

THE IMPACTS ON POVERTY OF COMMUNITY BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Community based natural resource management (CBNRM) programmes are designed to devolve rights over the management of certain natural resources to local communities to achieve the dual objectives of biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation. Incentives are key to encouraging and maintaining participation in these programmes, and the delivery of these expected benefits is critical to achieving poverty alleviation.

This paper examines what the impact of CBNRM activities has been on the multiple dimensions of poverty. The research was conducted at two sites, one in Mozambique (the Tchuma Tchato project in Tete Province), and one in Namibia (the Kwandu Conservancy in the Caprivi Region). CBNRM activities, centred on wildlife management, have been ongoing for more than ten years in both areas.

Poverty is understood as being multidimensional, and poverty indices measuring five dimensions of poverty – financial, human, natural, physical and social – were constructed. Propensity score matching was undertaken to estimate the impact of CBNRM activities on these dimensions of poverty by comparing treatment households (those in the CBNRM area) with carefully selected comparison households, located outside the influence of CBNRM activities. In order to understand how benefits and costs were distributed within the CBNRM areas, further analysis compared a group of households randomly selected within the CBNRM area, with a purposive group, selected because of household members' close association with CBNRM activities.

The analysis shows that no positive impacts on the multiple dimensions of poverty could be found arising from CBNRM initiatives in either Mozambique or Namibia. However, in Namibia, CBNRM activities were found to have impacted positively on purposive households, particularly with respect to financial capital.

Despite these apparently limited impacts on poverty, the attitudes of many CBNRM-area residents toward the CBNRM activities were positive, especially in Namibia. While relatively small proportions of the households surveyed in both countries had received the benefits they expected, in both Namibia and Mozambique approximately 50% of households believed that CBNRM had had a positive effect on their household over the previous 10 years prior.

Three main concerns about CBNRM initiatives were identified. Residents in both countries were concerned about the low level of benefits delivered and their inequitable distribution, while many householders were also concerned about the high costs imposed, relating particularly to human–wildlife conflict. These concerns will need to be dealt with more effectively, as these costs are a major source of discontent amongst residents.

If poverty alleviation objectives are to be met in the future, CBNRM programmes will need to generate more benefits, from more diverse sources. Programme designers and implementers will also need to consider more targeted poverty alleviation strategies –

potentially including a choice between broad but shallow impacts and narrow but more significant impacts. Further research into the specific pathways through which CBNRM activities can positively impact on poverty at the household level is recommended.