylor, 2000; Saugestad, 2001; Selolwane, 2004). Also, there are active ethnic politico-cultural organizations such as *RETENG*, an umbrella association for the ethnic 'minority' groups known and *Kamanakao* Association in Ngamiland. To date, these tensions have not precipitated ethnically motivated political violence fractures between majority and segmented minority ethnic groups (Selolwane, 2004).

From the above discussion, ethnic tensions with regard to access and utilization of the Delta natural resources is probable. The question is, are the tensions likely to inflame violent confrontation, or alternatively, create opportunities for cooperation and collaboration particularly at local community level. This paper will use three multi-ethnic Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Ngamiland to demonstrate the link between ethnicity and development. The tourism industry in Botswana is concentrated in the ethnically diverse Okavango Delta due to its striking landscapes, natural scenery and largest population of wildlife in Africa. Community based natural resource management (CBNRM) in this paper will be used as a blanket term to refer to the bundle of measures combining rural development and natural resources conservation (Saugestad, 2001). Among stated objectives of the CBNRM policy is the increased involvement, responsibility, and hence empowerment of the local communities. In order to benefit from this policy, local residents must form a legally recognized community based organization (CBO). The concept of community resource management is in line with global thinking on the protection of the environment. Participatory development is expected to follow from recognition of local communities to manage their own resources.

CBNRM CBOs have played a significant role in organizing ethnic communities to have access to, control over and utilization of natural resources. Through local and international collaborative networks, arenas have been established for local ethnic people to participate in 'development' by setting their own agenda, while at the same time deepening their understanding of challenges they face utilizing natural resources.

3 The Historical Use of Resource by Ethnic Groups

3.1 The Basarwa and the Use of Natural Resources

The oldest inhabitants of the Okavango Basin in Botswana are the Basarwa, a collective name used for several groups of Khoisan-speaking peoples. Evidence based on Early and Middle Stone Age implements found at sites on or near the delta margins seem to indicate that man has inhabited the southern periphery of the delta for about 10,000 years or more (Tlou, 1985). These shows that the Basarwa groups relied on natural resources found in the Okavango River ecosystem for many centuries. While this is the case, the Basarwa of the Okavango region are of different types, for example, they are those who lived along the floodplains and rivers of the Okavango Delta and those who lived in the sandbelt areas. The Basarwa of Khwai are an example of the group that lived along the floodplains of the Okavango River and Delta while and those of Mababe lived in the dry and sandbelt areas. Both Khwai and Mababe are found in the in the lower parts of the Okavango Delta. The Basarwa of Khwai are believed to have inhabited the Okavango Delta as early as 800 A.D. (Tlou, 1985). This group lived through hunting, fishing and gathering along the rivers and distributaries of the Okavango River. As a result of their way of life, they have been collectively referred to as *BaNoka*, meaning people of the river or the so called "river Bushmen" (Ibid). The Banoka simply moved from one part of the river to the other according to game and fish movements (Mbaiwa, 2005). However, Khwai Village is also composed of Basarwa who came to the place in 1963 led by a head-man called Kgwere (Tlou, 1985).

In general, the residents of the sandbelt were predominately hunters and gatherers. The Basarwa group in Mababe are also known as Basarwa ba *Setsiga* or *Matsegakwe*, that is the people of the dryland.. The Basarwa, though nomadic in nature, have always moved away from the delta during summer seasons when there was an availability of resources in the dryland area and into the delta in dry seasons (Mbaiwa, 2005). While these movements indicate the important role that the delta played in the socio-economic livelihoods of the Basarwa, the seasonal movements promoted the sustainable use of the Okavango Delta resources. That is, while they were away from a particular place for a season, the resources in the area would recuperate or regenerate.

Sethora (2007) argues that the Basarwa women of Bagakwe clan at Ngarange gather eggs of birds, roots and small animals. Further, Bagakwe women collect food from both the swamps as well as the savanna. These include eggs, roots, fruits, birds, reptiles, tortoises, insects including beetles and caterpillars, small game, *mongongo*, *morama* and *marula* nuts.

The vast majority of Basarwa in contemporary Botswana are no longer hunter and gatherers, but depend on a mixed economy which includes livestock, crop production, wage labor and welfare provisions such as drought relief, labor intensive public works, and subsistence support of indigents. Those who work in the cattle posts or are unemployed supplement their income through hunting and gathering and through crafts manufactured from ostrich eggshells, skins and other natural resources. However, wildlife still makes a significant contribution their diet, also, for its symbolic and material use in social exchange and networks of reciprocity. Wildlife management has thus a direct impact on the livelihoods of the majority of Basarwa. In 1979, a Special Game License for subsistence hunting was introduced, and holders were required to use traditional hunting methods and it was illegal to sell meat derived from the use of these licenses. Most Basarwa communities are faced with problem of transition from nomadism to sedentism. It is difficult to follow game and at the same time stay at home to tend to cattle and goats and fields. Consequently, these

communities are poverty stricken. The Remote Area Development Program (RAD) was created in the early 1970s and the majority of program recipients are Basarwa. However the welfare program tend to increase rather than decrease dependency on government handouts.

3.2 The Bantu-Speaking Groups and the Use of Natural Resources

The Bantu-speaking groups found the Basarwa already living in most parts of the Okavango River and Delta. While the Basarwa had lived in the Okavango Basin for thousands of years, the Bantu-speaking groups have lived in the area for not more than five hundreds years. The Bayei and Bambukushu were the first groups of Bantu-speakers to arrive in the Okavango region from 1800, and their migrations were probably the most significant historical events in the area. They extended matrilineally oriented cultures and introduced technological innovations of great importance for the development of fishing, hippo hunting and agriculture (Tlou, 1985). The rivers and swamps, rather than being barriers, became highways of communication between the peoples of Zambia and Botswana (Tlou, 1985).

The Bayei emigrated from Diyei, also called Ngasa, which is the area just east of the confluence of the Zambezi and the Chobe Rivers now within the Caprivi Strip in Namibia. The Bayei moved into the Okavango in small and large groups, walking or punting and paddling their canoes along water courses linking the Chobe and the Okavango swamps, until they settled on the rivers, islands and the margins of the Okavango Delta in about 1750 or earlier. The movements were gradual and extended over a long period of time (Tlou, 1985).

Although the Bayei arrived in the Okavango at different times, Tlou (1985) notes that after 1750, the Bayei were widely spread over the western, eastern and southern parts of the delta. Fishing and hunting played an important part in amongst the Bayei, however, it was regulated by special laws in order to avoid over harvesting. Lack of centralization among the Bayei society was partly caused by their environment. Villages were scattered all over the delta islands and the several floodplains. In this way, overcrowding was avoided and every family had enough land to cultivate and adequate hunting and fishing (Tlou, 1985).

The leadership wars in the Buluzi Empire also forced the Bambukushu to emigrate from their home at Katima Mulilo on the Zambezi River to the Kwando Valley in north-western Botswana. The colonial wars in Southern Angola and Caprivi Strip also resulted in further migrations of about 4,000 Bambukushu into areas around Gumare in Botswana. These Angolan Bambukushu joined their neighbours in the Mohembo/Shakawe area on either side of the Okavango River. Terry notes that when it became apparent that this area was becoming crowded, the Botswana Government resettled the Bambukushu in a 260 square kilometers area between Gumare and Sepopa along the Thaoge River (one of the three main distributaries of the Okavango River). There were thirteen Bambukushu villages established in this area and were named from Etsha 1 to 13. Etsha is a Sesarwa name referring to “water in a small pan”(Terry, 1984). However, amongst the thirteen Etsha villages, there are other groups of people such as the Bayei, Batawana and Baherero.

Most of the ethnic groups in the Western part of the Okavango Delta like the Bambukushu, Bayei, Bakgalagadi and Basarwa are popularly known for basket production (Mbaiwa, 2004). Basket production has become one of the main cultural tourism products in the Okavango Delta. The palm tree (*Hyphaene petersian*) or *mokola* plant found mainly in islands of the Okavango River and Delta is one of the plant species that is used for basket making. Basket production supports the livelihoods of ethnic groups that live found in the Okavango Delta. The fibre from leaf blades of the juvenile palm tree is an important raw material used for the production of baskets. The dye or colouring for *mokola* leaves is mainly obtained from roots of trees such as *Euclea divinorum* (*mothakola*) and *Berchemia discolor* (*motsentsila*) (Cunningham 1988, Tlou 1985). These are the most preferred species for dye because they have a dark colour which is preferred by basket buyers because it adds quality to the baskets, as they do not fade when dye is used (Cunningham and Milton, 1982). Terry (1986) notes that there are six different types of materials or plants that are used in basket making in Gumare and Tubu. These include *Hyphaene petersian* “*mokola*”, *Euclea divinorum* “*mothakola*” a dark brown dye material, *Berchemia discolor* “*montsentsila*” red brown dye material and

Eragrostis pallens “lihelo” grass for the inner core of the coils, *Indigofera* “mohetsola” a light purple dye and *Menispermaceae* vine for the interior core of the basket.

The Bambukushu also practice dryland-farming. *Molapo* (floodplain) crop farming along the Okavango River is one of the economic activities that the Bambukushu in the Okavango region are practicing. The Bambukushu have also taken advantage of the surrounding Okavango environment to collect edible plants, fish, small game, and insects which add to their diet. The Bambukushu have always been river people and the surrounding environment of the Okavango Delta has allowed them to continue their traditional practice of craftmaking. The trees, grass, and the reeds of the Okavango supply the craft producers with much of the necessary raw materials for handicraft production. Sethora (2007) argues that along the panhandle and in the Etsha area, where the Bambukushu are the dominant ethnic group, dryland farming is the main land use activity. In addition, seasonal floodplain (molapo) crop cultivation is associated with the Bayei and it is found in the floodplains at the western and southern fringes of the Okavango Delta mainly at Tubu and in the Shorobe area. Sethora also notes that the Bambukushu construct walls of houses with reeds, and then plaster them with mud. Outdoor enclosures are also built with reeds while the roofs are made with thatching grass. Sethora (2007) also argues that the Bambukushu, Dixeriku and Bayei men built fences from acacia thorn trees to protect agricultural fields from wild animals. (As baskets are mostly made for sale, the economic potential of this handicraft industry was to be copied by the Bayei women near Etsha who joined their Bambukushu counterparts and increased basket production in the area (Terry, 1986).

The history of the various ethnic groups living in the Okavango region in Botswana would be incomplete if the role played by the Batawana in the area is ignored or over-looked. The Batawana are an off-shoot of the Bangwato of the Central District of Botswana. They seceded in the nineteenth century and immigrated to Ngamiland District. Tlou (1985) states that the most important characteristics of the period before the arrival of the Batawana in Ngamiland District was the absence of a unitary state and the prevalence of small-scale communities with diversified social and political structures. None of these entities was powerful enough to impose its rule on others. They co-existed in a fairly peaceful and balanced manner and were relatively autonomous until their incorporation into the Batawana State in the early nineteenth century. After staying in several settlements such as Lephephe and Toteng, the Batawana finally built their capital at Maun in the 1900s.

The most significant aspect of the Batawana immigration in terms of resource use in the Okavango was the change of land use from a predominately arable economy and hunter-gatherer to one that included a strong livestock component. That is, although the Batawana practiced crop farming, pastoral farming became the backbone of their economy. Pastoralism was further promoted by the arrival of the Baherero who arrived in the Okavango in 1904/5 fleeing from the colonial wars in what was then German South West Africa or present day Namibia. The Baherero settled in the areas to the west of the Okavango Delta, and in the villages of Sehitywa and Nokaneng.

Other groups who are found in Ngamiland District are the Bakgalagadi and Basubiya. The Bakgalagadi lived a semi-nomadic life in small villages around waterholes especially in the sandbelt area. However, the Bakgalagadi emigrated in large numbers and settled on both sides of the Okavango Delta as far north as Tshodilo Hills and Shakawe, and Gabamukuni to the north-east between the 1820s and 1840s (Tlou, 1985). Like the Basarwa, the Bakgalagadi relied on game, which roamed the scrub savannah and parts of the sandbelt as well as around the Okavango Delta.

Natural resources in the Okavango Delta are now governed by international conventions and protocols that determine access to their use by local groups. The section below will discuss some of these instruments.

4 International Conventions and Agreements

4.1 The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance

In an attempt to promote the conservation of the Okavango Delta, Botswana rectified the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance in 1997. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of Interna-

tional Importance is an international agreement that seeks to promote awareness and cooperation in the conservation of threatened wetlands (Ramsar Convention, 1971). The Convention is particularly important to ecosystems that support a wide diversity of species. The Okavango Delta has as a result been listed as a wetland of International Importance under Article 2 of the Convention. Through Article 3 of the same Convention, Botswana is obliged to ensure that the wetland together with all the natural resources found in it are conserved (Ramsar, 1971). In order to promote the conservation of the Okavango Delta as a Ramsar site, Botswana has since drawn a National Wetland Policy and Strategy in 2000 and has produced Integrated Management Plan for the Okavango Delta known as the Okavango Delta Management Plan in 2006. All these strategies have come to limit access of resource use by various ethnic groups in the Okavango Delta. Resource use is now somehow regulated particularly that human populations have increased over the years. The increase in human population has also resulted in resource conflicts which all threaten the conservation of the Okavango Delta (Darkoh & Mbaiwa, 2005).

4.2 The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) is another international agreement aimed at promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (UNCBD, 1992). Botswana is a signatory to the Convention. The Convention notes that individual states retain sovereign rights to use their resource in their respective countries based on their environmental policies. However, it also notes that in the case of shared resources, activities of an individual state should not cause damage to the environment beyond its borders where other states become affected (UNCBD, 1992). The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity is important for Botswana as it will ensure that activities on the Okavango Delta do not have detrimental effects on the biodiversity and ecological functioning of the wetland. However, Angola and Namibia who are on the upstream are also signatories of the Convention. In this regard, the Convention is more important to Botswana in the down stream than Angola and Namibia because what happens in the upstream may affect the Okavango Delta in the downstream. It is in this perspective that socio-economic developments by any of the riparian members states particularly the use of water resources from the Okavango River is done in consultation and the agreement of other member states. As a result, the UNCBD directly impacts on access in resource use by ethnic groups in the Okavango Delta since harvesting of resources in the wetland is somehow done inline with aspirations of Angola and Namibia.

4.3 The Southern African Development Community Protocol on Shared Watercourses

The Revised Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Shared Water Courses of 2001 was signed by each of the member states in 2001. The protocol indicates that shared and heightened awareness of the critical importance of water resources for the entire Southern African region (Ashton and Neal, 2003). Among some of the key provisions of the revised protocol include obligations that; member states within a shared watercourse system undertake to establish close cooperation with their neighbours in the study and execution of all projects likely to have an effect on the regime of the watercourse system; and that member states shall utilize a shared watercourse system in an equitable manner. A shared watercourse system shall be used and developed by member states to attain its optimum utilization and for the benefits consistent with the adequate protection of the watercourse system (Ashton and Neal, 2003).

The revised protocol has also made provision upon which the countries of Angola, Botswana and Namibia should develop water systems that flow within the boundaries of their sovereign territories. The critical part of the provisions are that each state should inform its neighbours of any plans to develop or modify a shared river system, to work together to ensure that each state shares in the benefits of such plans, and to ensure that environmental degradation is avoided or minimized. While the protocol promotes co-operation between each member states, the problem is that only Botswana and Namibia had ratified the protocol by 2001 (SADC, 2001). The implications of this attitude is that even though it is unlikely that a member state can develop a water project without the cooperation of other member states. It is one thing to sign up an

agreement, it is another to implement it. Therefore, even though the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has responded to the issue of water resources in the region with a protocol on shared river basins, the Okavango is likely to continue to be a source of strategic local and regional conflict in Southern Africa. This shows that accessibility to water resources by ethnic groups in the Okavango Delta is limited by such protocols. For example, in 1997, the Botswana Government wanted to extract water from the Boro River (a tributary of the Okavango River) and provide water to Maun residents. This proposal was met with international opposition and threats of stopping development aid by developed countries. The result was that Botswana abandoned the project hence people in Maun and surrounding were denied access to water use from the Okavango Delta.

4.4 The International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

The centralization of natural resources such as wildlife in Botswana is not the only approach that has reduced access to resource by local communities. The Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) of 1975, is a United Nations convention designed to control international trade in wildlife products. Emphasis is placed on endangered wildlife species. Botswana as a signatory of CITES has led to a trade embargo on the country's elephant products at both local and international markets. Export and import of Appendix I species are not allowed by signatory nations except under specialized conditions of non-commercial use, such as scientific. The international trade embargo on Botswana's elephant products has led to the rapid increase of the country's elephant population. From a population of 60,902 elephants in the 1991, Botswana's elephants increased to 109,471 by 2003 (CSO, 2005). Botswana's elephant population is concentrated in the north in areas such as the Okavango Delta and Chobe regions where there is a permanent supply of water. Range ecologists such as Perkins (1996) state that Botswana's elephant population is beyond the range's carrying capacity hence the need to reduce it. Crop damage by elephants cause land use conflicts between crop farmers on the one hand and wildlife managers and conservationist in the Okavango Delta on the other hand CITES has not only created an embargo on elephant use, it has also restricted the use of wildlife in the Okavango Delta by local communities. Restrictions in the killing of elephants have led to large herds of elephants becoming destructive to crops hence creating human-wildlife conflicts in the Okavango Delta (Mbaiwa, 1999).

5 National Policies, Resource Use Strategies, Conflict and Collaboration

At a local level, several institutions and policies have affected access to resource use in the Okavango Delta. For example, in 1963, Moremi Game Reserve was established within the Okavango Delta. The Basarwa of Khwai and Gudigwa were relocated from Xakanaxa and Chiefs Island which are inside the reserve to their present sites (Mbaiwa 2005; Bolaane 2004). In addition, the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), which is responsible for the management of resources inside the reserve, does not allow free access into the reserve by ethnic groups living around it. That is, entry into Moremi Game Reserve is not allowed by DWNP without a permit, and a fee is charged for this permit. In respect to all the different ethnic groups a living in the outskirts of the reserve, DWNP can only allow them into the reserve when they pay gate fees and enter the reserve as tourists. This on its own shows how ethnic groups have come to be restricted in using resources in the Okavango Delta. Past studies (e.g. Kgathi et al 2004) have shown that community leaders particularly those at Gudigwa and Shorobe expressed their unhappiness for being denied access to veld products (e.g. thatching grass and veld products) in Moremi Game Reserve.

The erection of veterinary fences is another modern instrument that has come to deny local groups access to resource use in other parts of the Okavango Delta. Veterinary fences are meant to separate livestock from wildlife, especially foot and mouth disease carrier animals such as buffalos. Botswana exports beef to European markets and beef production is the third largest economic sector in the country after diamond mining and tourism development (Darkoh and Mbaiwa, 2002). The erection of veterinary fences has created resource access boundaries that prevented communities in the Okavango Delta from accessing

economic activities to sustain their livelihoods. In particular, veterinary fences erected in 1995/96 to control the outbreak of Contagious Bovine Pleuro-Pneumonia (CBPP), had numerous negative effects on the livelihoods of communities in the Okavango Delta. For example, fences create barriers to the free movement of communities in pursuit of traditional sources of livelihood such as veldt products (Kgathi et al, 2004).

The Tourism Policy of 1990 and the Wildlife Conservation Policy of 1986 further restricted the use of resources in the Okavango Delta by local groups. The Tourism Policy was designed to diversify of Botswana's economy from reliance on diamond mining through wildlife-based tourism in areas such as the Okavango Delta. As a result, government describes tourism as the "new engine of economic growth" (GoB, 1990). The Tourism Policy has thus resulted in the Okavango Delta and its rich flora and fauna being marketed in industrialized countries by government and tour operators as "a pristine and undisturbed" wilderness destination. The policy emphasizes the promotion of high-cost low-volume tourism (GoB, 1990). What the Tourism Policy has achieved so far is creating the Okavango Delta particularly concession areas as a free zone for tourism development. Some of these concession areas especially those leased to safari operators do not allow communities to have access to resources in these areas. Currently, the people of Tubu have conflicts with the concessionaire in a CHA known as NG/25 which is generally their former land. This area is now used for tourism purposes and the people of Tubu are denied access to resource use in this concession area. Legislative intervention by government agencies therefore make resources to be readily accessible and optimally beneficial to foreign safari company interest groups compared to indigenous people of the Okavango Delta.

The Wildlife Conservation Policy of 1986 resulted in the Okavango Delta being divided into Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Controlled Hunting Areas (CHAs) in 1989. This means most parts of the Okavango Delta have been set aside for the various wildlife-based tourism purposes that include Community-Based Natural Resource management (CBNRM) program. The CBNRM program shows that resource use by rural communities in the Okavango Delta has further been restricted and is now commodified for the tourism market. In addition, the CBNRM program provides a limited number of people of the Okavango Delta the opportunity to participate in wildlife-based tourism while the some of the villages and people such as Mababe, Ditshiping, Gudigwa and XaiXai believe that they have been allocated WMAs which are not rich in wildlife while the wildlife rich areas have been allocated to foreign tourism companies (Mbaiwa et al 2008). These villagers believe that they have been allocated WMAs and CHAs that are dry and in most cases unattractive for tourism purposes. This shows that even though the zonation and demarcation of land into WMAs was initiated with noble intentions of promoting natural resource conservation, in some communities, it has led to feelings of anger and betrayal by local communities that not only has their best land been taken away and given to foreign investors, but also that they continue to be marginalized and are forced to irk a living in small drier areas.

Although the implementation of the CBNRM program in Botswana has generated inter-ethnic tensions, CBNRM Trusts established in Ngamiland, also demonstrate intra/inter ethnic trade-offs and collaboration. The Okavango Community Trust (OCT), for example, was established in 1995 as a multi-village CBO comprising of the villages of Seronga, Gunotsoga, Eretsha, Beetsha and Gudigwa and their respective satellite settlements. OCT is multi-ethnic comprising mainly of WaYei, HaMbukushu, BaKgalagadi and Bugakhwe ("River San") ethnic groups. The WaYei are dominant in both Seronga and Gunitsoa while the HaMbukushu are in the majority in Eretsha and Beetsha. Gudigwa is predominantly Bugakhwe. Since the beginning of its operations, OCT has acquired a number of assets like vehicles, boats and established a bottle store in Seronga. It also has a guesthouse, trust office and small general dealer store at Beetsha, as well as a vegetable project in Eretsha. The Trust currently employs 45 people in total while the joint venture operator employs 120 people.

Mababe Zokotsama Community Development Trust was established in August 1998 as a single-village Trust of Mababe village. Ethnic groups found in the village include Ts'exa ("Sand San"), WaYei and BaSubiya, with the Ts'exa in the majority. The village had a population of 157 in 2001 (CSO, 2002) and

consists of 55 households. The Trust entered into a joint venture arrangement with African Field Sports, a safari company, in 2000. The company operates two hunting camps and a photographic camp in NG 41 and employs a total of 64 community members. Employment by both the Trust and the safari operator accounts for 52% of the population based on 2001 population and housing census records. The Trust has ventured into a number of activities and projects such as the establishment of Dizhana Community Campsite, housing for old age people, introduction of Old Age Fund where elderly members, who do not benefit directly from Trust activities are paid P50.00¹ and an Orphans Fund of P200 per orphan per month paid to legal guardians. Trust recently constructed a Trust office block, Community hall and ablution block in Mababe village.

In 1986, The Kuru Development Trust was founded in Darkar as a CBO aimed at facilitating participation and empowerment of the San in the development process, especially with regard to access and utilization of natural resources, including the tourism. In 2000, Kuru Development Trust established the Trust for Okavango Cultural and Development Initiative (TOCaDI) in Shakawe. TOCaDI facilitated the formation of in 1999 Teemacane (which means stand up) initially to promote Xanekwe and Bukhakwe ethnic culture through eco-tourism. Teemashane Trust is made of members from eight villages, Shaikarawe, Mohembo west, Kaputura, Tobere, Xakao, Sekodomboro, Nagarange and Mogotlho. Although Teemacane was originally established as a Kwe trust, the cultural and ethnic diversity within the eight member villages made it imperative for TOCaDI to work with and support other more 'powerful' minority groups, the Hambukushu, Bayei and Herero to avoid escalating tensions. TOCaDI strategy has been to be inclusive rather than exclusive. The Projects include hiking trails (including the N/ôâxom area (NG 10) which covers approximately 5 x 3 km the river bank eastern side of the Okavango panhandle), mokoro riding, fishing, thatching grass, basket weaving, language development and HIV/AIDS awareness project. Cash income is aimed at reducing community dependency on government handouts.

6 Conclusions

In conclusion, the Okavango River Basin is an important ecosystem to both human life as well as to animal, plant, insects, birds and other microorganisms found in it. The basin has sustained the socio-economic livelihoods of most people living in northwestern Botswana. The various ethnic groups found in the region are interrelated and have co-existed with each other for centuries. As a result of major migrations into the Okavango Basin by these groups, they in the process introduced a diversified and improved way of natural resource use found in the delta. This is to say, the various ethnic groups found in the Okavango River Basin posse various skills and techniques, which they used to exploit natural resources found in the Okavango. Such skills and techniques were passed to other groups in the delta. For example, the Bayei were responsible for the people in the area use the introduction of fishing techniques and mekoro, both of which are still. The Bayei and the Bambukushu taught the delta dwellers *molapo* farming which has become one of the agricultural methods used by the people living along the Okavango River and its distributaries. The contribution of the Banoka to the economy lay in their expert knowledge of digging game pits and the manufacturing of a variety of poisons for hunting purposes. The Bakgalagadi and the Basarwa excelled in the production of leather goods, and their knowledge of plant and animal life, the Basarwa were specifically famed for their use of medicinal herbs.

For centuries, the different communities that lived around the Okavango Delta depended on natural resources found in the area. These societies always utilized natural resources in their environment sustainably. Each community had unwritten laws, customs and traditions as well as an institutional framework that ensured the sustainable use of natural resources in the area. Overharvesting of resources was unheard of in the Okavango Basin until the arrival and the introduction of European trade in the area from the 1850s. The commercialization of natural resources such as wildlife and the breakdown of the traditional institutional

1 BWP/USD exchange rate – per Pula = 0.1654

framework in the management of natural resources resulted in the over utilization of wildlife resources in the area. This problem, together with increased human population and socio-economic activities continue threaten the future availability of natural resources in the delta. The other threat is that of the various economic development projects such as the proposed and suspended abstraction of water from the Okavango River by the Namibia Government and the suspended dredging of the Boro River (one of the Okavango River distributaries) by the Botswana Government. The various socio-economic activities in the Okavango Delta suggest that the basin needs a comprehensive and integrated management plan to be drawn in order for natural resources in the area to be used sustainably. The design, implementation and monitoring of such a plan need to take into consideration the views and aspiration of the various people and societies living in the Okavango River Basin in order for it to succeed.

In the era of commodification of resources and resource degradation in the Okavango Delta, international conventions, agreements and policies and strategies have been adopted and most of them reduce access to resource use for local communities. However, local community participation in decision-making regarding natural resource management is an important aspect for sustainable resource management. In the homefront, there was little or no consultation with local people or was there any social impact studies done before the zonation of Okavango Delta into WMAs, erection of veterinary fences (e.g. CBPP fences), adoption of the Wildlife Conservation Policy of 1986 and the Tourism Policy of 1990, decisions on wildlife quotas and tourism licences including the establishment of Moremi Game Reserve. As a result, natural resource management policies and institutions have restricted access to resource use by local people in the Okavango Delta. Sustainability of resource use in the Okavango Delta thus largely depends in the involvement of all stakeholders including local communities in the decision making process.

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