

## The Dynamics of Benefits Sharing in Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Among Remote Communities in Botswana

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**Abstract:** Community based natural resources management (CBNRM) is a rural development approach in Third World Countries that seeks to achieve a dual objectives namely to form of biodiversity conservation and promote socio-economic development. Whilst conservation lobby groups applauds the program as contributing significantly to biodiversity conservation, in Botswana, achievement of the socio-economic objective is varied and contradictory. On one hand, the promoters of CBNRM point to substantial amounts of funds (in thousands of US-Dollars) generated by the program for some communities. On the other hand, critics of the program argue that benefit sharing contradicts the objectives of the programme at every point. While community self governance in natural resources management and utilisation is one of the main principles of CBNRM for instance, government interference in CBNRM projects, is endemic. This paper investigates the dynamics of benefits sharing models (actual and desired) in two San (Basarwa) remote communities of Mababe and Phuduhudu that are involved in CBNRM projects in Ngamiland district in north western Botswana. Study findings suggest that benefit sharing models in these communities do not differ from the social welfare poverty alleviation model promoted by the Botswana government. Subsequently, the dynamics of this benefits sharing model tend to polarize the community into two groups, namely those who acquire extensive benefits and those who benefit minimally. This study has shown that the trickle down assumption [of equitable sharing of benefit accruing from CBNRM development project] has been misguided and presumptuous. Whilst the government and donor agencies have not succeeded in implementing the trickle down wealth re-distribution at international and national levels, it was unreasonable to expect poorly resourced communities with low human capital and infrastructural development to succeed in it.

**Keywords:** CBNRM, Benefits Sharing, Trickle down

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### 1 Introduction

Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) is premised on the philosophy that if a resource is valuable and land holders have effective rights to manage, use and benefit from it, then sustainable use is likely (Murphree, 1993, Stiner & Rihoy, 1995; Bond, 2001). It is based on two arguments. Firstly, 'fortress' approaches to nature conservation are seen to have failed or too expensive. Secondly, it is believed that if local people perceive direct individual, household or community benefits to accrue from conservation, their commitment to such actions will increase. CBNRM as a concept is carefully crafted and is infused with notions such as democracy, participation and biodiversity conservation. It is a development framework that brings an entirely new machinery involving the state, donors and powerful international conservation organisations into areas that were traditionally the preserve of anthropologists and historians. (Swatuk, 2004).

Since the inception of CBNRM projects in the past 15 years, credence and criticism of the programme have emerged from several sources (Dore & Chafota, 2000; Swatuk, 2004; Blackie, 2006). On one hand, proponents of community conservation present CBNRM as a means of reconciling conservation and development objectives by ensuring that the interests of local people are taken into account in making trade-offs (Kaimowitz & Sheil 2007, Mbaiwa & Darkoh 2005, Thakadu 1997). Supporters of community projects are however not neutral and impartial. They too have biases and tend promote either their own agendas or the interests of those they represent (Friedmann 1992; Peters, 1994; Narayan, et al 2000). They view the CBNRM as a state-led, scientific management project that is necessary to guarantee the preservation of biodiversity (Adams and Hulme 2001).

On the other hand, Blackie (2006) argues that the CBNRM project is porous. It can absorb different agendas and is rich in the variety of benefits it promises, and there appears to be “something in it for everybody”. Thus, theories about the benefits of CBNRM are judged less by their predictive value than their appeal to various different constituencies of different international financial institutions. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, critics argue that views of the communities engaged in CBNRM are rarely heard, (Blackie, *ibid*), and that, if and when their opinions are taken into account, there is no in-depth analysis to rigorously interrogate the genesis of these views.

This paper examines the CBNRM benefit sharing models of two San (Basarwa) communities in Mababe and Phuduhudu villages in Ngamiland district in north western Botswana (Figure 1). The main objective of the paper is to explore the flow and distribution of benefits within these study villages.

### 1.1 Issues of Benefits Sharing in CBNRM

CBNRM has been implemented widely in Southern Africa over the last two decades. Whilst the nomenclature has been different for different countries, the aims and objectives of the programme have been the identical; and that is, to sustainably utilize natural resources whilst providing socio-economic benefits for the rural people. In Zimbabwe, the concept is referred to as Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous People – CAMPFIRE (Bond, 2001). In Zambia, the programmes are named Luanga Intergrated Rural Development Project (LIRDP) and Administrative Design for Game Management Areas (AMADE). In Namibia, there is the Living in Finite Environment (LIFE) and in Mozambique ‘Tchumo Tchato’ – Our Wealth. The performance of the different CBNRM programmes is varied at individual project level, with some recording impressive revenue generation in the hundred of thousands of US Dollars, whilst others never took off the ground.

Benefits generation is a crucial aspect of CBNRM. The array of benefits envisaged to accrue to communities includes both tangible and intangible benefits. Chief among the benefits is income generation and employment creation. Non tangible benefits includes active participation in resource management, capacity building and community empowerment. The proponents of CBNRM had assumed that benefits, especially monetary ones would trickle down equitably throughout the communities. However, distribution of benefits has now become a topical issue in CBNRM. Rozemeijer and van der Jagt (2000) have suggested that

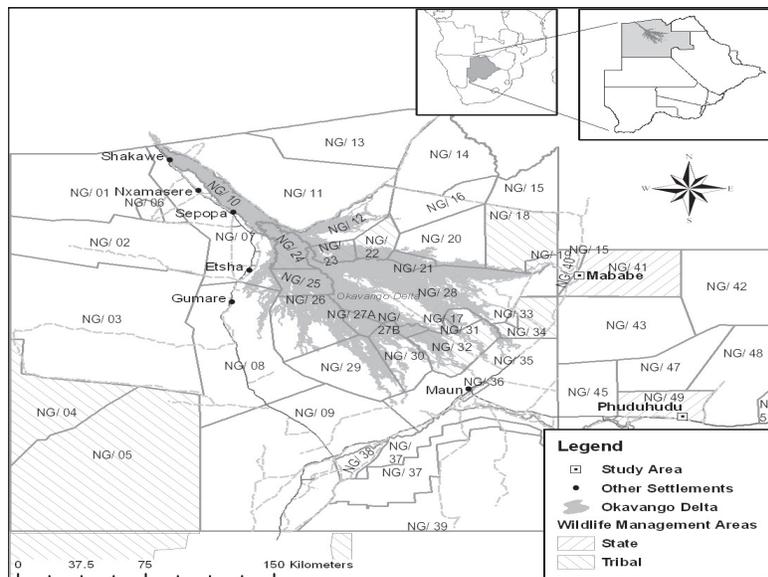


Figure 1 Map showing study area (Mababe & Phuduhudu)

the distribution of benefits in CBNRM is probably the most crucial component and if not done effectively it can have adverse effects on the development of community based tourism. Mbaiwa (2007) argues further that poor distribution of benefits could threaten the sustainability of CBNRM. Kgathi and Ngwenya (2005) note that where there are direct financial benefits to households, the returns are generally low and below sustenance levels. Jones (2002) argues that where benefits accrue to the community and are not passed down to individual level, there is no sense of ownership by the individual.

The issues that have since arisen includes whether the benefits should all go to the community as a whole or to households/individuals, or if to both, in what proportions?

In general it can be expected that the poorer and less socially cohesive a community, the higher the chance that the majority of the community will want financial benefits to be distributed among them. The wealthier and more socially cohesive a community, the higher the chance that majority can accept that financial benefits be used for community projects (van der Jagt 2002). In addition, characteristics of multiple/single village CBNRM projects, including population size, are major determinants of the way in which benefit distribution is structured. Existing research tend to suggest that it is easier to distribute benefits in a single than a multiple CBNRM project (Kgathi & Ngwenya 2005; van der Jagt, 2002).

## 2 Study Area and Methodology

This study is based on two remote area dweller communities in Ngamiland in the North West district of Botswana. Mababe village located on the eastern fringes of the Okavango Delta has operated a hunting and photographic CBNRM project from 1998 through their community Trust called Mababe Zokotsama Community Development Trust (MZCDT). The village has a population of 157 people (CSO, 2001) belonging mainly to Basarwa (San) ethnic group. The village was selected as an appropriate study site because it is one of the pioneer communities for CBNRM in Botswana. The other village is Phuduhudu, is located south of the Okavango Delta and near the Makgadikgadi salt pans. In 2003, Phuduhudu established the the Xhauhwatubi Development Trust (XTD) to operate a hunting and photographic CBNRM project. The village has a population of 377 people (CSO 2001) of mainly San origin. In both villages, community mobilisation and CBNRM facilitation was initiated and promoted by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP).

Secondly, the two villages were also selected in part because they are situated on the boundaries of protected areas, viz: Chobe National Park and Nxai Pan National Park, and also because when these parks were created and subsequently expanded, the residents of both villages lost access to land and resources that they had regularly used in the past to the new protected areas. Thirdly, both San communities' have a history of loss of authority over utilization of land and other natural resources, a common phenomenon among San groups in other parts of Botswana (Hitchcock, 2002). Given this loss, the stakes for San participation in CBNRM projects, including potential benefits, should be to compensate for this deficit. From the above discussion, the two villages provides an appropriate context for exploring in depth, specific dynamics of CBNRM benefits sharing and significance to the well being of rural residents not only in Botswana, but also throughout Southern Africa.

### 2.1 Research Methods

Data collection was conducted first during the months of June through July 2006 and secondly in February and March 2007. Structured interviews using a questionnaire were administered to heads of households or their representatives to collect data on the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the community. As the total number of households was small and manageable for both villages, sampling involved surveying all the households. Altogether 21 out of about 35 household heads were interviewed in Mababe. In Phuduhudu, 19 out of a total of 30 households were sampled. Those households not covered were due to absentee residents. The methods used to collect the data included document reviews, participatory observations, discursive interviews, household interviews and focus group discussions. Discursive interviews were held with key informants who possess a lot of information about CBNRM activities in the two villages.

Focus group discussions were held with the MZCDT and XDT Board members, professional guides and community escorts guides.

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Village Profiles

The profile of the communities of Mababe and Phuduhudu shows that the age structure is dominated by the under 30 years olds (Figure 2a). Ethnicity is less diverse in Mababe, with 86% of the residents being San (Figure 2b). Similarly, education level measured by attainment of primary and / or secondary education is slightly higher at Mababe (52%) than Phuduhudu (47%). Furthermore, unemployment at Phuduhudu is double (84%) the level at Mababe.

The level of illiteracy was very high in both villages ( about 50% see figure 3), much higher than the national level of 13% (CSO 2004). Secondly, the most educated members of the communities had gone as far as secondary school, largely lower secondary or Junior Certificate, a mandatory 10 year education policy for every pupil. Unemployment was also much higher than the national average of 23% (CSO 2004). Those community members who were employed held menial jobs that require on the job training, such as Night-watchman, Escort guide and Waiter.

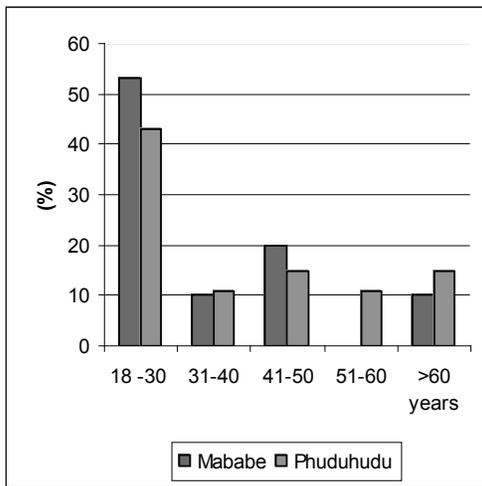


Figure 2a Age cohorts

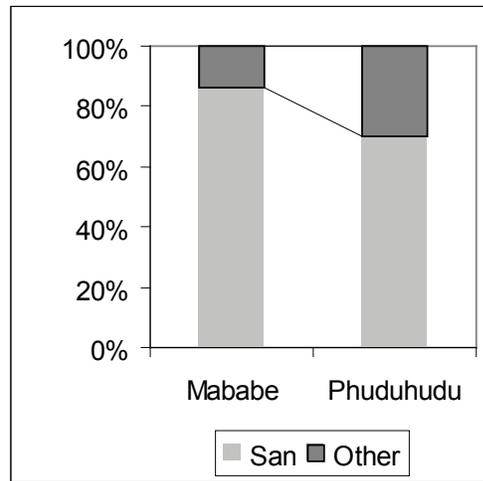


Figure 2b Ethnicity

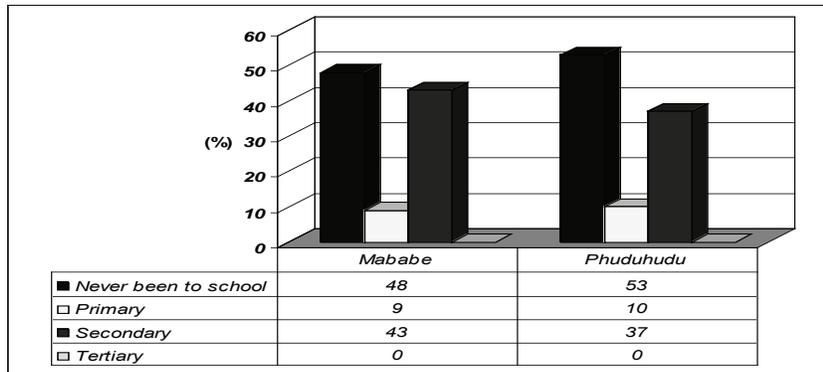


Figure 3 Education and unemployment levels for Mababe and Phuduhudu communities

It is not surprising that the people who were employed held low ranking and low paying job that require minimal skills and educational qualifications. Saum (2006) also found that low education levels of community members was an impediment in the success of CBNRM.

### 3.2 Institutional Structure of MZCDT and XDT

The process of community mobilisation for both communities was initiated by DWNP officers from 1995 -1998 for Mababe and 2000 - 2004 for Phuduhudu. This involved a series of *Kgotla* (traditional assembly) meetings and workshops where concepts of representative and legal entity (Rale) as well as CBNRM were explained to the people. According to some of the community leaders in Mababe, these were foreign and difficult concepts for people to understand and they (local community) were suspicious of Government motives. As for Phuduhudu, DWNP officers relied heavily on the other CBNRM projects for reference.

The institutional structure of the Trusts follow an inverted pyramid hierarchy, (Figure 4), where the village community (all persons above 18 years) forms the general membership and the highest authority of the trust.

The Board of Trustees, elected from the community, report to the general membership. The Board of Trustees then have employees to execute the Trust activities. Employees of the Trusts are exclusively residents of the respective villages. The Deed of Trust or the Constitution guide the community Trust and its structures (Figure 4). In both the MZCDT and XDT, there are ten Board of Trustees led by the chairperson. There are voting and non-voting ex-officio members who include the village Kgosi, Councillor and other heads of government institutions found in the village (School Head Teacher, Nurse, Social & Community Development Officer). The general membership meets once a year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), with a provision for a special meeting should the need arise. The AGM is the main decision making body where motions are debated and resolutions made. This is the fundamental and formidable driver of CBNRM, the perceived promise of participation particularly by donor agencies. These promoters of CBNRM presuppose that effective development can only be achieved where people are free to participate in the decisions that shape their lives (Thakadu, 2005). In both villages, people attend AGMs in large numbers, however, it was not evident that they comprehended the authority of the AGM granted by the constitution. The general membership saw the Board of Trustees as the body with overall authority to make decisions for the community and not the other way round.

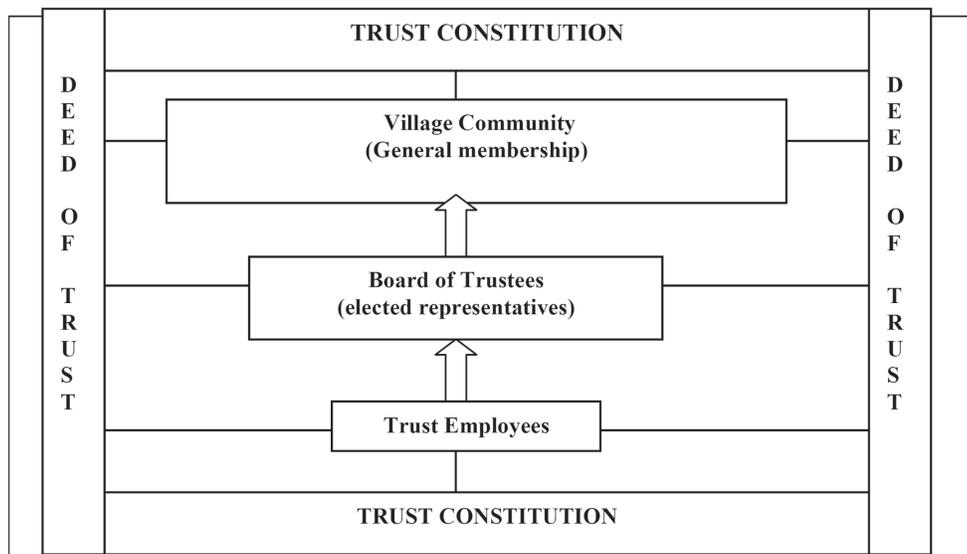


Figure 4 Structure of the Community Trust

### 3.3 Financial Benefits

Total revenue generated for both communities comes from land rentals (10%) and wildlife quota (90%). Whilst the revenue generated has been increasing, expenditure has also increased at the same rate and even surpassing income in the case of Mababe in 2006 (Figure 5a & 5b). This trend does not leave any funds for investment in other ventures, let alone conservation related ones.

When operating expenses for the Trusts are removed from the accounts for Mababe during 2005 and 2006 (Figure 6), the most expenditure was on Trust employees (wages, overtimes, night out allowances etc) and general community undertakings (construction of shop, entertainment hall, food for community events etc).

In the case of Phuduhudu, which is still to diversify its beneficiary groups, Trust employees were by far the group that benefited the most from Trust revenues (Figure 7).

An area of high expenditure for both communities was vehicle fuel, maintenance and repairs which reached P340,000 (US\$ 56,000) for Mababe in 2006.

When the community members were asked to state the main beneficiaries of their CBNRM projects, the Board members and the Trust employees came up top in both villages (Figure 8). These views were supported further by the accounts of both Trusts as shown in Figures 6 & 7. Though Board members do not appear to rank high in terms of expenditure on them directly, they benefit indirectly from the board deci-

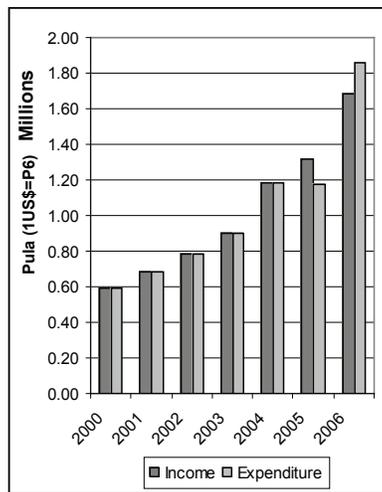


Figure 5a Income & Expenditure Mababe Trust (MZCDT)

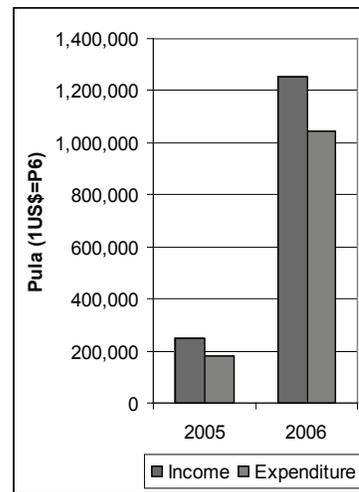


Figure 5b Income & Expenditure Phuduhudu Trust (XDT)

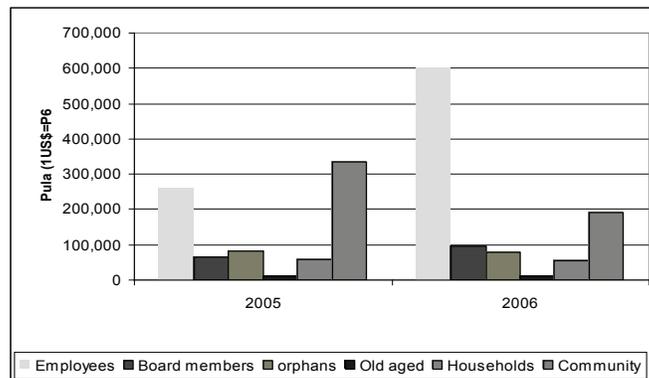
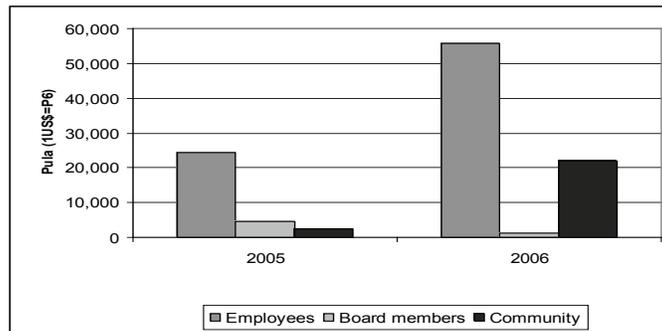
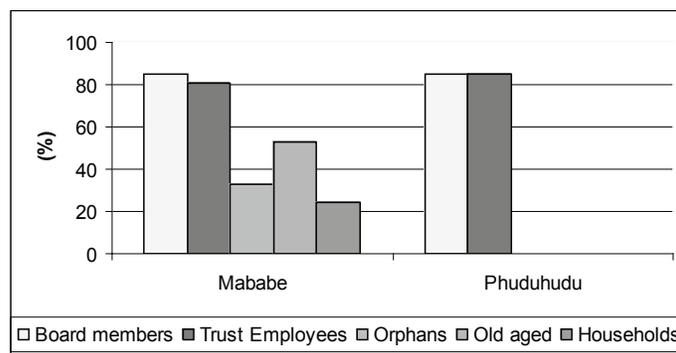


Figure 6 Revenue allocations of expenditure for different sectors of Mababe community



**Figure 7** Revenue allocations of expenditure for different sectors of Phuduhudu community

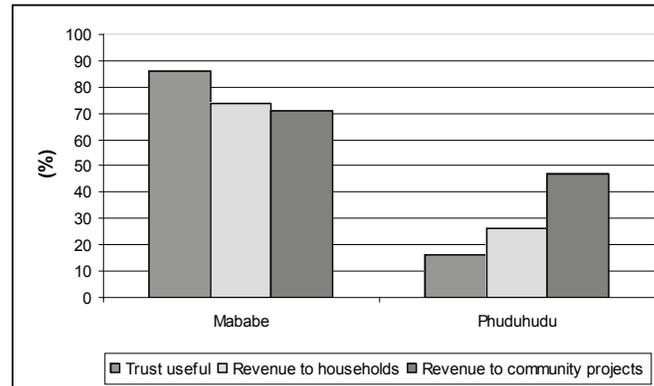


**Figure 8** Community views about the main beneficiaries from Trust funds.

sions they take that place their close family members in privileged positions such as getting employment from the Trust.

When the community members were asked whether the Trust was a useful village institution, 86% of respondents from Mababe held the view that it was, whilst only 16% of respondents from Phuduhudu held the same view (Figure 9). In addition, over 70% of the respondents in Mababe held the view that revenues from CBNRM should be allocated to both individual households and community projects. On the other hand, close to 50% of Phuduhudu residents held the view that the revenues should be allocated and utilized for community projects whilst 26% wanted the revenue to go to individual households.

These findings contradicts those found by van de Jagt (2002) who postulates that the less cohesive and poorer a community, the more likely that they would want financial benefits of CBNRM to go to individual households. Firstly, the Phuduhudu Trust has been in existence for a much shorter time than Mababe's, and such sentiments may be arising from frustrations from it not performing up to expectations of some community members. In the first two years of the Trust generating funds, most of the funds went to the employees and other community members may be fearing that the trend will continue that way. The other cause of variation may arise from the support received from government and how it is perceived vis-à-vis funds from CBNRM projects, i.e. treated as the norm. The government through the Remote Area Development Programme has an array of assistance packages including provision of monthly food rations for destitute people and orphans, old age pension, free education, free livestock etc. Whilst government supposedly provides community level infrastructure and other projects to villages, Phuduhudu, which has a small population, ranks low in the prioritisation of provision of such projects by government. Therefore the Phuduhudu residents may be hoping that revenue from CBNRM could fill that niche. Yet another reason could be the realisation by the community that the funds are too little to go round to all the individual households and hence community projects would be a fairer and a more equitable benefit sharing ideal than have only a small minority benefit genuinely or corruptly.



**Figure 9** Community views about usefulness of Trust and how revenues should be utilized

### 3.4 Social Benefits

The social benefits included formation of the first legally recognised institutions within each village (see Table 1). The formation of the Trusts allowed the villages to now enter into legally binding contracts with other parties from within and outside their villages, including government, commercial companies etc. These institutional arrangements are critical for the initial development of community based natural resource management and tourism (Nelson 2004). Following the establishments of the Trusts, the two villages entered into separate agreements with Government of Botswana for the management of natural resources in their immediate locality (NG41 for Mababe and NG49 for Phuduhudu). They were also able to go into a joint venture agreements with private safari companies for commercial utilization of wildlife resources in their areas. Mababe partnered with African Field Sport whilst Phuduhudu partnered with Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris. Whilst this is a laudable achievement, it must be noted that the government (represented by DWNP) played a significant role in the process of trust formations, directing the whole process and limiting the choice of Trust's existence to "government approved ones" (Taylor, 2000). The Environmental benefits are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1** Type of benefit and level of realization of the benefit from CBNRM for Mababe and Phuduhudu

Type of Benefit	Hypothetical Benefit	Level of realization of Benefit by communities
Social	Formation of legally recognised institution in the village	Fully realized
	Participation in trust activities & hence resource management	Minimally realized
	Preservation of indigenous knowledge	Moderately realized
	Strengthening of local institutions	Minimally realized
	Empowerment of community	Minimally realized
Economic	Job creation	Moderately realized (esp. Mababe)
	Income to carry out infrastructure and other community projects	Moderately realized
	Food (protein) security	Moderately realized
	Stimulation of local economy	Minimally realized
Environmental	Conserved species from reduced poaching	Moderate to highly realized
	Investment in conservation projects	Minimally realized

#### 4 Discussion and Conclusion

The mode, shape and form of benefit sharing from CBNRM was given little attention by the proponents of the program. The assumption was that there will be direct and equitable trickle down of benefits for individual community members. As with other open market systems, the powerful members of the community are conquering the resources and amassing them to themselves through securing nominations to the Board and or being Trust employees. The weak (physically, politically & socio-economically) then receive what is left over if any. Homer-Dixon (1999) argues that renewable resource scarcity initiates a process of resource capture by empowered actors within states, and the ecological marginalisation of subordinate groups lacking power to resist or negotiate resource acquisition with dominant groups. The history of human community – of ‘civilization’ – is movement, at the heart of which is the search for and struggle over resources. Therefore, CBNRM will and must continue to face great difficulties (Swatuk, 2004).

This study has shown that the trickle down assumption was misguided and far fetched. Whilst the government and donor agencies have not succeeded in implementing the trickle down wealth re-distribution at international and national levels, it was unreasonable to expect lowly educated and poorly resourced local communities to succeed in it. Notwithstanding, the power to utilize the funds and other benefits generated from CBNRM lie with the community Trust through its Board, however, the Board has merely replaced government bureaucracy and power centrality in further marginalising the poor, weak and powerless. In a bid to redress these challenges and perhaps to reclaim lost authority over CBNRM benefit sharing, the government has promulgated a CBNRM policy that demands that 65% of the revenue generated from CBNRM projects be handed back to the state (MEWT 2007). The legality of this policy aspect remains a subject of intense debate, let alone how it will be implemented. This is likely to throw CBNRM into further pandemonium and perhaps increased marginalisation of poorest of the poor.

The way funds generated from CBNRM are spent by the communities follows more or less the modus operand of a welfare state that Botswana has become with its consumer society (Samatar, 2006). All the target groups that receive support from the Trust (Orphans, Old age pensioners), also receive monthly food rations and other assistance from government. It is not far fetched to assume that the decision of the trusts to target the same needy groups as the government was engineered and / or promoted by government officers advising the Trusts. However, even with this duplication of support, these needy groups do not necessarily get the lion’s share of the CBNRM benefits. As with the re-distribution of diamond revenue, much is captured by the few and less by the many (Samatar, 2006). In addition, there are no indications for re-investment of CBNRM funds into other conservation projects or in pure investments such as the stock market or property market, but the funds are ran down through expensive consumables (such as vehicle fuel and repairs) and other non value added infrastructure (e.g. halls, workshops that remain unused and dilapidate from lack of maintenance).

The main environmental benefit of CBNRM is reduced poaching of ungulate species, which according to Taylor (2000) is a benefit enjoyed more by the tourism industry than the local communities. This is however precarious because the conduct and practice of CBNRM has not yet inculcated the traditional wildlife management heritage in its fold (Magole & Magole 2007). The communities are under pressure from CBNRM promoters to sell off all of their hunting quota to get cash and forgo some of their cultural rituals associated with hunting. Those members of the community who still have strong sentiments to their cultural heritage and have not found a substitute in the new CBNRM and may thus resort back to poaching.

Therefore, the multi-dimensional CBNRM, bringing together weak and poor but complex local communities, the powerful state and influential global institutions does not take place uncontested, rather a congruence-building process called localisation occurs (Swatuk 2004). In the case of Mababe, whose ethnicity is more homogenous, more educated and less poor than Phuduhudu, a dichotomous approach for benefiting individual households and the general community was preferred. Phuduhudu on the other hand

preferred more community level benefits than individual households. This is contrary to findings by Van de Jagt (2002). Finally, whether it is intervention or simply accurate analysis, understanding of CBNRM benefit sharing requires considerations of dimensions of knowledge, economics and power.

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