



Final
Project Narrative Report to
WCS-AHEAD Funded
Bennde Mutale - Community Theatre Outreach Programme
by
Nkululeko Chunky Phiri and Simon Anstey

January - June 2009

Project: Community Theatre as a Communications and Outreach Tool to Support Local Level Scenario Planning Initiatives within the GLTFCA

Prepared by: ResourceAfrica

Reporting Period: January - June 2009

Narrative Report

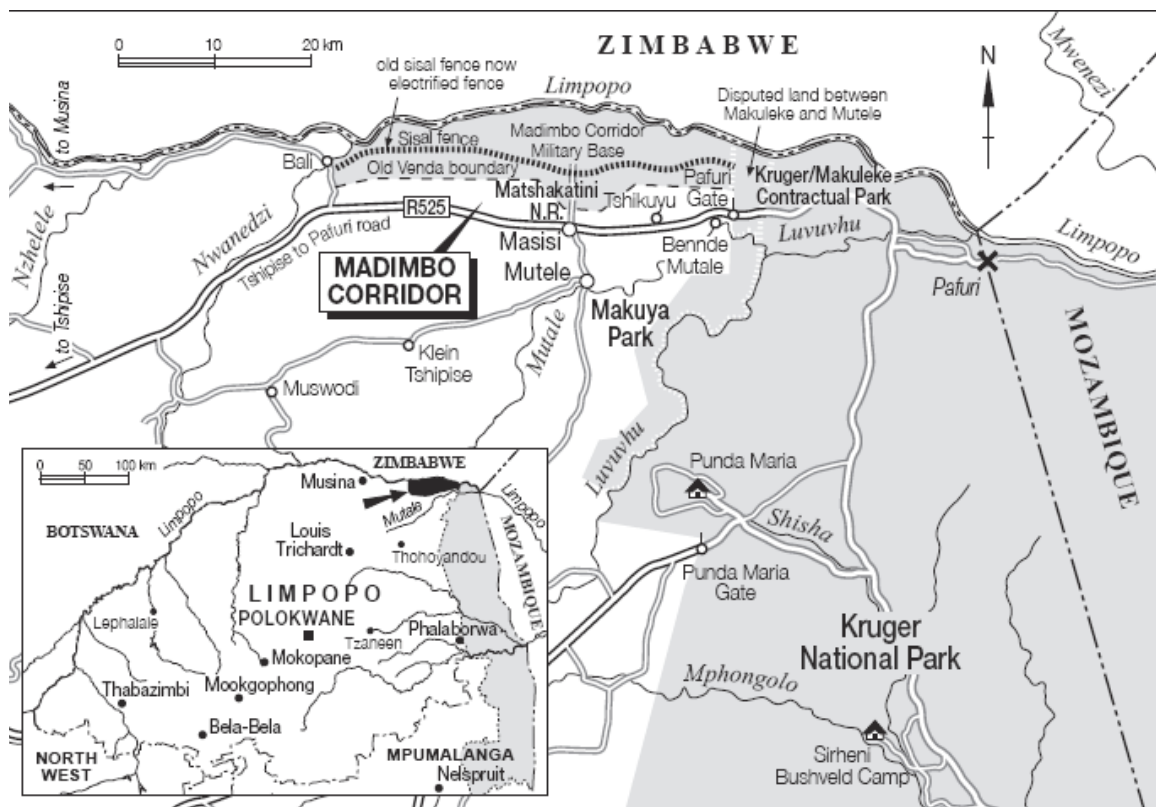
1. Executive Summary
2. Project Background and Objectives
3. Project Progress
4. Project Exchange Visit
5. Project Challenges and Next Steps
6. Financial Report

Annexes

Acronyms

RA	ResourceAfrica
BM	Bennde Mutale
BTG	Bennde Mutale Theatre Group
GLTFCA	Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area
CTOP	Community Theatre Outreach Programme
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
AHEAD	Animal Health for Environment and Development
CNRM	Community Natural Resource Management

Map of Bennde Mutale Area



1. Executive Summary:-

This narrative report has been compiled by RA for submission to WCS-AHEAD in accordance to RA's contractual obligations under the project "Community Theatre as a Communications and Outreach Tool to support Local level Scenario Planning initiatives within the GLTFCA"

This document reports on implementation activities, the impact, challenges and constraints encountered by the project and suggestions for the follow up activities. Financially, the project has been managed affectively and was completed within budget. Even operating under difficult and unpredictable conditions the project managed to achieve most of its objectives. Apart from the challenges, unpredictable constraints which are discussed hereunder, overall the project did well and left neighbouring countries and villages demanding similar projects to be implemented in their areas. The project was successful in achieving its goals and surpassed expectations in delivering on all inputs.

Process and training.

A total of 6 'actor-facilitators' (4 women and 2 men) were selected and trained from the community of Bennde Mutale in theatre, research and facilitation techniques. Following training and identification of key issues and drivers of change the Bennde Mutale Theatre Group has developed various scripts and plays. Beyond the direct training and theatre processes, the overall initiative has also contributed significantly to the development of intra-community cohesion and conflict reduction with the neighbouring Makuleke community. The initiative has also experimented with additional 'arts' tools for local scenario planning through piloting 'photo stories' as a mechanism for the community to express views on drivers and plausible futures.

Performances.

The group has managed to perform the shorter version of the play 6 times to its neighbouring communities. This was to extract issues from the community and build up a full length 45minuter. The finale version of the 45minuter was first performed for the Bennde Mutale community on the dates below.

- *3 and 17 May performances for the Bennde Mutale community;*
- *7 May 2009 - Nwanedi Game reserve at a local stakeholders meeting for the GAZA GLTFCA organized by IUCN/CESVI;*
- *21 May 2009 – Birchwood Hotel-Johannesburg at the Climate and Equity Advocacy Workshop for Southern Africa organized by Norwegian Church Aid and ResourceAfrica and attended by range of NGOs and donors involved in climate change and community adaptation.*
- *14 July 2009 – Bennde Mutale at the Official Lighting of electricity before a record attendance of 5000 people organised by the Local Government;*
- *21 July 2009 – Protea Manor Hotel – Pretoria – CBNRM Regional Training Workshop; organised by the University of Florida (WWF SARPO, Namibia, NGOs in CBNRM in Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe)*

Inter-regional performances to share experiences, discuss on drivers and changes were also carried out by the group in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The performances were targeted for communities adjacent and around the GLTFCA.

- *24 June 2009 – Canhane Village Massingir – Mozambique;*
- *26 June 2009 Zongoene Community; Gaza Province, Mozambique*

- 27 June 2009 - Combomune Rio villages – Gaza Province (TFCA) Mozambique;
- 30 June 2009 – Chipinda Pools neighbouring communities – Zimbabwe organised by Zimbabwe National Parks in conjunction with Frankfurt Zoological Society;
- 1 July 2009 – Malipati/Chikwarakwara area communities (Chief Gazani Kraal) – Zimbabwe in conjunction with CASS/University of Zimbabwe, Scenario Planning Project (and RDC Chiredzi)

2. Project Background and Objectives:-

This project seeks to promote the use of theatre and related artistic media in bridging the communication gap between policy makers, public and non-governmental institutions, the private sector and local communities, in the context of conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, climate change and scenario planning in the GLTFCA. The Bennde Mutale community lives in an arid area and close to the geo-political boundary zone of Madimbo Corridor, which is a very remote, poor and marginalized area within the GLTFCA (see project document for details). This project, through theatre, aims to help the Bennde Mutale community to articulate their needs, aspirations, challenges and successes.

The project builds and works in partnership with on-going scenario planning initiatives, which are understood as creative stories about the future, “plausible futures, each an example of what might happen under particular assumptions,” by the Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) at the University of Zimbabwe.

Two important decision levels are targeted in this project:

- ⇒ The production of local messages, to be achieved through research at a local level, refined through performances for local audiences and feedback through facilitated discussions
- ⇒ communicating emerging issues to policy and decision makers involved in the planning of the GLTFCA and management officials at the Makuya Park.

The overall goal of this project is to contribute to themes on human health, livelihoods, land use and ecosystem goods and services within the GLTFCA. The project aims to achieve the above goal through theatrical and creative communications (actor-facilitators) support to; the ongoing scenario planning initiative; and the Makuya Forum that facilitates communication and exchange between the Makuya Park and local residents in Bennde Mutale

Objectives

- ✓ To use culturally appropriate and creative communication and facilitation tools such as theatre and dance to showcase ongoing local level scenario planning processes within the GLTFCA, with Bennde Mutale community (SA) acting as a pilot site and hopefully, in the long term, extending into Mozambique and Zimbabwe.
- ✓ Select and train 6 actor-facilitators from within the Bennde Mutale community to research key drivers of change from local perspectives – and in particular with regard to natural resource issues (water, land, climate change) and social and health issues (HIV-AIDS, malaria, etc.)

- ✓ To produce short plays based on this participatory research to gather wider views and then develop a 1- hour play for provincial performances and performances in Mozambique and Zimbabwe.
- ✓ To assess in this pilot phase the value of community theatre in village scenario planning and in addressing information exchange on climate change and health issues.

3. Project Progress:-

The project has managed to pursue its purpose in relation to the outputs and the work plan. (See workplan attached as Annex 2).

Project and Institutional Establishment:-

ResourceAfrica is the implementing agency for the project, with Kule Chitepo RA-SA Director as the overall supervisor and Simon Anstey RA-UK responsible for project management. The coordinator and artistic director of the project is Nkululeko Chunky Phiri.

In the partnership basis for scenario planning with CASS, support was received from Mike Murphree and Peter Mudzanani who provided technical advice in local level scenario planning. Along the way we have managed to get technical support from David Cumming - CESVI: Zim, Paolo, Sylvia, Clara all from CESVI, Noqobo from The Department of Home Affairs, Jeanette Manjengwa of CASS and the BM community.

The community of Bennde Mutale provided the 6 actor/facilitators. These individuals had never been involved in performing arts ever and it is their first time to be in such a project. They initially had no knowledge about scenario planning, sustainable use of environment and climate change.

The project document and original work plan envisaged that Chunky Phiri would work with a Local Advisor from Bennde Mutale. However, the selected person Charles Munzhelele unfortunately died in a car accident just prior to project field implementation and, characteristic of the fissions that existed with factions of the community at the initial period of the project, a lot of fights and complexities broke out within the youths to fill this vacancy. Considerable supernatural activities were thrown around in the village which ended up interfering with the process and the post of a local advisor and so the funds for the post were re-allocated on that budget line.

This example illustrates some of the underlying tensions that existed in the Bennde Mutale community at the start of the project and which required a flexible approach to be taken that emphasised transparency and building of trust. The people of the area were divisive internally along age divisions, traditional versus modern 'leaders', between different perspectives on land use choices and with tensions between the BM and nearby Makuleke community and local perspectives and local government decisions. The CASS scenario programme had been stalemated for the period immediately prior to this project and has remained largely so during its implementation; complicating an initiative designed as a partnership approach to link scenario planning outcomes with theatre and arts techniques. External interventions have also been complicated also by 3 separate BM youth 'leaders' acting as 'gatekeepers' for any external initiatives and specifically controlling access to work or income possibilities for their own followers. The result of these various features was a general sense of 'apathy' (as self-described by a number of community members) towards change possibilities.

The approach of the Theatre Initiative was to avoid further entrenching 'projectised' modes by involving respected and diverse members of the community in the selection and recruitment of local actor-facilitators, maximising the transparency of the way of working and through Chunky Phiri living amongst the local community and building up trust and relationships with them over the initial 3 months of the initiative. The initiative also benefited from the fact that it was designed and introduced to Bennde Mutale by Dr Webster Whande who had long worked in the area. Finally the initiative by providing tangible and intangible benefits ranging from training, capacity building and work for youths with few other opportunities, an apolitical forum/process around which different groups and interests could meet and based around humour and local expression has acted to facilitate wider communications within and between communities than was envisaged. One example being the request by the BM community to Chunky Phiri to facilitate the first meeting for 15 years between the BM and nearby Makuleke community to resolve long standing disputes.

Development of Actor-Facilitators and Scripts/Plays

Auditions were held, and they were characterized by a large attendance of women compared to men. The transparent selection process involved a board made up of widely respected members of the community including school teacher and a volunteer development worker. Out of 60 participants 5 were men and the rest women. From this exercise we managed to select the final 6 actor/facilitators – 4 women and 2 men.

The 6 actor/facilitators are Ramabanda Daniel Naledzani, Siphuga Voster, Munzhelele Ezlee Elelwani, Chauke Gloria Mthabeni, Hlungwane Mavis Sheluzdani and Munzhelele Caroline Thingahangwi.

At our internal workshop with the actors we raised issues and challenges that the community is facing. HIV-AIDS, malaria, cholera, and the high level of illiteracy came up as the main challenges in this village. We took our research to the community where we conducted door-to-door surveys and the very same issues came out of it.

After the auditions there was a six week period of conceptual development and script development. This was a collective process where we had to draw from the community and actors experiences. Issues were drawn from the youth to the oldest people in the community. We picked a few overwhelming issues and we created a 15minute play. This is the play that we performed around the village and after every performance we invited the community to share their views and issues. We managed to get a lot of issues which we used to develop the full length theatre piece.

After four performances we had two intensive weeks of theatre development skills which included music-singing, dancing, acting, and facilitating running concurrently with creating and rehearsing a full theatre piece. By the first week of May we had managed to come up with a polished full length theatre piece. This full length 45 minute production can be split into other 3-15minute plays and performed separately.

Challenges in the conceptual and script development process:-

- ✓ One of the major challenges was the language barrier. 5% of the community can communicate in English. It took Chunky Phiri a month to learn and communicate in *ChiVenda* and for that period of time he was working with a translator.

- ✓ Getting support from community members during the inception period of the project. The community did not know what exactly the project was driving at up to the time when the group delivered its 1st 15minute performance.
- ✓ Finding the easiest, best ways to explain climate change, scenario planning to a community that had no understanding of sustainable use of environment.
- ✓ Transformation and tapping on raw talent into refined actor/facilitators.
- ✓ Not getting the necessary feed or technical support from the local level scenario planning project, that was crucial for development of the script.

Performances:

Performing under the name Bennde Theatre Group (BTG), the group has managed to perform the shorter version of the play 6 times to its neighbouring communities. This was to extract issues from the community and build up a full length 45minuter.

The final version of the 45 minute play has been performed as follows.

Local Performances

- 3 and 17 May performances for the Bennde Mutale community;
- 7 May 2009 - Nwanedi Game reserve at a local stakeholders meeting for the GAZA GLTFCA organized by IUCN/CESVI;
- 21 May 2009 – Birchwood Hotel-Johannesburg at the Climate and Equity Advocacy Workshop for Southern Africa organized by Norwegian Church Aid and ResourceAfrica and attended by range of NGOs and donors involved in climate change and community adaptation.
- 14 July 2009 – Bennde Mutale at the Official Lighting of electricity before a record attendance of 5,000 people organised by the Limpopo Local Government;
- 21 July 2009 – Protea Manor Hotel – Pretoria – CBNRM Training Workshop; organised by the University of Florida and attended by NGO’, universities and research institutions involved in CBNRM in Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and South Africa.

Inter-regional Performances

- 24 June 2009 – Canhane Village Massingir – Mozambique;
- 26 June 2009 Zongoene Community; Mozambique
- 27 June 2009 - Rio Combomune ; Mozambique;
- 30 June 2009 – Chipinda Pools neighbouring community – Zimbabwe organised by Zimbabwe National Parks in conjunction with Frankfurt Zoological Society;
- 1 July 2009 – Malipati/Chikwarakwara – Zimbabwe in conjunction with CASS Scenario Planning Project and RDC Chiredzi

This production communicates the needs, challenges and perspectives of disadvantage communities like BM which the actors are from in relation to NRM, conservation, diseases related to climate change, effects of climate change and its adaptive methods-scenario planning. The production also focuses on telling a story of people who once lost their land to the Government when it was fenced from them, later own they managed to repossess the land but there are still denied access. This production tells the stories of BM and two neighbouring countries Zimbabwe and Mozambique through song, dance, acting, story telling, humour and music.

Comments on Performances from Audience: This was an open session exercise conducted after every performance. Comments here are made based on the evaluation exercise which consisted of formal and informal interviews and feedback sessions with members of the audience. As the evaluation exercise demonstrated, the project was successful in achieving its objectives.

Lamson Maluleke:- Makuleke CPA, *ResourceAfrica managed to work and break ice in a place no other NGO had thought of working. Only after we have seen your achievements with the community of BM that is when a lot of NGO's are willing to work in the area.* Lamson said he would like to see these NGO's and government institutions engaging RA in their planning and implementing as *RA have earned trust and respect from the community.*

He also thanked RA for facilitating the possibilities of the Vendas in BM and the Shangaans in Makuleke reuniting and working together again. *Since 15years back the two had never seen eye to eye. Only in March Edward Siphuga approached RA (Chunky Phiri) and asked if they could facilitate dialogue between them and the Makuleke's. It took a few phone calls and dates where set for the meeting. Finally the Makuleke CPA agreed to meet with BM community.* The 9th of May was the first meeting in 15years.

Edson Mutele:- Mutele tribal authority, *He was very proud of the first theatre group from BM. He expressed his full support and promised to introduce the group to resource people he knows to enhance the quality of the play, theatre, musical and other skills that could be important to the group.*

Mike Murphree:- Scenario Planning Project Bennde. *He applauded the group for major improvements from the first time he saw them perform in March. Mike said the actors where so confident and the play was beautifully structured.*

David Cumming:-CESVI Zimbabwe. *"The play was clearly interpreted and received very well by the audience and it is obvious that the key themes and messages of the play were clear and appreciated by the majority".*

Makonde Linoni Mbedzi:- SABC's Phala Phala FM - indicated they enjoyed the play. *A true story with hard hitting issues but told in a very simple, clear and humorous way. He also expressed his interests in working with the group in sharing some issues which he feels need more emphasis.*

Despite the challenge in language 99% of the audience responded positively as to whether did they enjoy the performance and why? Humour, use of props, song made it simple and clear to follow the play and messages communicated.

Every village and community that the play was performed agreed that theatre plays a very important role in communicating issues, the great way to keep people actively engaged in debates. Interpretation of the play was clear and appreciated which led to healthy, valuable debates and discussions after every performance. *“the best thing that has happened in our area in a long time as we have no access to TV’s and Radio”*

Given the areas at which the play was delivered the discussions surprisingly indicated that a majority of people shared and experienced the same challenges as their counterparts from neighbouring countries. Some of the issues presented by the play were not so new but they were never spoken about-due to old traditional values.

“this performance helped us women to speak out, highlight and echo on some of the challenges that we face on a day to day life as performed by the theatre group” – “Participation of women in the play has shown and given us the urge to stand up before men today and say out our views-we are never given a chance to voice out our concerns even in our village meetings. Men make decisions on our behalf. Today we are proud to meet powerful young women- Power to the women”

Other Comments: Most people shared extremely positive comments to the whole project such as;

- ⇒ *use of theatre or this kind of communication should not be considered as just entertainment,*
- ⇒ *this play was really 100% funny but also with very serious things inside*
- ⇒ *can these plays be transferred into the books and be used by schools as part of their arts curriculum,*
- ⇒ *the main target audience for the play should be the decision makers-who have no idea of what ordinary people go through in their daily lives,*
- ⇒ *The play should be recorded on DVD’s, spread and shared all over.*

Other Indicators: The clearest indicator of the impact is further demand for similar initiatives. In addition to the overwhelming response from audiences to ‘keep up the good’ work and approaches from dozens of individuals for further information verbally, specific written requests inviting ResourceAfrica to help in establishing similar initiatives;

- ⇒ *An invitation by Roberto Zolho from IUCN Mozambique for another exchange visit this time specifically to pilot community adaptation to climate change pilot initiatives in southern Mozambique.*
- ⇒ *Zimbabwe National Parks with the help from Frankfurt Zoology were impressed about the exchange programme and too have expressed their interests to continue working with ResourceAfrica in establishing similar community outreach groups, and performances.*

The manner and level at which performances are debated and constantly talked about is another useful indicator. After the CBNRM Training Workshop in Pretoria on the 14th of July a number of environment specialist, noted the power of theatre as a communications.

- ⇒ *Such theatre presentations should be targeted to decision makers and other bigger environmental events were decision makers meet and taking it to neighbouring countries.*
- ⇒ *WWF-Namibia Patricia Skyer and Richard Diggle, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Wilderness Safaris Botswana, University of Florida, have already shown interests in investing and collaborating in such a project. All of these requests need following up.*

The outcome from the evaluation exercise confirms that theatre is an effective communication medium at all levels from community through to the policy levels. Furthermore, new skills and capacity is enhanced to the theatre team and knowledge passed and shared with communities.

Delivery of specified output so far: The activities detailed above resulted in the delivery of the outputs specified in the project proposal. These were:

- ✓ Development of a 45 minute theatrical production which encompasses 3-15minute productions to support local level scenario planning.
- ✓ 6 times 15minute performances and 6 full length performances delivered as of now, locally.
- ✓ 5 inter-regional shows delivered in neighbouring villages on the exchange programme to Zimbabwe and Mozambique.
- ✓ Creation of alternative livelihoods in very remote, undeveloped and underprivileged community (6 jobs created and basic funding/work identified for the BMTG until end of 2009).
- ✓ The development of a one size fit all theatrical production which can be performed in any country space and anytime.
- ✓ Improved skills and capacities within BM to engage in further environmental education activities and initiatives. The major challenge is that in BM there is no key individual who has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of issues, process and approach for environmental community extension activities and managing the project further if RA pulls out.
- ✓ An internal assessment of the project and value of using theatre/arts in local level scenario planning and communicating key drivers of change (undertaken by Dr Webster Whande in mid May – final report as Annex).

4. Project Challenges and Next Steps

Challenges and Solutions

The challenges of engaging in a relatively difficult communications initiative in a community and social setting of considerable complexity has been discussed previously. The evidence that the local selection of 'actor-facilitators', the use of theatre methods and an inclusive transparent process suited to local norms of conflict reduction has been successful in generating considerable support at local level, bodes well for this pilot initiative to be further expanded in other areas where initial community cohesion is likely to be higher but equally complex.

Retaining the focus of the process and productions at the local level (e.g. such as the use of the vernacular in much of the plays) presents challenges in performances at the other targeted scales of provincial, national or donor/NGO audiences and senior decision makers in the GLTFCA process. However, this has been addressed through the use of additional English in the longer play (involving the teaching of English to the local actors) and through communication in dance and mime that are universally appropriate. The effectiveness of the play as a communication tool at these levels and to non-South African audiences has been further tested and refined during the visits to Mozambique and Zimbabwe (where *ChiVenda/ChiShona* and *Shangaan* are also widely spoken).

The decision has been taken to retain the prime focus as being local perceptions and communication rather than develop a separate targeted play at considerable expense for

national/international audiences or for a more 'entertainment' angle. Avenues are also being explored to produce a DVD of performances to provide wider access to the play and launch the video on web sites and via You Tube.

During the exchange programme the major challenge was to get support from the local level scenario planning partners based in Zimbabwe and Mozambique to help organise performances and logistics for us. It was discussed that in these two countries Zimbabwe and Mozambique the CASS Scenario planning programme would help in organising performances, venues, accommodation and other logistical arrangements. In Zimbabwe, it proved to be difficult to get one dedicated person to liaise with and get this process going. A string of phone calls, e-mails and tentative programmes were sent through a month before the exchange programme, but that did not help at all. Due to the work plan and the duration we got to a point where we just embarked on the exchange programme with only Mozambique shows finalised and decided to face the Zimbabwean challenges on the ground. Unlike in Zimbabwe, in Mozambique we managed to liaise with Baldeu Chande from Limpopo National Park, Roberto Zolho from IUCN-Mozambique, Vasco Acha, Abel and Veronica Dove from GTA. All pre-planned communities were visited and performances delivered and accommodation was booked in advance.

A further constraint was the lack of technical/informational input from all three CASS local level scenario planning projects in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique to feed into the creation of the play. Which means we did not use the maximum potential capacity of channelling the issues into the theatre project and producing one holistic performance with all issues from the three GLTFCA represented. This meant that they could have been bias towards Bennde Mutale issues.

Only after the exchange programme, local level scenario planning projects realised the impact brought by the theatre and requested that the issues collected after every performance during the exchange programme should be then now brought together to make up a bigger inter-regional production. Since then we have developed a good working relationship which we look forward to expanding on and maintaining in the next phases of the CASS Scenario Planning Project.

A more fundamental challenge has been the issue of how to target the evolution of scenario planning and identifying key drivers and 'plausible futures' in the somewhat stalemated process of the CASS scenario planning programme for which this initiative was designed to compliment. In addition to the use of theatre and actor-facilitator mechanisms to research key drivers of change, this initiative has also initiated an experiment in May with the use of 'photo stories' as a 'arts' means to identify drivers and a set of view about the future for BM. This has been led by Dr Webster Whande and undertaken during an assessment process of theatre/arts approaches of this project.

The 'photo-stories' process involved the use and distribution of inexpensive (\$5) disposable cameras to selected groups in the BM community. The aims of the photo stories were to further identify driving forces for change and prepare for discussions on plausible futures. This method relied on the residents themselves photographing local features that they hold dear in their lives. Fifteen disposable cameras were purchased for this exercise and distributed to self selecting groups of people. The selection of who to work with on the photo stories was based on already existing groups and a spread of people within the different socio-economic groups previously developed in 2005. As interest in working with cameras and developing stories grew, it became necessary to group individuals together.

Three main questions guided the process and what kind of photos to be taken. The first question was for participants to photograph a feature that they held dear or that was important in their lives. The second aspect was for them to think what is important about the feature and write this down (a story about the importance of the feature they had photographed). The second aspect was on how such a feature was currently used and the final was on what future they saw in the feature, what the threats and opportunities are. The following is a description of the process by an observer:

The main fear was that community members might fail to use the disposable cameras and not understand the concept of telling stories through photos but that proved not a problem with the help of the local professional photographer Ndanganeni Mudzanani who played an important role in explaining the process and demonstrating the use of the gadgets. Disposable cameras were distributed to individuals from sex workers to traditional healers, community groups such as the Stockvel group of ladies who mould bricks, vegetable irrigation and pig farming, the Citrus group, the youth group.

The photos were developed on the 15th and on the 16th there was an exhibition at Madhavhila School for the community. Before the exhibition opened at 8am the community met for their usual Koro (gatherings). It was then that the community members who did not participate in the photo stories were invited to school for the exhibition. The response was overwhelming as all community members swamped the school to see the pictures after the koro.

The photo owners were asked to pick a/series of photos from their collection, stick them on to a manila sheet in order of events unfolding. Then below the photos they write their stories in relation to the photos using the guide words such as "before, current and to be". It was an easy exercise for the community as they worked collaboratively to identify challenges, drivers and plausible features. For the first time in many years a community that is marred by disagreements, fights, mistrusts put their differences on the side and seemed to be working towards the same goal. Surprisingly joining in the writing of stories was some community members who did not participate in taking photos. They felt it was part of their right too to contribute in this exercise.

The whole exercise took about 2hrs and then after we had an extra hour of informal but very useful and informative discussion with the community members as we deliberated on these challenge and way forward. Most of their stories focused on challenges in border jumpers coming to steal cattle, HIV & AIDS, drought, shortage of water and firewood and medicinal plants/trees.

The stories are in the process of being translated into English and the photos being developed into a small booklet (A3 calendar format and ring bound) that will carry the stories with each photo. A reflection on the stories once they are translated will be undertaken by Webster Whande after which a recommendation for further clarification will be taken. A more detailed analysis of the stories and use of this additional 'arts' approach to scenario planning will be undertaken.

1. Development of sustainable future for the BTG.

With a trained Bennde Mutale Theatre Group (BTG) now formed and active, the next steps are to identify and market the BTG to undertake further research and theatre/arts initiatives to both provide longer term livelihood options for the team and ensure that their skills and plays can contribute to development and planning options on the South African GLTFCA process and others.

So far after their 6-month project contract expired with RA, RA has continued to drum up more support and resources for the BTG. RA has managed to connect BTG to three high level meetings and workshops in Johannesburg and Pretoria. From all these performances BTG have received positive feedback which needs to be followed. The only challenge is getting funds to keep the coordinating office to do such a job as follow up and establishing new contacts. So far it looks positive that the BTG will have work/income for next 5 months through these various efforts and a

chance to both experiment further, develop finance/marketing capacity and sustain the 6 jobs created in this project.

2. Assessment Process and Replication of Pilot Initiative

At the end of June 2009 RA concluded the WCS/AHEAD funding support for this initiative through an assessment process of the lessons learnt from the pilot project.

For replication of the pilot process, RA has prepared a number of proposals for national and regional theatre/arts based on this pilot and largely focused on addressing the critical communication challenge around community climate change adaptation. These are a/ a proposal to the Swiss SDC related to Zimbabwe; to FFI for further social research/planning/theatre in NRM; c/ to NORAD and Development Marketplace/WB both for regional theatre/arts programmes. Assuming one or more of these proposals are supported, then the project should achieve the aim of replicability.

3. Recommendations

- The evaluation exercise and demand for similar inputs clearly indicates the value of this approach providing justification for a continuation and expansion of activities.
- There has and still is a lot of calls in demand for this kind of initiative. The only way to capture this demand effectively is for RA to establish an institutional basis where all these great ideas could be channelled and coordinated.
- Try to secure funding to establish the institutional and sustainable base for coordinating.
- Follow-up with organisations who have contacted RA and shown interest in collaborating needs to be handled as soon as possible. Of immediate importance are discussions with WWF-Namibia, for theatre training workshop in Namibia, University of Florida for downloading the BTG DVD to You Tube and other internet contacts.
- Discussions with joint management board of the GLTFCA to make use of the group in their future events and educational programmes for schools and tourists visiting the parks. There are already many positive and negative linking factors within these three boundaries, which can always be addressed through such mediums.
- Maintaining a positive and strong existing relationship with WCS-AHEAD in GAZA and hopefully in the similar initiative now funded for KAZA. This project clearly demonstrated the invaluable support that WCS-AHEAD can provide for activities of a similar nature in the near future.
- The creation and rehearsing period should last longer, especially for disadvantage communities like Bennde and the team who had never worked on such projects before. Such short periods to create, translate, adapt to English and rehearse put a lot of pressure on the artists and on the whole team.

6. Financial Report

Attached to this Final Progress Report is an Excel Finance Report detailing the final status of funds and the project budget.

This report indicates that the project has been implemented in line with the original grant and budget provisions.

Annex 1 Photos

1/ Photos produced in the 'photo-stories' scenario planning pilot.



2/ Photo of process of community involvement in photo stories



3/ Miscellaneous Photos of play/performances/actors





ANNEX 2 Work Plans

AHEAD-Scenario Planning Theatre Project		
8 Month Work Plan		
Name:	Chunky Phiri	
Function/Position	Consultant	
Project Description:	AHEAD-Scenario Planning Theatre Project	
Week Commencing:	November 2008 – June 2009	
PROJECT PHASE	TASKS	MEASURABLE
PHASE 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise logistics and planning framework for project 2. Visiting other RA working sites. Finding possibilities of linking, engaging and collaborating theatre as a medium of communication. 3. Support evolution of theatre programme of RA 	NOV – DEC '08
PHASE 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of local theatrical and facilitation team 2. Training in theatrical and facilitation skills 3. Training-activities in scenario planning methodology 4. Identification of what local residents perceive as the main driving forces (e.g. climate change) and the plausible futures. 	JAN – FEB
PHASE 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local theatrical productions and Performances. 2. Facilitation of scenario planning methodology 3. <u>Prepare mid term progress report + finance report (progress report by 1st week May)</u> 	MARCH - APRIL
PHASE 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Theatrical and facilitation process at district and provincial levels 2. Exchange visits to Mozambique and Zimbabwe 3. <u>Project Report writing – due by end of June</u> 	MAY - JUNE
PHASE 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitoring and evaluation 2. Linkage opportunities to other initiatives 3. Research and feedback 4. <u>Final Reports (Narrative and Financial due by mid August)</u> 	

WORK PLAN – Bennde Mutale Theatre and Scenario Planning Project

ACTIVITIES	Sub-ACTIVITIES	WHO	WHEN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend meeting in Bennde Identify + Meet with the local facilitator Find a rehearsal venue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise accommodation Formal introduction to the community Meet with community & establish relationship 	<p>Mike & Chunky Mike & Chunky</p> <p>Chunky</p>	Early Jan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Back to settle in Bennde 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing meeting with local facilitator(s) 	Chunky	Jan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify local theatrical & facilitation team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to arts skills 	Chunky, local facilitator & Peter	Jan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise auditions and select the top 6 actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise 6 actors selected Keep contact with Mike Peter and locals 	Chunky	Jan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills training begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salaries for the actors @ \$225x6 & the local facilitator @ \$375 	Chunky	Jan-End
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theatrical skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase stationery for the office, training note pads for actors 	Chunky	1 st week Feb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitation skills training Start to workshop a 15minute play with actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase of rehearsal costumes Make & buy props from locally available resources 	Chunky	2 nd week Feb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance of the 15minute play Workshop of the 1hr main show 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Script development of the main play 	Chunky & local facilitator	3 rd week Feb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearsals of the main play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make & Purchase props, costumes 	Chunky & local facilitator	4 th week Feb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salaries for the actors @ \$225x6 & the local facilitator @ \$375 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite locals for an open rehearsals 	Chunky & local facilitator, RA	Jan-End
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open Show rehearsals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the show and redirect if necessary 	Chunky, local facilitator & actors	March
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open show Dress rehearsals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite local authorities Workshop of the play after the rehearsals 	Chunky, local facilitator & actors	March
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearsals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific rehearsals in relation to comments from the workshop. 	Chunky	March

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Days break come to Pretoria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue supporting RA in Theatre development plan initiatives 	<p>Chunky & actors</p>	<p>March</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise local performances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open dress rehearsals 	<p>Local Facilitator</p>	<p>April</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performances within Bennde & surrounding areas • Link with Mozambique & Zim for possible performances within the GLTFCA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation on scenario planning methodologies • Talk with Janet Manjengwa-Zim • Vasco Acha-Moza • Organise accommodation for actors in Moza & Zim • Transport for the exchange visits • Book venues for shows 	<p>Chunky, local facilitator, Janet, Vasco, RA, actors</p>	<p>April</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave Bennde for exchange visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure transport • Secure accommodation • Secure performance venues 	<p>Chunky, local facilitator, Janet, Vasco, RA, actors</p>	<p>May</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows in Moza & Zim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw on info, issues, for a possible regional theatre piece • Establish links for starting similar theatre groups in Moza & Zim 	<p>Chunky</p>	<p>May</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 weeks in the field then back to Bennde 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link the theatre group with local private lodges around Bennde for performances. 	<p>Chunky & local facilitator</p>	<p>May</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Evaluation & review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of report 	<p>Chunky</p>	<p>June</p>

ANNEX 3 ASSESSMENT REPORTS and PHOTO STORIES METHODOLOGY(Dr Webster Whande)

**Bennde Mutale Theatre Group: Community Outreach Theatre and
Scenario Planning Assessment**

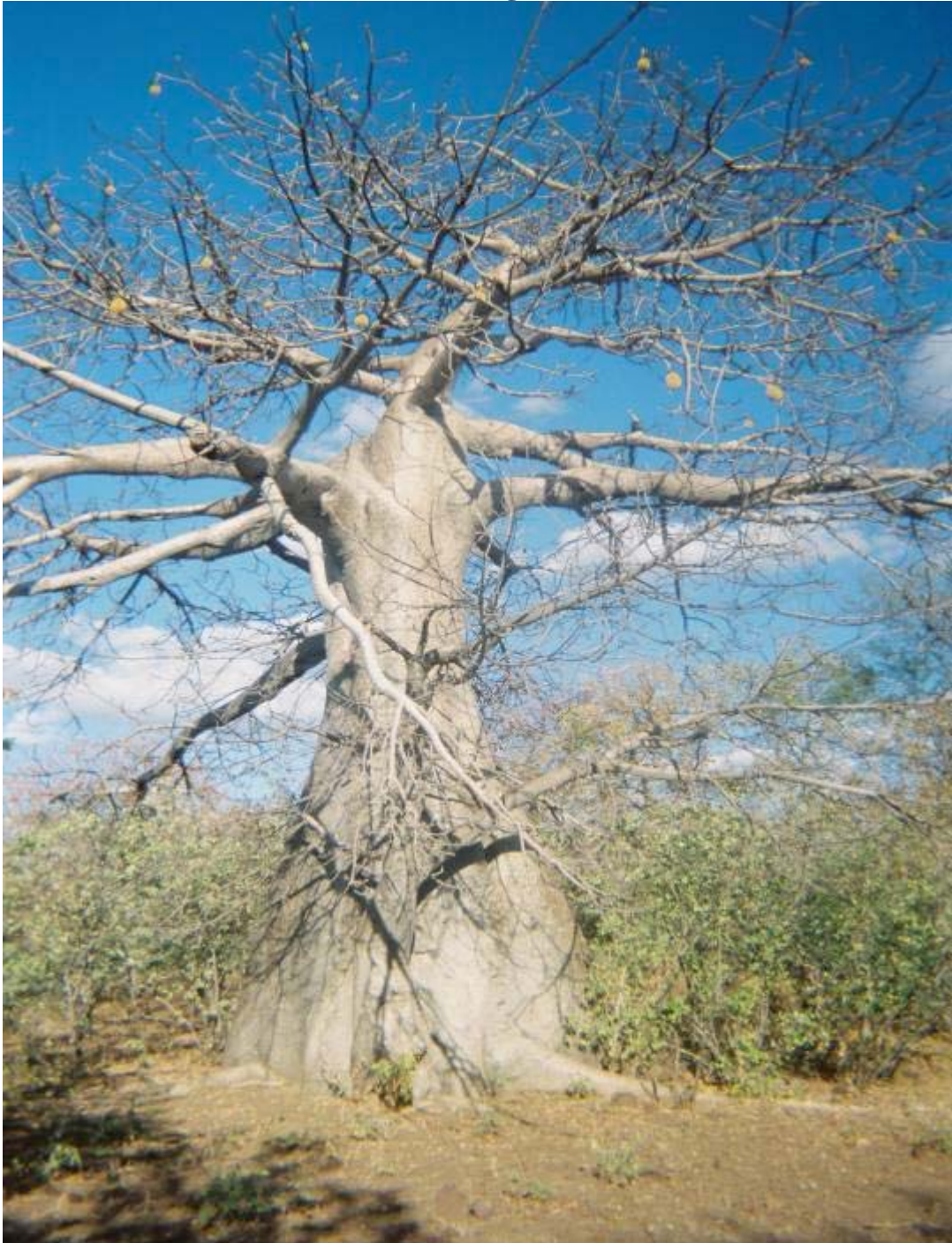


Photo: Morris Baloyi, Bennde Mutale Village

**Report
Webster Whande**

Bennde Mutale Theatre Group: Community Theatre Outreach Project and Scenario Planning Assessment

1.1 Background and Objectives

The Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) at the University of Zimbabwe has managed a programme of local level scenario planning within the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA). The South African component of this programme was started in July 2007 along the Madimbo corridor and with specific focus on the village of Bennde Mutale. In 2008, Resource Africa was awarded a grant by Animal Health for Environment and Development within the GLTFCA (AHEAD-GLTFCA) to support the local level scenario planning process through the use of theatre and other artistic means of communications. This assessment is primarily concerned with the theatre initiative and secondarily with the local level scenario planning process. It is designed to review the use of theatre in communicating local realities and lived experiences in the village of Bennde Mutale. Recommendations on integrating aspects of natural resource management and suggestions on strengthening the scenarios or driver forces for change in the current production are also offered.

The exact purpose of this assessment is to conduct field based review of the theatre programme's performance and focus on a set of key issues as defined in the Terms of Reference (TOR):

- A basic assessment of the issues covered in the current play(s) and recommendations on integrating other elements (eg on Madimbo corridor, wider NRM issues and 'interest groups' - youth tourism, women's citrus group etc)
- Working with women's groups, the youth tourism project, the theatrical actors and local leadership, offer suggestions on strengthening the scenarios/drivers elements of the play.
- Provide strategic inputs/advice regarding the play/theatre group performances and travels to Mozambique and Zimbabwe based on past experience
- Conduct focus group discussions and facilitate the production of photo stories to support further identification of future scenarios
- A report on this field work with recommendations that can help to guide the final months of the theatre process, suggestions for next phases of the project/theatre group and guidance to help in the evaluation of theatre-scenario planning to take place near project end.

The assessment was undertaken in May 2009 and some activities continued into the month of June. However, as the author was involved in the planning of the project (through writing the proposal) and previously conducted research in Bennde Mutale, some insights in this report are drawn from long term research and debates with the theatre project manager and village based scenario planning facilitator and observations of the process as it unfolded over the last six months. Additionally, I also facilitated the initial entry of the scenario planning project so was familiar with the objectives of the initiative.

The assessment report is divided into five major sections. Following on this background section, I briefly discuss the methodology used in this assessment, followed by an assessment of the theatrical production. The third section discusses the enhancement of scenario planning and driver elements for change while the fourth section discusses the

photo stories exercise. The fifth section closes off by discussing a way forward for both the theatre initiative, the scenario planning process and management of the two.

1.2 Assessment Methodology

A variety of methods were used in this assessment to reflect the diversity of people involved in the implementation of the project. The methodology also took into consideration the fact that the residents of Bennde Mutale are the main players in the process and that the issues covered in the theatrical production is about their lived realities and that the scenario planning process about their visions of a desired future. The assessment drew from earlier research the author has conducted in the village of Bennde Mutale, and as a result, included aspects of impact assessment. This understanding provided some base line background of the community before the implementation of the project and also some benchmarks (these included participation in externally proposed and driven processes, articulation of people's needs and aspirations) to assess the overall impact of the theatre process on the local community. The assessment further drew from observations and experiences during the proposal writing engagement¹ with the local community.

In line with the TOR the assessment methodology consisted of interviews and focus group discussions with residents of Bennde Mutale. Interviews were conducted with local leaders, the youth involved in tourism projects, women participating in a loan scheme group (*stokvel*) and members of the theatre group. In conducting interviews and focus group discussions, the assessment included open ended questions, was flexible to allow for general reflections and follow up on emerging thematic issues. The two approaches of interviews and focus group discussions were designed to assess the subjective opinions of individuals to check for validity or to triangulate results from different people. Triangulation was also provided through reflecting on past engagements with residents of Bennde Mutale, in particular noting areas of social and political change, especially in relation to engaging externally proposed and driven interventions.

Two theatrical performances were attended and a review of the thematic focus of the production undertaken, while attendance at rehearsals were designed to observe the process of iterative refinement of the theatrical production based on continued research by the actor-facilitators. As well as attendance at performances and rehearsals, the theatre group was part of a focus group discussion and its members interviewed individually. Interviews and focus group discussion were meant to assess the impact of the theatre initiative on the actor-facilitators in terms of understanding of their respective roles as well as the issues covered in the production.

Further analysis of impact of the theatre initiative was provided through a combination of photo stories and reflections on locally selected and photographed images. Photo stories were conducted through selecting groups of people in the village to whom inexpensive disposable cameras were distributed. The groups included women's money lending group (*Stokvel*), the youth tourism project members, women's citrus project members, local village leadership including the headman and the civic structures, and individuals in various capacities. The individuals or groups themselves photographed local features that they hold dear or they find important in their lives. Fifteen disposable cameras were

1 The theatre proposal writing phase included a two day consultation process with residents of Bennde Mutale and local leadership in co-creating the theatre intervention and in defining the actual focus of the theatre.

purchased for this exercise and distributed to individuals and groups. Technical aspects on how to use the disposable cameras were provided by a local professional camera man. After taking and developing photographs, the groups were then asked to write a story about the importance of the feature they had photographed or narrate what they valued about the feature, the current uses of the feature and then highlight what they viewed as threats and/or the opportunities they saw in relation to the feature into the future. As well as an engagement with the assessment of the impact of the theatre initiative, photo stories were meant to take the scenario planning process through a further identification of the driving forces for change and laying the ground for a discussion on locally defined plausible futures. As well as working with those individuals and groups that had been identified for distribution of cameras, an exhibition at the local school was held where all members of the village were invited to share in their reflections on the photos and stories that had been developed.

To gain an understanding of the evolving thematic issues in relation to land, natural resources and the general social and political context in the area, one village meeting was attended during the assessment period. This was useful in documenting the issues that local residents were grappling with.

While the assessment was an internal exercise (for Resource Africa, the NGO implementing the theatre initiative) with a team that has worked together and involved in the design of the theatre initiative, some constraints were experienced during the assessment period in May 2009. The assessment had planned to conduct focus group discussions with a wide spectrum of local people, according to local groups such as the women's money lending scheme, the youths involved in the tourism project, women involve in sex work, men who regularly hang out at the local tavern and the theatre actor-facilitators. It was not possible to have these focus group discussions with everyone as this was in the middle of the harvesting season and most people were working in the fields to harvest their crops. Additionally, most of the youths involved in the youth tourism project also hold individual contracted jobs and were not all available at the same time. Some of the youths were also involved in a training exercise to be security guards.

An important aspect of assessing the use of theatre was its relation to the local level scenario planning project. Assessing the role of theatre in facilitating local level scenario planning was constrained by the fact that the relationship between the two has not really taken off, the two initiatives have proceeded to be implemented as if they are different. The local scenario planning team, which was (is) supposed to feed research ideas into the development of the theatrical production, has to date not fulfilled this role. The theatre team (as well for purposes of this assessment) does not have any documentation produced from the scenario planning team to feed into the process of theatre production and facilitation, despite an explicit plan in the proposal suggesting ways of enhancing collaboration between the teams. In all this, it appears the practical meaning of the local level scenario planning process has been lost and the central tenet of its approach (facilitative rather than directive) abandoned.

Due to these unforeseen constraints, the assessment process and field approach was changed to suit the local conditions and opportunities. Instead of constituting focus group discussions, individual interviews were conducted with members of the village and the members of the respective groups who were available during the one week of field work. Detailed reflections of the current theatrical production were held with the actor-

facilitators as well as opinions on the production obtained from individual interviews. The photo stories also generated remarkable interest in the village, with people volunteering to have a disposable camera and contribute stories. The exhibition at the end of the assessment provided a useful opportunity to get local feedback and reflections on the production as well as gain an insight into further driving forces for change and plausible futures. This flexibility in conducting the assessment made it possible to come to some conclusions on the impact of the theatre on local processes and potential role in local level scenario planning.

As the scenario planning project is one component of a three-country initiative, the project proposal included a plan to travel to other villages in Mozambique and Zimbabwe to share challenges faced in Bennde Mutale and facilitate discussions among the villages within the GLTFCA. The choice of these villages was on the basis of their participation in the scenario planning project. The assessment process was supposed to provide strategic advice on this inter-country exchange. Due to the delays in finalizing the photo stories, it was minimally possible to provide this advice in a more systematic way, leaving the project managers to carry out most of the strategy work as well as the logistical arrangements. It is therefore not possible to address this issue in any detail in this report.

1.3 The assessment approach

The assessment was conducted in the context of a commitment to the local level actor-facilitators in terms of how they can continue functioning as a group beyond the stipulated programme time which ends in June 2009. More broadly, however, the assessment was guided by a question on what the greatest potential that can be achieved through both the scenario and theatre process, for a common vision for the residents of Bennde Mutale but also in the context of changing livelihood, social, environmental and political systems. As such, it focused on short term changes in attitudes and behaviours among the actor-facilitators and changes in their capabilities. As well as identifying the short term changes that might be useful for future long term and sustainable success (of the group, of the community in dealing with external social and political processes), the assessment exercise was meant to identify key areas of success, strengths and weaknesses of the project to enable forward planning for a possible next phase. Necessarily, any future planning for local level scenario planning and use of theatre as a tool need to facilitate locally defined visions of desired futures that is both dynamic and flexible. By introducing photo stories and assessing the impact of the theatre piece, this assessment has initiated a process of entering a dialogue on local people's visions of a desired future, which will be critical to moving the process to the next stage of working with Bennde Mutale residents to articulate what they see/view/desire as plausible futures and scenarios².

2 Local engagement with the theatrical production

Two areas were assessed in relation to the theatrical production. These are: the impacts of the theatre initiative on the actor-facilitators as well as on social relations within the

2 It is important to note that scenario planning is not only arrived at through visions of a desired future (see Nemarundwe, de Jong & Cronkleton 2003). Other possibilities include mapping trajectories based on current trends. I have chosen here to focus on visions of a desired future as defining trends would involve another stage in the process, which is likely to complicate the process.

village of Bennde Mutale, and secondly the thematic issues covered in the production. While the former was not explicitly outlined in the TORs, it is important to discuss the short term impact of the theatre initiative on actor-facilitators as ultimately they are the basis upon which future process facilitation, long term sustainability and success is built.

2.1 Changing roles of actor-facilitators in the community

Two major issues are important to mention in the assessment of actor-facilitators. The first concerns the gender composition and socio-economic mix of the team, and what this implies for roles among local people and articulation of views and perspectives in particular by women. The second issue is in relation to skills development, in particular conducting research to feed into theatrical productions. Linked to conducting research is the issue of articulation skills and general confidence building.

A total of six actor-facilitators were chosen by the theatre director, with four women and two men (see Phiri & Anstey 2009). This is explained, firstly, by the number of those who responded to the call to come for auditions. As pointed out by the theatre director, an overwhelming number (fifty five) of women turned up for the auditions compared to only six men. While this explains the ratio of men:women among the actor-facilitators, it does not explain the attitudes of the men in responding to the call for auditions. One man indicated that they thought 'it was a joke.' The second aspect of gender distribution is that it has provided a new image of who gets to work in these kind of initiatives, where in the past employment opportunities usually fell to men. Additionally, observations from the past are that women are not always at the forefront of leading social processes in the village, often resorting to informal channels of communications to articulate their ideas. Having the majority of actor-facilitators as women is a clear break with this observation, also because theatre involves not only an articulation of ideas but assuming a central position, the centre stage and holding the space through performance and narration. The attitudes of the actor-facilitator women bears testimony to this change, as one of them explained that she sees herself 'as an example to the young girls of what one can do.'

The actor-facilitators all come from different socio-economic contexts, some are from relatively wealthy families with lots of livestock, some are locally regarded as poor, yet they appear to have found a commonality in articulating the challenges and prospects they see for their community. Their diversity of backgrounds holds promise in co-visioning or articulating 'desired' futures and capturing the nuances of the local community from different socio-economic perspectives. The current theatre production, which is a reflection of local people's historical experiences (as opposed to visioning a future or articulating desires) is testimony to the possibility of this creating and facilitating processes that reflect their different socio-economic backgrounds.

In producing the current theatrical piece, the local actor-facilitators were actively involved in conducting research and helped in shaping the messages of the play. They relied on their personal experiences to reflect on the messages that were emerging, as well as on interaction with their families and friends. One of them reflected that the process of making the theatre piece amplified issues that they always thought as trivial and that the response of local people is also an indication that these 'issues are important not only to me as an actor but to everyone living here in the village.'

It is also clear from interactions with the actor-facilitators that they have gained confidence to perform for the public and articulate environmental and socio-political issues clearly. In our discussions, the actor-facilitators clarified what they thought of their

roles. They saw their roles as communicating concerns of the local community, as making people laugh and learn but also as working. It was clear in their responses that they have clearly made the connection between their roles as actor-facilitators and the broader socio-political dynamics among the local residents as well as with other levels. They spoke of facilitating dialogue with the neighbouring Makuya Park, especially after 'conflicts over use of natural resources.' They also observed that the issues they are articulating in the play are what they observe on a daily basis, in particular in relation to young people's behaviours and the risk of HIV/AIDS. There was a clearly a linking of everyday observed issues and their performance roles. Considering the constraints faced with the hiring a local advisor, the 30 minute theatrical production as well as the skills developed by the actor/facilitators is a major achievement (see Phiri & Anstey 2009).

2.2 Theatrical issues and messages

Two rehearsal performances were watched during the field work in Bennde Mutale. The first performance was without the theatrical director, designed to allow the actor-facilitators to articulate themselves on the thematic issues covered and not worry about the technical aspects of performance. The performance was followed by a focus group discussion of the issues covered.

The issues covered are varied, and at times seem too many for a 30 minute play. This, however, reflects the socio-political and ecological complexities of the village of Bennde Mutale. They also reflect the current concerns of the population of Bennde Mutale and that of their neighbours in other villages along the Madimbo corridor.

2.2.1 Health issues

Health issues, in particular HIV/AIDS and cholera are prominent in the production and are also often referred to in casual discussions. A term I found in common use this time around is *siyawairira* a Shona word for leaving instructions in anticipation of one's absence. Its use in Bennde Mutale, clearly a reference to the current lack of a cure for HIV/AIDS, is also an indictment for local consciousness of preparing for the future. The coverage of the issue in the production is therefore a reflection of this new wave of awareness as witnessed in the local terminology. Besides the socio-linguistics of Shona terms finding meaning among a predominantly Venda population (it should be pointed out, however, that Shona and Venda are linguistically related and often have common terms), there were also aspects of viewing this as a problem largely emanating from Zimbabwe.

The second component of the HIV/AIDS is also covered in the play in these trans-boundary connotations. While it is now acknowledged in literature that migrants are at a higher risk of contracting and spreading sexually transmitted infections, the production should also challenge local Bennde Mutale residents from a perspective of what their own responsibilities are. This is also important as other factors might be at play in spreading HIV/AIDS along the Madimbo corridor, such as the presence of unaccompanied soldiers and police and contract workers who primarily support sex work paid either in cash and other means such as food rations. Never the less, the portrayal of the issues of HIV/AIDS in the production are critical in highlighting local consciousness, the next stage is to explore local visions of a desired future in relation to the disease.

2.2.2 Climate change issues

The second prominent issue of the production is climate change. Contrasting local village contribution to climate change with city lifestyles is particularly effective. Similar to the issue of HIV/AIDS, the highlighting of climate change issues has resulted in increased discussions within the village, with people often talking in terms of their observations of a changing climate. Thus, climate change issues are also in terms of historical experiences, they denote the driving forces for change among the local residents to cope with the observed and experienced changes.

Interviews conducted in May and reflections from previous interactions with local residents inform assessment of the theatre production in terms of climate change issues. Florence Tshivhambu liked the production, she said, and recognised the climate change aspects locally. She reflected that the local situation had changed, either there were violent rains (in reflection to the 2000 floods and the strong winds of 2005) or completely dry summers. Her response to these changes thus far have included increasing the amount of land she farms, yet that also has not helped in times of extreme weather. Her reaction is clearly one of adaptation to the changing conditions. Currently the play emphasises aspects of mitigation, exploring the importance of not cutting down trees. A balance between adaptation and mitigation needs to be explored through further facilitated dialogue. It appears for someone like Florence the entry point into this dialogue is agricultural production, and in particular how agricultural practices (some of which in response to environmental change such as climate change) are themselves driving forces for environmental change. A continuous feedback loop is created and perpetuates itself.

Some of the cattle farmers expressed similar sentiments of that their focus was on adaptation measures for their livestock. A 'rich' cattle owner I interviewed in 2006 once remarked that cattle are a symbol of wealth but when it comes to drought, the only livestock that he can realistically expect to survive are goats. He kept goats for 'day-to-day' provision of meat but also for recovering some of the cattle (through selling goats) after droughts. The issues of agricultural productivity and its links to climate change can further be explored through weaving some of the stories into the play.

The two stories show some planning for uncertain times, but they also indicate that livelihoods are at the core of local planning and actions. Entry into discussing plausible futures can be explored through local visions of adaptation to climate and their role in mitigation, additionally, local visions of their own agricultural based livelihoods in two different climate scenarios, an increasingly wet or dry climate can be explored in relation to local land management practices.

2.2.3 Protected areas/local people relations

A third issue explored in the theatrical production is the one of relationships between local people and protected areas management. It was not possible to analyse the extent of dialogue facilitation between local communities and protected areas management as in May no performances had been conducted with the PA management in place. The design of the project as spelt out in the proposal was to start a process of dialogue between the two parties with different objectives for land uses in the area. While the theatre initiative has not specifically led to dialogue between local residents and the protected areas managers, it is important to note that dialogue has been facilitated with the Makuleke who for ten years had been accused of having incorporated land for Bennde Mutale residents into their land claim of 1998 (see Phiri & Anstey 2009).

The dialogue is in part due to openness to possible tourism related land uses as the Makuleke run a tourism venture on the land that was returned to them after a land claim and in part due to the avenues for direct communication offered through the theatre director.

2.2.4 Trans-boundary local relations

Trans-boundary local relations are explored in the production and this is a reflection of local sentiments especially considering the mobility of Zimbabweans and security of livelihoods. A major trans-boundary issue is that of livestock theft, which is adequately covered in the play even though the reverse livestock theft issue is not explored. Cattle are stolen from South Africa to Zimbabwe and goats are stolen from Zimbabwe to South Africa. Local efforts to deal with cattle thefts include the recent set up of a committee in South Africa and the express need to set up similar committees in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. I view this organic and local attempt to deal with livestock theft across boundaries in the same light as the functioning of the GLTP Joint Management Board (from which local people are excluded) and can provide a useful contrast between the functions of the JMB and local realities of dealing with issues such as livestock theft. Equally, it is important to highlight the difficulties and dangers that people face attempting to recover their livestock when its stolen, but this might be too much to try and deal with a 45 minute theatrical production and can rather be the focus of post-performance facilitated discussions.

Still on trans-boundary issues, the play can incorporate more nuanced approaches to highlight the complexity of the issues of trans-boundary movement of people and their effects on natural resources as well as the history of human movement in the area. One aspect of human movement along the Madimbo corridor is highlighted in the trans-boundary marriages, both in the past and presently. I would suggest that as well as exploring issues of disease travel (HIV/AIDS from Zimbabweans in the words of local Bennde Mutale residents), the play can also explore the positive aspects of this movement, in particular the history of trans-boundary marriages. Other positive aspects of human movement include trans-boundary livelihood strategies – for instance during the use of the Zimbabwe dollar, people could travel to Zimbabwe to buy cheaper maize meal – some local people also cross the river to drink beer (social reasons).

Some of the trans-boundary cooperation at a local level are clearly constrained by state level approaches to dealing with human movement. For instance, the area has a history of cattle loaning (a practice widespread in southern Africa) across boundaries. While it relies on trust that one can loan their cattle for safe keeping and to access rich grazing fields, it also requires constant monitoring. Given the nation-state constraints on human movement, this monitoring is not possible. The story of Noria Manganyi in Bennde Mutale who loaned her cattle to a family in Zimbabwe illustrates this constraint and the threats it poses to people's livelihoods. Noria Manganyi loaned her cattle to a Zimbabwean family but last year she received a message that her cattle, in excess of 200, had been stolen. When she sent her grandchildren to investigate, they were thrown in jail. Upon their release they could not continue with this exercise. Would things have been different if local people were allowed to move freely between the two countries. It appears local efforts at controlling transborder cattle thefts is premised on cooperative relationships between local residents in Zimbabwe and South Africa and that these should also build on existing institutions (rules of the game) already in place such as cattle loaning understandings.

3. Strengthening scenario planning and drivers for change in the play

My sense of the process so far is that both the scenario planning process and the theatre initiative have done a lot to identify the drivers for change, but have not moved to identifying what local residents see as plausible futures in relation to natural resources in the locale and in interaction with broader policy, environmental change and social processes. The issues discussed in section 2 above are all issues based on local experiences of their lived reality and they inform the drivers for change.

3.1 Drivers for change

The drivers for change in Bennde Mutale can roughly be classified as social, economic, environment and governance. The following table further elaborates on this and gives specific examples of each category as a driver for change. What is perhaps clear from this table is that the drivers for change can not be viewed in isolation, they are all interconnected, what happens with one of them has the potential to impact on how the other drivers are engaged with.

Drivers for change	Local manifestation
Economic, globalisation and poverty	Increased tourism (potential, imagined or real) investments, infrastructural developments, migration to the city (migrant labour and associated employment trends from mining to soft jobs such as waiting)
Environment	Climate change, environmental degradation (practices that enhance the feedback loop between climate change and environmental degradation with resultant effects on agricultural productivity)
Education	Access to basic education, increased funding of education (even from families considered to be poor)
Governance and political	Conflicts over authority, decision making, legal regimes in relation to land and natural resources, state-local relations, struggles to access and use natural resources, youth transition to adulthood
Social (to include human heath?)	Mobility across boundaries, changing demographic structure (mostly as a result of HIV/AIDS and migration to cities), socio-economic transformation (land use changes from agricultural based focus to embracing local symbols of globalisation (tourism), cooperative arrangements for improving livelihoods

3.1.1 Intergenerational interactions as a governance driving force for change

Having spent time in Bennde Mutale, I have come to the conclusion that the youth, as a demographic group, occupy a specific place in the governance and political realm of driving change. In South Africa, this is particularly so when one considers how the youths of the 1940s (Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu etc) shifted the discourse and engagement with the struggle for liberation and how years later the youths on 16 June 1976 shifted the engagement with apartheid South Africa through a more confrontational approach. There are of course less celebrated or recognised youth battles that shifted society and the pace and direction of social and political change. I have picked this issue

to highlight the role of theatre in building consensus and reaching out to disparate voices that are otherwise an impediment for individuals and communities realising the greatest potential for positive change. A little story from Bennde Mutale indicates the local generational dynamics involving the youths of Bennde Mutale and how the battles among the youths themselves and positioning for future leadership roles is stirring for change.

The youths of Bennde Mutale are restless, they are stirring trouble both among the local residents and how the local residents should and can engage with external process such as donor funded projects. Things were not always like this. The first time I got to Bennde Mutale the youths were the first ones to recognise the importance of research. They quickly moved to approve the research exercise at a public meeting (perhaps the signs were always there but done more subtly). They were curious, they wanted to know how the research will evolve and how it will help them. They had, early on, made the connections between improving their livelihood situations and research.

As the research progressed, I arrived to find them building a local tourism initiative – specifically designed along the same lines as a nearby commercial tourist place (using sisal poles for building) – and they had managed to fundraise for the initiative. It was at one meeting with them that they declared they don't want to work for anyone, they wanted to make money and manage their own tourism facilities on their land. It seemed there was a radical transformation in the youths.

Economic opportunities were not the only early indications of a growing restless youth. They also started challenging the local leadership, asking at public meetings what the headman was doing to improve the lives of local residents. They denied the chief and the headman to sit on the 'board' for the tourism project. There was unity of purpose that culminated in the ousting of the traditional council chaired by the headman (except for the headman whom they cannot dismiss) and the civic structure saw new elected members – all youths and agitating for change.

In May 2009, things had changed, something had taken the steam out of the youths. Interestingly, it was competition and jostling for external resources that provided the final blow to the increasingly ambitious youth grouping. The second reason was that as much as the youths united against the older generation of leaders, those from the headman's family fell back in line to support the headman and leave everyone else who is not royalty out in the cold. Those who reverted back to the headman found a new system to protect their interests, a traditional governance structure which they now control and direct despite the presence of the headman. Much of the current dynamics are competition among the youths and their battles to control access to information, access to resources that come with projects and building a political patronage system through controlling access to jobs. Yet, even divided, they still agitate for certain changes, the latest being that external researchers are getting turned away even if they have permission from the headman.

The role the youths of Bennde Mutale are playing is viewed both in positive terms locally but also as a destructive approach to resolving issues. What is clear, however, is that the youths are demanding a different way of doing things, and in certain circumstances they are also forcing new ways. Yet as yet there has been no real discussion with them about what visions of the future they have.

This story would be pointless without reverting back to the question guiding the assessment approach, that is what the greatest potential that theatre and scenario planning can facilitate by engaging with the residents of Bennde Mutale. To what extent can the theatre and scenario planning processes contribute to the long term sustainable change?

3.2 Moving forward with scenario planning

It is tempting to project historical and on-going experiences of local residents into the future (and possible responses in retrospect) and be comfortable with that as identifying future scenarios. My experience in Bennde Mutale thus far is one of engaging with these drivers for change in giving solutions. This would be an all too comfortable exercise, however, it does not prepare local residents for different possibilities in relation to the drivers for change. The next level of facilitation should necessarily move to facilitating scenario planning processes, the identification of plausible futures based on local residents' visions and desires for the future. It also involves mapping possible undesirables.

Based on observations of local debates and coverage within the production, the issue of HIV/AIDS can provide a facilitatory focus for exploring future questions. The effects of HIV/AIDS on the local demographic structure are well articulated locally, with the elderly Endani once remarking that 'this disease is finishing off the young, even before they have had a chance to raise their own children'. If knowing what they know of HIV/AIDS today, how are local people going to chat their future in relation to the disease and their social relationships. The increased levels of awareness and the reference to HIV/AIDS in future terms suggest an opportunity to start facilitating future questions and scenario stories in relation to the disease, and in particular by facilitating the visions local people have of the future in relation to the disease, what their desires (as well as the undesirables they can be confronted with) are and what social changes are demanded to achieve their visions of success and avoid the undesirable possibilities. Theatre can play a further facilitatory role in moving the process forward.

The natural resources management changes in the past have highlighted the issue of governance as an important driving force for change. Issues of governance are partially covered in the production through a discussion of the length of time it has taken to resolve problems associated with the Madimbo corridor land claim. The issue of governance, however, needs strengthening in the production to facilitate further debate. They can be strengthened through the exploration of leadership conflicts (which is partly responsible for the delay in resolving the land issue) over land uses along the Madimbo corridor. Chief Mutele and some of the headman along the Madimbo corridor are in favour of conservation driven tourism while the Communal Property Association, tasked with the land claim, is in support of using the corridor for grazing and crop agriculture. They both support the use of the area for mining purposes, basing their suggestions on experiences of job creation from mining activities at Tshikondeni Mine and the closed graphite mine at Gumbu. A further exploration of the leadership conflicts over land uses along the corridor is potentially useful in bringing these issues out more explicitly. Actual reference to the different land use options will be useful in highlighting the leadership challenges in relation to the Madimbo corridor. The conflicts are also not just between local leadership but between local people and government at various levels. This is reflected in the play with a scene on land reform having been completed for Madimbo

corridor yet local people continue to be excluded from entering, even threatened with arrest and killing over hunting of wildlife. This is one option of bringing in the issues of the Madimbo corridor more explicitly. The local visions in relation to governance issues can also be explored by facilitating dialogue on what local residents picture the future like in relation to both their personal desires as well the undesirables they can find themselves into.

Much of scenario planning literature prioritises the ranking of the drivers for change. I would suggest the ranking exercise at Bennde Mutale indicates the issues that people are most passionate about and is useful as an entry point for discussing plausible futures. My experience in May during the field work is that different demographic groups are passionate about different drivers for change, there is an inherent ranking of the drivers for change according to demographic groups. For instance, I found that the most women are passionate about issues of HIV/AIDS, aging and caring for the weak and elderly, the youth more concerned with economic drivers for change (how to access donor funded projects, how to have access to information so they can benefit from tourism investments and infrastructural developments in the area) and generally engaged in political processes. It can of course be a problem to identify areas or drivers for change that a specific demographic group is most passionate about as it can trivialise complex social and change processes, yet an exploration of the linkages among the drivers of change can be achieved through focused work on specific issues that people are passionate about. Further analysis of the issues that specific demographic groups are passionate about are provided through analysis of the photo stories process conducted in May 2009.

4. Working with photo stories

Apart from interviews and group discussions, local Bennde Mutale residents were also engaged through the development of photo stories. The aims of the photo stories were to further identify driving forces for change and prepare for discussions on plausible futures. Developing photo stories generated local interest and there were more requests for cameras than had initially been anticipated. Besides running out of cameras, it also became clear that the process needed to be managed more closely as it is easy to end up having a huge number of photos and little time to get into detail about the meaning of the particular photos taken.

4.1 Process

The selection of who to work with on the photo stories was based on already existing groups and a spread of people within the different socio-economic groups previously developed in 2005. As interest in working with cameras and developing stories grew, it became necessary to group certain individuals together (as colleagues working on electricity lines, women participating in the home based care group and the youths heading cattle).

Three main questions guided the process and what kind of photos to be taken. The first question was for participants to photograph a feature that they held dear or that was important in their lives. The second aspect was for them to think what it is that was important about the feature and write this down (a story about the importance of the feature they had photographed). The third aspect was on how such a feature was currently used and what future they saw in the feature, what the threats and opportunities are.

After developing the photos, they were given back to the camera persons to start reflecting on or writing down their stories. The photos were then displayed at the Madavhila Primary school (see below) and all the camera persons invited to share their stories on some of the photos or on all of them.

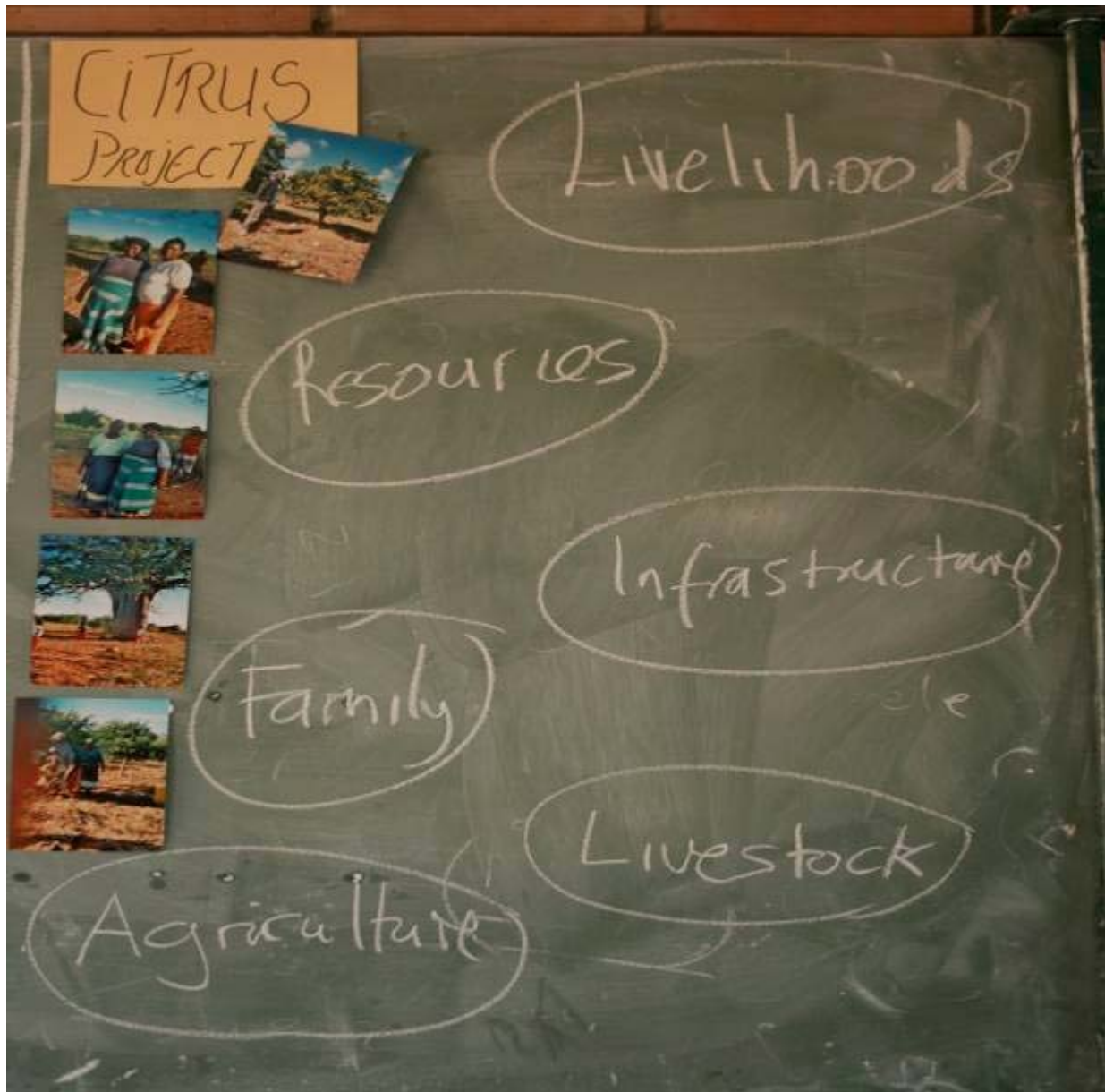


Collection of photographs displayed at the school during the story development exercise

4.2 Emerging issues

A number of issues can be identified from the photo stories. They include livelihood, conflicts over natural resources and cooperation issues. While some of these issues have been identified as important before, they are specifically written by local residents themselves and not products of interviews.

A striking feature of the stories is that they are almost exclusively about livelihoods. Previous research along the Madimbo corridor has not identified livelihoods as possible driving force for change, but from the photos taken it appears that livelihoods are a major driving force for change. The main livelihoods images are of livestock and crop agriculture and the stories are intricately linked to concerns about environmental issues such as low rainfall and poor grazing, which also feed into environmental change such as climate change.



An interesting issue to emerge from these photos is also of family and cooperation (see below). Cooperation images were mostly from the women in terms of working together to make bricks for shelter or participating in money lending schemes and citrus project for livelihood sustenance. While the homebased care group did not speak in terms of cooperation and was often referred to in terms of a livelihood, their operations indicated an awareness of the major driving forces for change, especially in relation to issues of health. It also appeared to be a centre around which women are taking initiative and changing the nature of looking after the elderly and the terminally ill. The enthusiasm of the home based care group is also an indication of one issue in Bennde Mutale that is unfolding regarding participation in local processes.



Lydia Munyai

We work in groups to make bricks. The man made bricks are used to build houses because there are shortages of houses in our families. Once we have completed making bricks for one person we move on to do the same to the next person until all members of the groups are covered.

The enthusiasm to be part of the photo stories group highlight a change in engagement with external processes. While apathy was common in the past, these days it appears external intervention is met with active participation. It is not clear what is driving this new change, but indications are that it is the desire to have access to information and also to be positioned for possible employment. Additionally, the current six actors employed through the theatre project are seen as an example that a call to participation can result in employment. It is also clear from statements by some of the people who came to participate in the photo stories that, besides the aspect of taking photographs, they also expected to be considered for possible employment. One point of reference from two of the men involved in the photo stories was that they 'already have passports to travel to other countries' in reference to the fact that the six actor-facilitators were part of a team travelling to Mozambique and Zimbabwe for an inter-country exchange. The new wave of participation can therefore be indirectly linked to livelihood considerations.

An interesting observation from the photo stories is the focus on fuel wood. While previously local residents spoke of fuel wood, they mostly did so from a money generation perspective as a lot of people were cutting firewood to sell. The photo stories seem to signal a shift from the commercial perspective to more talk on fuel wood as a

source of energy for cooking and heating. Governance issues were also explored from the perspective that it was now more difficult to obtain firewood as permits were not being issued and also from a resource availability perspective as people noted firewood was not abundantly available any more.



Photo: Sam Maluleke

One of my duty is to gather fuel-wood from the bush. I use fuel-wood for cooking but I also sell fuel-wood to get income. There is no longer fuel-wood in the nearby vicinity. Fuel-wood is now collected from far away. Fuel wood is now collected from Makuya and Makuleke area which is a distance from Bennde Mutale. We are now suffering because we do not have trucks or cars to go and collect fuel wood. Text: Lydia Munyai

However, there are features or processes that could not be photographed therefore can potentially be overlooked in developing photo stories. As a result, photo stories were combined with other methods such as interviews and attendance at a village meeting. For instance, the issue of leadership (or lack thereof) and governance are critical (based on individual interviews) but they are also not so easy to capture in photographs. A change from apathy to active participation in political issues is as elusive to capture in photographs, yet is also critical for understanding governance drivers for change.

My assessment of the active participation of people is that it is not only for access to information, but a response to positioning themselves for possible livelihood benefits. While this scramble for information is a positive development, it is also along this that local contests and conflicts are emerging. It is mostly the young, more educated people

who are scrambling for information and at times sidelining their competitors. These issues could not be photographed hence a need to allocate more time for discussion on the issues or features photographed.

5. Way forward

In discussing a way forward, it is important to first analyse the local grasp of the scenario planning terminology and process. There is no vernacular terminology to explain what scenario planning is and what the drivers for change are. This presented difficulties during the proposal writing phase when the project was first discussed in Bennde Mutale. As a result, despite the implementation of the scenario planning project since 2007, there appears to be confusion as to what exactly is meant to be achieved. Mention of scenario planning is often met with expectations of managerial type of planning, and it explains why initially the scenario planning initiative was only welcome by two groups in the village; the citrus growing women and the youth tourism project. In relation to both these groups, it is clear that their motivation hence the practical meaning of the scenario planning process was to tap external resources for the development of their respective projects. A link between scenario planning and long term sustainability has not been explored or explicitly made. This observation informs the way forward proposed here.

5.1 Proceeding with Scenarios

It is perhaps opportune to move away from the terminology of 'planning' altogether and start working with what local residents in Bennde Mutale's future desires, dreams and aspirations are. This does not in any way mean that there is no local level scenario planning for uncertain future, much of the discussions in Bennde Mutale indicate that there is often an elaborate consideration of the future possibilities, risks and possible responses. A few examples include the investments in education even for poor families, the balance between drought resistant livestock such as goats and symbols of wealth animals such as cattle and even the involvement of women in money lending schemes (stokvels) are an indication of scenario planning, of people working towards a vision of a desired future.

The way forward for the scenario planning initiative is to work with the individuals that have already expressed such huge interest in the photo stories initiative. The starting point should be to facilitate local visions of a desired future, and not dwell so much on current constraints and historical experiences.

The process of working with those who have already contributed to the photo stories can be explored both on an individual basis and also on a group basis. Individuals and groups who have contributed stories can be engaged in one on one discussions to explore visions of their desired futures.

5.2 The continued role of theatre and photo stories

An important contribution of the theatre initiative is articulation of ideas. Theatre can still be useful in communicating visions of a desired future for wider discussion with the rest of the community. As a way forward to generate some visions of a desired future, facilitation should be continued with the groups and individuals who have already participated in the photo stories to encourage them to come up with visions of desired futures. The theatre process can then be used to package these visions into dance, performance and song which are then performed for the wider community to get their views and perspectives and continue the delineation of the future possibilities.

5.3 Managing social processes in Bennde Mutale

The marriage between the scenario planning process and the theatre initiative, while planned to be complimentary has seen both being implemented as separate initiatives. Going forward a more delicate management process needs to be put in place to avoid parallel processes being run. This is particularly so as there appears to be another NGO moving into the area to facilitate a community based natural resources management project. This new initiative has been met with some resistance from some of the youths and the manager's response is that 'if no one wants to be part of the process, leave them out' without actually engaging in what these youths' fears are. If anything, this kind of resistance should be viewed as an opportunity to discuss what future these youths want instead to seek to sideline them.

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