

# RURAL ECONOMY

**Local People and Forest Resources in Zimbabwe**

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Staff Paper 97-01

## STAFF PAPER



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## **Abstract**

The Mafungautsi Forest Area (MFA) is the site of land and resource use conflicts involving people living in adjacent communal areas. This study used qualitative case study information and questionnaire survey data to explore and describe how displaced people and other communities living adjacent to the MFA perceive and use forest resources.

The results of the study indicate that the displacement of people from MFA has caused land shortage problems for communities that accommodated them. The same communities overwhelmingly depend on forest resources for their livelihood. Land was ranked as the most important use of the forest, followed by grazing and then by timber. Results also indicate that a unit that is responsible for monitoring illegal activities by communities could not stop their depredations on the MFA. In terms of forest management, the results point to the need to develop joint management strategies that benefit both the FC and local communities.

## **Introduction**

As early as the 1920s, forest lands and resources in the region of contemporary Zimbabwe were considered state lands, to be managed by the Forestry Commission (FC) on behalf of the government. Following independence in 1980, many Zimbabwean families settled within state forest areas in order to cultivate the land and exploit the forest resources that they had been promised. The post-independence government considered all forest occupants to be illegal residents and, as of 1993, government policy dictated that all forest communities be relocated out of the forest areas. This policy has been defended on the grounds that further extended use of the forest would deplete its resources and cause environmental destruction. A second reason given for the relocation policy was that the government was unable to provide the necessary infrastructure to the forest communities that is already available in the communal lands. The relocation scheme has yet to be completely carried out due to lack of support from various state authorities, however, scattered efforts were made to move people out of the state forest areas and restrict their use. The result has been tenuous relations with the forest communities. Communities adjacent to and once displaced from one such forest area, the Mafungautsi Forest, served as the site of this study.

### *Mafungautsi Forest Area*

The Mafungautsi Forest Area (MFA) lies in the Gokwe District of the Midlands Province, northwestern Zimbabwe. In the early 1980s, 800 resident families were evicted from the forest. Many are now residing in communal lands adjacent to the MFA. The focus of the study was on understanding the forest dependence of these families, as well as other living adjacent to the MFA, and how this dependence has led to conflict between the state and these local forest users.

In order to better understand the nature of tenurial and use conflicts over state owned forest resources in Zimbabwe, the study explored the following five questions in relation to the Mafungautsi Forest Area:

1. What is the level of dependency on forest resources from MFA by displaced peoples for their livelihood strategies?

2. Why do displaced people continue to depend upon forest resources from state forest areas?
3. What is the basis of local people's contest of state forests?
4. What shapes displaced people's perceptions and use patterns of adjacent forest resources? and;
5. Can there be sustainable management and conservation of state forests without some level of participation by adjacent people or communities?

### *Definitions of Property Rights and Ownership*

There are three types of land tenure situations in contemporary Zimbabwe. These are state land, communal land and commercial land (Moyo et al, 199 1). Approximately 42% of lands are commercial, that is, privately owned. The remaining 58% of lands are state lands, including national parks, wildlife and forest reserves, and communal lands. Zimbabwe's private lands are owned by no more than 4,000 individuals, while over 70% of a population of 10.4 million people live on the communal lands.

Resource management schemes are dependent upon the allocation or restriction of rights, duties and privileges of people in their use of natural resources. To understand how conflicts can arise between resource users and resource managers, it is useful to define notions of property and property ownership, particularly as they apply to the Zimbabwean situation.

State property regimes, the focus of this study, are those in which the ownership of and control over property and resources lies with the state. Individuals and groups may benefit from state property, but only with the permission of the state, and it is the state that makes decisions regarding access to property and the nature and level of exploitation of the property (Bromley and Cernea, 1989).

Communal property regimes "are those in which resources are held by an identifiable community of interdependent users in which outsiders, in relation to that community, are excluded while use by members is regulated by cultural norms" (Matose, 1994- 26). Unlike state and private property, rights to communal property are not transferable, nor are they exclusive within the community.

Private property entails legal and socially sanctioned exclusive use of and control over property and resources by a private individual or group (Bromley and Cemea, 1989). The owner of such property can exclude others from use and make independent decisions regarding property use and management.

Certain state lands, such as forests, have characteristics of both private and state property regimes, often with historical roots as a communal property regime. As a result, the management of natural resources rarely falls exclusively into one of the three regime types (Murphree, 1993). In nationalizing and privatizing areas that were once communal forest lands, the government of Zimbabwe aimed to develop sustainable resource management strategies. However, as Bromley and Cernea (1989; 10) point out,

evidence is thus accumulating that the promotion of privatization -- or nationalization -- carries with it the risk of depriving large portions of the population of their livelihood without delivering on the expected promise of more effective resource management.

Within the MFA, resources are allotted through three mechanisms. The first mechanism is the issuing of permits by the FC, allowing individuals to harvest thatching and broom grass. The second means of resource distribution is through unplanned, informal agreements allowing local people to graze their livestock and collect dead/dry firewood from the forest area. A third way that local people gain access to forest resources is through unsanctioned, illegal “poaching” of timber, wildlife and plant materials. The land and resource shortages caused by the relocation activities of the Zimbabwean government contribute to the illegal poaching of forest resources. Controlling the poaching and developing a fair and equitable resource management scheme for MFA has proven difficult, as the residents of communal lands believe that they are entitled to the forest resources. Thus, they question the authority of the FC to manage the forest and implement rules about use of resources.

## **Research Methods**

### *Study Site*

Chomusonde VIDCO<sup>1</sup> in Ndhladhlabi Ward I served as the study site. It is located in the south of Gokwe District, Midlands province, Zimbabwe. The VIDCO is composed of seven villages and two communities. The previously occupied portion of the MFA is adjacent to the southwest of the study site. The study area had three distinct ethnic groups with three distinct languages. All three groups were able to speak a common language, Shona, which was also the first language of the researcher.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

In order to obtain a detailed understanding of the conflict between the state, represented by forest managers, and the local people, as the forest users, a case study approach was adopted. A combination of qualitative methods were used to conduct the case study, including in-depth and

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<sup>1</sup> VIDCO refers to the Village Development Committee. As a unit, the VIDCO comprises 5 to 7 of the ‘traditional’ villages. The VIDCO is a group of elected village residents that are frequently responsible for allocating communal land holdings and managing communal resources.

key informant interviews, observation and the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises with the Forest Protection Unit.<sup>2</sup> There were 47 persons residing within the VIDCO that had previously been displaced from the MFA. These 47 people were the major focus of the case study part of the study.

Key informant and in-depth interviews were used to obtain detailed information about community history and historical factors related to forest use and the present conflict, community experiences related to forest privatization, community perceptions of forest resources and forest managers, community willingness to participate in management initiatives, and how the forest managers viewed the communities. In-depth interviews with leaders such as *sabhukus*, the local chief, the Ward councillor, and VIDCO chairpersons provided information about the existence of institutions for control of resource use and access. PRA techniques were utilized to obtain information about forest product collection patterns and priorities. Seasonal calendars were used to outline resource collection activities, while priorities were established through ranking exercises included in the questionnaire instrument. Research assistants were also requested to observe and note people's uses of forests.

Following the case study period, a questionnaire survey was used. In some instances, the questionnaire was accompanied by face to face interviews with the respondent. In order to ensure consistency of the responses for purposes of coding the data, the questionnaire was of the fixed choice response format. Some questions utilized the Likert scale rating system, some questions gave a "yes" or "no" choice to respondents, while other questions provided a limited set of answers to choose from. This questionnaire instrument was used to gain information on the issues that emerged with those of the case study and to compare the responses about issues faced by displaced people, non-displaced people, and the wider community. The questionnaire was pre-tested and administered with the help of seven research assistants hired for the task.

The questionnaire sample frame included the 47 displaced people interviewed for the case study plus an additional 278 households within two communities. The sample consisted of the 47 displaced people and an additional 87 randomly selected households. Random selection was done through the use of household lists provided to the researcher by the seven *sabhukus*<sup>3</sup> in the VIDCO. From the 87 households randomly chosen off the lists, 131 household members older than 18 years participated in the survey. The six staff members of the Forest Protection Unit and

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<sup>2</sup> The PRA method referred to was a seasonal calendar. Members of the Fire Protection Unit were asked to draw, on the ground, calendars of seasonal forestry activities that community members were engaged in throughout the year.

<sup>3</sup> A *sabhuku* is a traditional village leader. The village is traditionally the lowest level of community organization. In contrast with the elected VIDCO representatives, the position of *sabhuku* is inherited.

the forestry extension staff working around the forest were also included as study participants. Table 1 summarizes select characteristics of the questionnaire respondents.

### *Data Analysis*

The qualitative data gathered as part of the case study was analysed according to convergence of participant responses and the emergence of themes from the data (Guba and Lincoln, 1983). Convergence/agreement of the information given by respondents was examined through a three step process. First, responses were divided according to issues and concerns. Secondly, these issues and concerns were prioritized according to the level of importance the study participants placed on them. Last, the categories were checked for completeness and credibility by matching them to the original concerns and issues, and rechecking the original sources of information that the categories were derived from. Once the convergence of information had been determined, the information could more easily be classified into themes.

The questionnaire data was coded and analysed using SPSS software. Of the 131 persons sampled, 127 useable questionnaires resulted. There were 87 variables present within the questionnaire items, but only those that corresponded to the themes from the qualitative analysis were used in the statistical analysis. Frequencies were calculated for all the relevant variables (see Table 1) and the Chi-square statistic was used at a 0.05 level of significance to determine the relationships between independent (ethnicity, distance from the forest, displacement, etc) and dependent variables.

### **Findings of the Study**

The findings of the qualitative analysis are presented as themes and issues, discussed in the order of importance that the respondents gave them. The results of the survey are presented to complement and support the case study findings.

One assumption leading this inquiry was that displaced people would be more affected by the exclusionary policies and practices of the FC than non-displaced peoples because the displaced peoples had a longer history of forest dependence as a direct means of livelihood. Therefore, the life histories of the displaced people are provided to give the context and facilitate understanding of the study findings. Following the historical information, land, grazing patterns, forest product collection, the Forest Protection Unit, and social issues are discussed in turn.

### *Life Histories of the Displaced Peoples*

Most (91.5%) of the 47 displaced persons interviewed were of the Shangwe ethnic group. According to Beach (1980), the Shangwe were the original settlers of the Mafungautsi Plateau of Gokwe Communal Lands. During the 1940s, most of the respondents and their families were living in or around Raji, a small scale commercial farming area to the south east of MFA. Since Raji was designated as commercial farm land by the government, the settlers were relocated into



the area now designated as the MFA. Those relocated joined other families that were already established in the forest.

Table 1. Selected characteristics of the respondents.

		frequency	percentage
age	< 19	3	2.4
	20 - 29	26	20.5
	30 - 39	36	28.3
	40 - 49	28	22.0
	50 -59	19	15.0
	> 60	14	11.0
settlement status	non-displaced	81	63.8
	displaced	46	36.2
distance	close to the forest (< 1-2 km)	77	60.6
	across river (2-3 km)	35	27.6
	close to main road (> 3 km)	15	11.8
land subsistence	yes: we have enough	73	57.5
	no: we do not have enough	54	42.5
ethnicity	Shangwe	68	53.5
	Ndebele	16	12.6
	Shona	43	33.9
ranking of land	rank 1	56	44.1
	rank 2	33	26.0
	rank 3	13	10.2
	rank 4	10	7.9
	rank 6	2	1.6
	rank 0	7	5.5
ranking of grazing	rank 1	33	26.0
	rank 2	51	40.2
	rank 3	13	10.2
	rank 4	15	11.8
	rank 5	3	2.4
	rank 0	5	3.9
	rank 1	20	15.7
ranking of timber	rank 2	27	21.3
	rank 3	42	33.1
	rank 4	12	9.4
	rank 5	10	7.9

In 1954, management of the MFA was taken over by the FC<sup>4</sup>, however, the effects of this change were not felt by the residents until 1963. During that year, forest inhabitants were moved by the FC to an area called Zanda, in the western half of the WA. It is not currently established if there were previous occupants of Zanda living there during this period. The move forced the forest residents to abandon both their homes and their burial grounds, a constant source of problems for resettlement in Zimbabwe.

The forest residents were an inclusive society with established social mechanisms for the designation of farming and settlement land, resolution of conflicts and disputes, and the performance of religious rituals and ceremonies. Village elders held an important position in leading religious events, including the ceremonies to ensure plentiful harvests and the continued healthy flow of water in the Rutope river. The villages were headed by *sabhukus*, and all villages fell under the authority of the Chief, who resided outside of the forest area.

The forest dwellers continued to live a fairly autonomous life and had a cordial relationship with the FC until the 1970s, when the FC began issuing rules and regulations. One such regulation prohibited livestock grazing, large game hunting, and the cutting of designated tree species. Timber harvesting was still sanctioned, and permits for cutting thatch and broom grass began to be issued. In order to secure a cutting permit, the applicant had to indicate the end use of the products to be harvested and the amount of time required to harvest the product. Hunting of small animals and all other forest harvesting activities remained uncontrolled.

During the peak of the liberation war in the late 1970s, the MFA employees (most of whom were from the families displaced from the MFA) stopped their forest service, and a huge influx of settlers into the forest followed after independence, in 1980. These people moved into the forest on the assumption that the war was being fought to regain access and control over their lands. Thus they felt entitled to re-establish themselves on lands that had been taken over by the colonial government. Independence also saw the return of the MFA employees to their service, which resulted in illegal settlers being evicted from the forest in 1981. Most returned to Zanda. Despite the evictions, a cordial relationship between the local people and the FC continued, and the permit system of forest use was resumed.

This amicable relationship between the villagers and the FC broke down in 1983, in conjunction with the rise of dissident activities. Due, in part, to the post-independence government's lack of response to land equity issues, and also as a result of agitation by political dissidents, the villagers began to view the FC as "owners" of the forest and the FC's camp and other equipment were set on fire in 1985. This action, along with rumours that the forest inhabitants were sheltering the dissidents, provoked the government to issue a three month eviction notice to all the forest residents at Zanda in 1986. Since the notice was issued in the spring harvesting period, the residents thought that the government would allow them to harvest

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<sup>4</sup> According to local people, the perception is that the MFA was "bought" by the FC.

their crops before leaving the forest area, but government soldiers returned to the site to carry out the eviction before the villagers finished their harvest. One elderly respondent, a *sabhuku* at Zanda during the incident, recalls the forced eviction:

I was lucky to have a son who was employed at the time, because I told him a week before the soldiers came back. All the same by the time he came home the soldiers were already setting alight other people's homes. Before we could load all our belongings onto the truck my son had hired, the soldiers had already set alight the temporary grain storage. I lost five scotch-carts of maize. The twenty pigeons were all burnt in their pen before we could free them. Our chickens were burnt in the same manner. The whole village had terrible smoke and smells of burnt clothes and animals. We were hurrying to get as many of our belongings into the nearby forest as we could before they caught fire. We managed to load the belongings we had salvaged on to the truck before setting off to where we are now. I had talked to the headman the week before. When we got here (outside the forest in Chomusonde where they live now) we had to build as quickly as we could in order to have some shelter. Most of our kin decided to move as far away from the forest as Madzivazvido and Simchembo (Matose, 1994;66-67).

During the period that this research was conducted, many of these people lived on the fringes of their former forest homeland. They have not been invited back to Zanda and are afraid to return on their own initiative. This chain of events has contributed to the rise of a host of problems between the displaced peoples and the surrounding host communities. These problems are addressed within the themes discussed below.

### *Land*

Land is the biggest problem for the forest residents. The detailed discussion of land issues are subdivided into land availability, land disputes, land management strategies, and perceptions of forest use and resources.

#### *Land Availability*

Of the 47 displaced people interviewed during the course of this study, most had an inadequate amount of farming land. Only three people interviewed felt they had access to enough land to meet their needs. In the early 1980s, newcomers to Chomusonde VIDCO were allotted ten acres of land per family. By the mid 1980s, the land base of Chomusonde VIDCO was heavily occupied, and newcomers were only allotted four acres per family. Given the inherent problems of farming sandy Kalahari soils, four acres is not enough land to feed one family. Some people rely on small parcels of land they borrowed from their relatives, others cultivate their homefield<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Homefield (also known as a home garden) is the land that is in proximity to the homestead and usually does not exceed one acre in size.

and some old, infertile fields that were disused by the original owners. A few people were loaned other plots of land in the neighboring VIDCO, but these parcels were located too far away to allow for routine cultivation. Some plots were as far as seven kilometres from the village. Thus, although these tracts were arable, they did not use those lands. Although the displaced people have access to some plots of borrowed land, they do not have secure tenure over such land.

### *Land Disputes*

When the displaced people arrived in Chomusonde VIDCO, their hosts believed that they would only be accommodating the evictees until the war ended, thus they could afford to lend small tracts of arable land to the new families to enable them to produce enough for subsistence. When the war ended and the relatives requested the return of their lands, many disputes ensued. The majority of the disputes taken before the chief and *masabhuku* were settled in favour of the displaced people, as they were in a position of greater insecurity and needed to survive (Matose, 1994). This situation produced a community climate in which people will no longer lend tracts of land to others, even if they could afford to. Resentment has developed among some of the older community residents towards the immigrant forest residents, and some village leaders that do have land to spare have been known to keep it for the use of their future generations, rather than allot it to the immigrant families.

The issues discovered during the case study interviews are supported by the findings of the questionnaire survey. Table 1 depicts the results of the statistical analysis of land issues. Some 42.5% of the respondents reported not having enough land for subsistence purposes. Of this 42.5%, 21% worked borrowed land, 30% survived on only a few acres, close to 19% worked only their homefield, and 27.7% cultivated old, infertile lands. As a result of inadequate land holdings, approximately 28% of the entire sample did not produce enough food to feed their families.

### *Land Management Strategies*

Kalahari sand soil types require specialized land management strategies which do not include the addition of cattle manure and fertilizers. The local people have resisted the adoption of fertilizers because the annual rainfall leaches the nutrients, thus making it necessary to re-fertilize every year. This practice is too expensive for most of the farmers in Chomusonde and, according to the District extension officer, when the farmers were offered free fertilizers by the government, many of them sold it to farmers with fields in clay soil areas. Therefore, land management strategies must take this fact into consideration.

Most local people work their lands as one large field, cultivated on a rotational fallow system. The fallow system is used to manage weeds and soil fertility, however, it is not uncommon for the fallow portion of one's field to be returned into cultivation after only two or three seasons. This is especially true for farmers with small land holdings.

A second land management strategy used by local farmers is the leaving of many trees within the arable lands. Crops are grown in an intercropping system in these fields. The most common species employed in this strategy were *Brachystegias*. These trees were retained for their production of leaf litter and to protect the soil from erosion.

### *Perceptions of Use of Forest Lands and Products*

A ranking exercise was done with questionnaire respondents involving ranking eleven cards which depicted forest products and uses in order of importance. The eleven forest use choices were land, grazing, timber, thatch, game meat, brooms, mushrooms, *macimbi* (tree caterpillars), honey, fruits, and firewood. Nearly 75% of respondents ranked land as the first or second most important forest resource. Some of all respondents stated that they would like to settle in the forest, while only 26.8% said they would not. In contrast, 63% of all respondents claimed that they would like to farm in the forest.

A majority, 69.3%, of all respondents stated that they supported the idea that the FC should give parts of forest land back to its neighbours. Cross-tabulations run on this data indicate that respondents of Shangwe ethnicity and the displaced peoples were more supportive of the idea than other ethnic groupings (the differences were statistically significant at a 95% confidence level). Of the Shangwe respondents, 86.7% supported the idea, compared to 55% of the Shona respondents. Overall, 62.2% of respondents did not support the idea of the FC relinquishing the entire forest to the surrounding communities.

### *Livestock and Grazing Issues*

Studies by Matzke (1993) and FES (1993) explore issues of livestock in detail. Therefore, the topic was given less attention than other issues during the course of the study. However, a number of issues emerged from the analysis that are presented below.

Prior to 1986, most forest dwellers freely grazed their cattle, penning them only in the evening. Since the eviction of tenants, cattle must be herded to prevent having them stolen. Villagers living closest to the forest tend to graze their cattle in the forest, while those living furthest away from the forest usually did not graze their cattle in the forest area. Those persons living close to the main road did not graze their cattle in the forest because there was high quality grass available at a closer distance. These herders often made use of the spaces between peoples' homesteads and their fields as grazing land. The distance between the river and the forest meant that herders would have to take their cattle to graze, return in the afternoon to water them, and take them back to the forest to graze again before returning home in the evening. This was too much of a labour requirement and created too high a risk of the cattle being stolen while in transit or while grazing in the forest.

Chi-square tests of the survey data support these distinct grazing patterns. Approximately 77.5% of respondents living less than 2 kilometres from the forest admit to grazing their cattle in

the forest, while only 22.5% of respondents living 2-3 kilometres from the forest do the same. No one living further than 3 kilometres from the forest took their cattle to graze in the MFA.

## *Forest Products Collection*

### *Timber Products*

Timber requirements were the second most important (behind land) source of conflict between displaced peoples and the FC. Like grazing, those living further away from the forest are less dependent upon the forest for timber supplies than those living closer to the MFA.

Some 74.4% of displaced respondents relied on timber resources from the forest, as compared to 58.8% of all other respondents. Of those respondents living closest to the forest, 81.8% used timber resources from the MFA. Some 51.6% of people living between two and five kilometres of the MFA used the forest as a source of timber, while none of the respondents living five or more kilometres from the MFA used that forest as a timber source.

Timber cutting in the MFA was most prevalent between mid-March and May, when farmers built granaries to store the incoming harvest. Since it is an illegal activity, the farmers (usually men) would cut the timber early in the morning and haul it out on scotch-carts before the cattle grazers came for the day. Farmers relied on each other to stand watch for members of the Forest Protection Unit while the cutting was done. The FC's prohibition policies seemed to have a negative effect on the amount of timber cut, as is reflected in this statement of one displaced farmer:

Given the fact that the Forestry Commission no longer issues permits to allow . us to cut poles from the forest, we now cut some poles that we would not normally use. For example, you now see people renewing their *ngarani* (maize drying/storage structure) every year when the poles can last for up to five years (Matose, 1994:8 1).

Some 45.6% of forest resource users admitted to cutting timber during the wet season. Only 26.3% of the resource users claimed to cut timber year round.

### *Grasses*

Since the 1986 eviction, displaced peoples have to obtain a grass cutting permit from the FC (a task that requires a journey of at least six kilometres, one way) and they must pay for each bundle of grass they cut. As a result, people are cutting inferior quality grass from the Mbumbusi River. This poorer quality thatching leaks and must be replaced every year, thus requiring more grass harvesting. A similar situation exists for the cutting of broom grass. Rather than obtain the necessary permits, many women will wait and cut broom grass when they are least likely to be caught.

### *Other Products*



Under the Forest Act, it is strictly forbidden to collect anything from a gazetted forest area without the consent of a forestry official. The sanctioned collection of other forest products, such as mushrooms, fruit, honey, wildlife and *macimbi* (edible tree caterpillars) has created tension and conflict between the villagers and the FC. The villagers need these products for dietary requirements, while the FC maintains that people will fell trees to obtain these products. Also, collection of caterpillars and honey could involve the digging of trenches that the FC claimed could eventually turn into gulleys. The use of smoke to clear away bees was also cited as a substantial forest fire risk.

Hunting was one illegal activity that brought huge fines to the hunters. The FC was enthusiastic about prosecuting hunters, and as a result, information about hunting practices was not easily accessed. Some 64.2% of study respondents indicated that they collected other resources that they used from the MFA.

### *Forest Protection Unit*

The Forest Protection Unit (FPU) is an organization under the Indigenous Resources Division of the FC. Commonly referred to as the “tree police” by local villagers, the FPU is responsible for all forest protection activities. At the time of the research, the FPU consisted of six members. The FPU was first introduced to the MFA in 1989-1990. At that time, the FPU held community meetings and informed the local villagers about their policing activities and all of the products that were illegal to collect from the forest. The FPU face enormous difficulties carrying out their policing duties, as the following passage demonstrates the ingenuity of the villagers in avoiding detection of their illegal activities:

... a group of women who were pretending to be weeping when they came across them in the forest. When they asked them why they were weeping, they claimed to be going to a funeral. However, after walking a short distance from them, they were surprised to hear the same women laughing. Eventually, they found out that the women had been so scared of the FPU that they feigned going to a funeral to escape being prosecuted for collecting the clay soil they were hiding in bushes nearby. Because of the clever tactics they have witnessed, the FPU now employs a policy of stopping and searching nearly everyone they meet in the forest (Matose, 1994- 88).

The FPU was an ineffective body for a number of reasons. In addition to being understaffed, the FPU have no vehicle and must walk long distances to traverse the 82,000 hectares that make up the MFA. As a result, the FPU typically camp for periods of about three weeks at a time in areas of the forest they are policing. Inhospitable working conditions and lack of supplies often end these policing expeditions prematurely. Locally paid informants provide the FPU with much of the information they need to catch ‘poachers’. The apprehension and prosecution of offenders is also hampered by the lack of communication equipment.

Generally, FPU members would like to have certain restrictions, such as mushroom gathering, lifted so that they may be able to more effectively pursue serious offenders such as timber harvesters and large game poachers. Of all the respondents surveyed, 81.8% admitted to illegal forest gathering, while only 16.5% reported ever encountering the “tree police” while they were in the forest.

### *Social Issues*

There are a number of social consequences to displacement and forced relocation of peoples. These issues range from separation from kin networks, discontinuance of spiritual activities, and feelings of fear and insecurity towards the FC.

#### *Social Integration of Displaced Peoples*

Although the displaced forest peoples were of the same ethnicity as the host community members, and many were related to the *sabhukus*, the newcomers were largely regarded by the host community as “outsiders” and “misfits”. As a result, the newcomers tended to keep within their own social circles and continued with the way of life they had before the eviction. An example of this way of life was the forest dwellers’ practice of throwing “tea parties”. The tea parties involve beer and dancing of mixed company that the host community regards as morally disdainful and degenerating. Having less land to cultivate than the established community members, and thus more time to brew beer and throw parties is a related distinction between the newcomers and the host community members.

A second example of social non-integration is the newcomers’ children’s poorer participation rates in school. Particularly high amongst the displaced population is the dropout rate of teenage students. This trend is a product of lower income levels amongst displaced families, related to the lack of land and lower agricultural yields of the migrants and fewer remittances sent from people employed outside the forest area. Another reason for lower school participation rates is that schools were built earlier in the communal lands than they were in the forest areas. Thus, the forest residents had their own self-sufficient way of life revolving around the forest resources and therefore had little perceived need to send their children to school.

#### *Discontinuance of Spiritual Activities*

Forest dwellers developed their own environmental religious practices while living in the forest. These practices involved holding rituals and ceremonies at particular places in the forest at specific times of the year to ensure the continued health and plentiful resources of the forest.

Nearly every displaced person that was spoken to argued that the Rutope river no longer flows because their elders no longer perform any ceremonies at designated pools to keep water flowing. They were also amazed that there were so many big pools along the river from which big fish could be caught that had virtually dried

up after 1986. All these practices are no longer performed primarily because they are now estranged from the forest in which the sacred sites are located. Discussions of religious practices drew very sad faces from displaced people as they felt they had now lost touch with their ancestral spirits which meant that they were now incomplete beings (Matose, 1994;95).

Another reason advanced as to why religious ceremonies were no longer performed was that elder leaders had been relocated in places too far from the forest. It is difficult for the forest dwellers to retain close ties with kin that are scattered all over Gokwe District.

### *Fear and Insecurity Towards Outsiders*

Many of the displaced people and the community members expressed fear and mistrust of the FC. Although it was often mentioned by interview respondents, only 13.4% of questionnaire respondents reported feeling insecure and fearful towards the FC. The displaced and Shangwe people reported a higher incidence of fear and insecurity than other respondents. These results are summarized in Table 2. Specifically, the villagers felt insecure about their land tenure and feared another relocation.

Table 2. Percentage of respondents reporting feelings of fear and insecurity towards the FC.

<b>ethnicity</b>	<b>percentage of respondents reporting fear and insecurity</b>
Shangwe	19
Shona	7
Ndeble	63
displaced people	23
non-displaced people	figure not available
total respondents	13

### *Institutional Issues*

When the forest dwellers were evicted from the Zanda area, leaders in Chomusonde hoped that they would eventually be allowed to return. Since the immigrants have not returned and freed up the land they are currently cultivating, the issue of land pressure is often at the top of the priority list when the village leaders meet with FC officials. As the FC is concerned with managing the forest, it is unwilling to permit land pressure issues to enter into the discussions. Therefore, the village leaders have become disillusioned with the FC and suspicious of the sincerity of and motives behind the FC's attempts to instigate good relations with the villagers.

## Summary of the Results

The results of the study support the following statements:

- The displacement of people from the Zanda area of the WA caused land shortages and social upheaval within the host communities living adjacent to the forest.
- The land shortage problems, in turn, prompted the villages to pressure the FC for land concessions.
- The forest use rules and regulations enforced by the FC have created tensions between the villagers and the FC, and motivate some villagers to unnecessarily poach resources and deliberately cause 'damage' to the forest.
- The majority of people living closest to the MFA make the most use of the forest for grazing, timber, and collecting other products.
- Despite the presence of the FPU in the MFA, local people continue to depend upon forest resources and take them illegally from the forest.
- In spite of the tensions and mistrust of the FC held by many villagers, most respondents surveyed indicated a willingness to try to work together with the FC to manage the MFA.

## Discussion and Conclusions: Implications of the Results for Forest Management Strategies

In this section, the study results are discussed in relation to the historical background of forest lands and forest use. Then, the discussion turns to consider the study findings in relation to the general land reform issues in Zimbabwe.

### *Historical Land Claims and the Tenurial Conflict*

While the FC was not responsible for the eviction of the Zanda forest dwellers, the local people believe that the FC is responsible to take some action to rectify the current situation. Specifically, they believe that the FC should open up some of the FMA to farming and settlement, and that displaced people should be allowed to live in the MFA.

There are several problems associated with these opinions. First would be the issue of who to allow to resettle in the forest. Most of the displaced forest dwellers were scattered through out Gokwe District. Thus, re-settling them back into the forest would not alleviate **all** the problems felt by the neighbouring communities. Land demands would continue from those living outside the forest boundaries, and the ecosystem of the MFA could not withstand the damage and alterations that settlement would inevitably bring.

## *Grazing Issues*

Grazing within the MFA is an issue that remains to be resolved between the villagers and the FC. Controlled grazing schemes must be carefully designed so as to not motivate current nongrazers (those that live far from the forest) to start grazing in the forest in order to be a part of the initiative. Any grazing schemes developed to control grazing the MFA must also address the lack of water in the forest and the insecurity felt by the herders towards cattle rustlers. However, since grazing helps minimize the risks of fire outbreak, and those with livestock are the most adversely affected by fires due to the encroachment of noxious weeds following fires, any carefully designed grazing scheme should prove mutually beneficial to the FC and the villagers.

## *Timber and non-Timber Forest Products*

Timber harvesting is strictly prohibited by the FC and will likely remain so. This study indicated that no amount of policing or laws will deter timber users from harvesting in the forest. Therefore, timber will likely remain a source of conflict. Tensions over non-timber products, however can be alleviated. Prior to 1985, forest residents had access to non-timber forest products they need for day to day subsistence. While access to such items is now prohibited, people continue to harvest it from the forests. There is more to gain by legalizing certain gathering activities than keeping them unsanctioned and tying up the limited policing resources of the FPU. Most of these activities can be carried out in ways that are not detrimental to the forest ecosystem and do not compete with any FC activities. Hunting is not widespread and could continue to be regulated without adversely affecting local populations.

## *The Role of Local Institutions in Joint Resource Management*

In contrast with the local government structures, the traditional structures represented by *the sabhukus*, the headmen and the chief appear to be effective controllers of resource use in local areas. The potential for local structures to assume the duties of the FPU is high, particularly if combined with the high level of willingness found amongst community members to work with the FC in managing the forest and its resources. The FPU members themselves had admitted that their tasks were much broader than they could handle, and the problems have grown to such an extent that it was almost pointless to continue operating the FPU. In any case, the concept of a government formed policing unit is in contradiction with notions of joint management and resource sharing. The FPU is in dire need of a redefinition of both function and process.

## **Reiteration of the Key Issues**

The most important factors in forest resource use and perceptions are not displacement status and ethnicity, as was thought to be the case at the outset of this study. Rather, physical proximity of residence to the forest, historical forest resource dependency, and incidents of land shortages act together to influence peoples' use of the forest and their perceptions towards forest resources. Those people displaced from the forest continued to depend upon forest resources for

their livelihoods and way of life. The shortage of arable land resulting from their relocation has had social and economic consequences not only for their own families, but the families of the host communities. The use of forest resources and the demands made upon the FC are not predominantly linked to any specific ethnic group, however the Shangwe people appear to be marginally more insecure towards the FC. This situation may affect future negotiations between the Shangwe people and the Forest Commission.

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