Safaris, Soya or Subsistence? The Politics of Wellbeing, Conservation and Development in Chiawa, Zambia
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Chiawa

• The Disconnect:
  – Dusty roads, mud houses, rain-fed no or low technology agriculture
  – Luxury safari tourism marketing wilderness
  – Large agribusiness plantations ‘feeding the nation’

• Classic modernisation imaginary:
  – Stagnant ‘traditional’ sector
  – Development through ‘modern’ sector employment
  – Local people as obstacles to (conservation-based) development: need to be better educated – and policed
‘Modern’ and ‘traditional’ are deeply intertwined

Some benefits (jobs) but overall livelihoods undermined by development

New bridge and road this year will reverse historical remoteness and bring new development

Challenge to manage new development to promote maximum benefit that is fair and sustainable: contributing to national economic growth, environmental conservation, local people’s wellbeing

‘Chiawa is very blessed in the sense that we have the natural resources in place, we have fertile land, we have abundant water source but how to tap these things for betterment of the people - that is the difficult part.’
Wellbeing offers an alternative register to development

‘People here, right now they are not sure how long we shall be in this area because you see, yes, development, we need it, but the development which is coming in this area is a development which is consuming our land bit by bit. Bit by bit, our land is being consumed. It means the community, eventually the community will have very little place to live, so that's why it is a hazard.’

NB Cultural resonance of ‘consuming’
Methods

• Two rounds of four months fieldwork, Aug-Nov, 2010 and 2012
• Survey combined objective (self-report) questions about livelihoods, education, health and social support with subjective questions about satisfaction and inner wellbeing
• Husbands and wives (separately) and women heading households
• 2010 412 people; 2012, 370 including 52 women heading households. 358 respondents surveyed both years.
• Qualitative notes from 54 survey interviews; full transcriptions 52 open-ended life history interviews
Farming Undermined

‘Life this time in Chiawa is difficult, it is not the way it used to be in the past…. We are facing a lot of challenges. Maybe the first challenge is the farming situation; we are not able to farm the way we used to because of the poor rainfall pattern, also because of the human animal conflict … also, because of the floods. When the spillway gates get opened then the crops are washed away by the floods.’

In 2012 only 25% report farming as main source of survival

- Kariba dam (1958) removed natural river flow (soil fertility) and opening of spill-way gates brings disastrous flooding
- Riverside farming (traditional risk management strategy) undermined by dam and commercial developments
- 2010 97% planted crops in previous year; 2012 78%
- 2012 70% planted maize – but only 37% harvested any
Employment

• 2012 Employment = main source of survival for 25% people
  12% Government or private jobs (not safari lodge) (predominantly men)
  9% (each of) Safari lodge employment (only men); Petty trading (mainly women, especially single women); Piecework (men and women, though different activities)
  4% Commercial farm workers

• Marginal increase (2%) proportion of people with jobs, 2010-2012.
• Weak negative correlation between having a job and doing farming ($r=-.12, p<0.5$) suggests decline in farming may to some degree reflect better opportunities elsewhere

• Safari lodge work mainly to young men, ambiguous impact in community – some support to wider families, but also conspicuous consumption, girlfriends, and bars
Women heading households

- Single women doing worst on most indicators objective and subjective
- Economic and social marginality and limited networks

‘Beer brewing is the last option... in the middle of the month, people have no money instead they will be drinking beer in credit saying they would pay at the end of the month. Sometimes at the end of the month they are not able to pay money. Sometimes they would just be telling you some stories....It’s true it creates a lot of tension especially from the married women because they feel when you are a single [woman] you start now beer brewing and that is now an invitation for married men to come to your home.’
A Risk Environment

- Since Game Management Area (1991) increasing numbers of wild animals, leading to personal injury and death, loss of livelihood, climate of fear/uncertainty
- Conservation restrictions mean they can only scare animals away, not shoot them
- Zambia Wildlife Authority seen as policing people, prioritising animals over them, and slow and ineffective in responding to incidents

‘So I have to go very far away into the bush so that I can cut some firewood there.. for cooking. And, if I am again to say there are a lot of elephants so I must not go and do some farming, then again there I will starve. So I also have to take a risk. So every now you have to take risks in order for you to earn a living, you see..... It’s just a game of win and lose. This year maybe there are not so many elephants, we are lucky. And this year there are so many elephants, you lose.’
Land

• Human-wildlife conflict masks more dangerous human-human conflict
• Few local people have land titles - customary land held by chieftainess
• 1995 land act – customary land may be given on title for development
• Land registry process very complicated and expensive, not viable for most local people
• Loss of access to water, grassland and fuelwood undermines livelihoods
• Fear of displacement, insecurity
• Reprisals when challenge land sales

‘You know people are just buying places here, anyhow, now that means the community will lose suitable land. Because the commercial farmer wants good land and also the peasant farmer wants good land, but you will see that the government will prefer to give that land to a commercial farmer because there are monthly or yearly contributions.’
Ultimate fear of loss of homes and farms

‘The 16,000 hectares, that they say they want to grow sugar cane; they will fence it, where is the elephant going to go? it will pass in the village. And the government is doing nothing. This issue was sent to the president and nothing is happening. What is the point of saying let this case go to police and DPP? The government should have just said we don’t want this farm. Let people have this land and if they want to do investment, let it be done with the people.’

‘Threatened, ok the threat that I have is that they have just written that they will push me out of that place, demolish your house, so all those are threats that I have faced…….

Now is quite difficult and hard for me to explain, the way I am coping up with it, because it’s every day it’s confusing me, every time is confusing, so unless it is fully settled, then I’m over that uncertainty.’
Elite capture of community benefits

- Pro-poor interventions, generally short-lived, driven by external agendas, and subject to elite capture.
- E.g. governance of the GMA, initiatives for the community to get involved in the tourism economy, scholarship and NGO agriculture interventions
- People left feeling angry, disillusioned, disempowered

’So also these tour operators... ...they are saying ‘we are paying money’ but where are they paying that money, who is holding that money? And for sure if you go there to ask ‘are you paying the money, are you giving something to community?’ they all say ‘yes, we are giving something!’ Now, we don’t see...’
Chiawa culture of wellbeing

- Economic sufficiency comes first
- But about *taking care* of others
- Own family most immediately, but broader ethic of generalised reciprocity extending over time and place
- Giving and receiving of material goods affirms moral identities and personal and social relationships
- This interweaving of material, relational and moral should guide the way that the community, and even the nation, should be governed – a motif for power properly used

‘By helping both the sides I was not looking at my direct personal benefit because they being relatives, I felt maybe at one point that you never know who is going to help whom; because maybe if I helped my relatives maybe at some point they also help me or my children, or maybe their children who help my children. My wife’s relatives also look at me as being a good person. Also, you never know who is going to be helped between my children and them.’
Quantifying Subjective Experience

• Sense of disempowerment shows in inner wellbeing scores. In 2010 the four lowest scoring items all concerned governance or the environment: ‘I feel I have no power to change decisions that affect me’ (-1.69); ‘We are not able to make organisations fulfil their promises’ (-1.47);’ ‘I do not get government assistance at the right time’ (-1.41); and ‘The environment we live in is full of hazards’ (-1.37)

• In 2012, we asked how satisfied people were with the way decisions were being made about new developments. Overall the results were clearly negative. On a -2 (very dissatisfied) to +2 (very satisfied) scale, the overall average was -0.37, with single women least satisfied at -0.76.
Consistent pattern into 2012
Inner Wellbeing Scores

Eight Lowest IWB Scores 2012 (-2/+2 scale)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>No. of responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP2 If official decisions are made that affect you badly, do you feel that you have power to change them?</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>-1.44</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC2 When do you get to hear about events in the community?</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>1.032</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC4 What proportion of people in the community are helpful to you?</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>0.879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC3 Do you feel that people around you have got ahead of you?</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>0.844</td>
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<tr>
<td>SW1 How well have you been able to face life’s difficulties?</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP3 Do you feel that you are heard (beyond family)?</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>1.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC1 How well would you say you are managing economically at present?</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC1 Do you know the kind of people who can help you get things done?</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>1.062</td>
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Key: AP= Agency and Participation; SC= Social Connections; EC= Economic Confidence; SW= Self-Worth

Low economic confidence, little sense of agency, low social trust
‘What brings about this division is that each time people try to come together there are always spies there. As soon as you plan for something then some people from that group will again go and report whatever is being discussed. And then those now will say “who are the ring-leaders, I think it was this one and that one?” and then those are called and then threatened. From there they will not come back to the group, they will say “ah, I think it is enough for me.” ’

A: Sometimes you want to demonstrate and you are called and food is provided and you eat and then what follows next? (He is laughing now)
Q: So once you have been fed it is difficult then to demonstrate? So you are saying you want to demonstrate against them but they are the ones who feed you? (A: Yes!) And once you have eaten you cannot demonstrate against them?
A: Yes, that is the problem.
Recommendations

• Livelihoods:
  – Support to make small-holder agriculture more viable – conservation practices, fencing, mechanisation, storage and marketing
  – Development of joint ventures for eco-tourism – beyond mimicry of ‘traditional entertainment and culture’

• Resource conflicts:
  – Restore alienated land to community control and safeguard people’s land rights for the future

• Wellbeing:
  – Participatory commission with representatives from ministries, Chiawa governance, safari lodges, agribusiness, ordinary people to establish local accountability in resource generation and use
Conclusion: the Value Added of a Wellbeing approach

- Alternative register to development: Development has occurred – but in ways that undermine people’s wellbeing
- Affirmation of local culture as resource – and recognition of where it may be a constraint
- Broader ‘whole of life’ view – risk environment, psycho-social effects of insecurity
- Quantification of subjective experience
- Apparently non-political character of wellbeing can be a significant advantage in situations of conflict
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