

AN ANALYSIS OF THE BINGA FISHER FOLK'S LIVELIHOODS (KANI WARD)



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

1.1 Introduction.

Binga district is endowed with natural resources of the Zambezi River and wildlife such as elephants mainly which makes it very distinct. It is the land of the Tonga people who have survived through these natural resources. Its flora and fauna has attracted people from far and wide to witness this magnificent God given resource. The entire Zimbabwe populace has immensely benefited from these natural resources which form the epitome of Binga district.

It is situated some 445 km from the second largest capital city of Zimbabwe. Its outlying areas/wards further stretch a maximum of 250km that is from Tyuunga ward to Kabuba ward in Lusulu. From the 2012 national census preliminary report (CSO report 2012), Binga district has 138 074 inhabitants. Binga forms the border of Zimbabwe and Zambia on the Northern part of the country. The council offices are located at the Binga centre which is within the Zambezi valley. In terms of human development, Binga is ranked the third least developed of all districts in Zimbabwe. The majority of the people of the area are Tonga and were settled further up the sides of the Zambezi valley when productive flood plains upon which they traditionally farmed were flooded in 1957. The district suffers from two major constraints to development. First and foremost, most of the land falls under region 4 and 5 with low rain fall meaning that it is more suited to extensive and livestock rearing and agricultural production is typically quite low. While this provides potential for tourism, wild animals are responsible for crop damage in neighbouring communal areas. Secondly, the area is physically remote and far from major markets hence the exchange of livestock for grain has been a coping strategy used by an increasing number of households in Binga district. Small livestock such as chickens and goats are used in exchange of grain or mealie-meal.

At Binga centre, there is noticeable infrastructural development in the form of a fuel station, government garage, retail shops, clothing shops and other service centres. It boasts of key institutions such as crocodile farming, AREX, National Parks and Wildlife and various government ministries. Three major cellular networks namely ECONET, NET ONE and TELECEL are operational in the district. This makes communication relatively easy in the border town and other surrounding wards.

The business people from other towns are a common sight in this remote area. For many years back, people from other areas never believed the existence of normal human beings in this part of the country until they set their foot. Today it forms a greater percentage of their business activities.

Historically the livelihoods of the Zambezi valley revolved around a combination of food production (maize, sorghum and millet). There was also small scale fishing, crafting and hunting, all of which have reduced in terms of contribution to household cash income, hence increasing both income and non income poverty. Also women participate in non farm income generating activities as an alternative source of income.

Zambezi Valley in general, remain one of the least developed areas in the country, highly vulnerable and chronically food insecure due to external shocks such as drought and crop failure

Characteristics of the three livelihoods zones in Binga district.

Characteristics	Livelihood Zones		
	Upper Dobola High Cotton Potential Cotton Production	Low Potential Cotton Producing Siabuwa	Poor resource Kariba Valley,
Soils	Heavy soils	Sandy loams and clayey	Kalahari sands
Rainfall pattern	NR IV. Up to 800 mm of rainfall	NR IV> Erratic; 400- 600 mm per annum. Characterized by mid season droughts and frequent droughts	Falls within NR V. Erratic; < 400 mm per annum; characterized by mid seasons drought. Frequent droughts
Economic activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash crop production (cotton, groundnuts, sunflowers & maize) • Sale of livestock/ stressful disposal of livestock during peak hunger seasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cotton production • Cereal production (maize, sorghum & millet) • Livestock sales & barter trade during hunger period • Market gardening • Beer brewing • Vending at flea markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock sales/ stressful barter trade in peak hunger season • Fisheries • Crop production (small grains, groundnuts and sunflowers) • Market gardening • Crafts • Vending (vegetables, wild fruits, crafts and firewood)

Source: SAVE the Children Value chain assessment report (2010)

1.1 General economic status of Binga district.

This section presents the findings of the economic mapping exercise. To start with the research looked at different sectors in the district and then went on to look at different sub sectors. The district has three broad sectors namely agriculture, tourism and trading.

Agricultural sector.

Agriculture as a sector has played an important role in the economy of the district. Most families have been raised by different sub sectors within agriculture. The district, because of its unique nature is spread in regions 3 to 5.

Fishing:

Fishing is a common economic activity in Binga district especially within the Zambezi valley. Most of the activities in this sub sector are found in Kaani, Simatelele, Sianzyundu and Lunga wards which lie along the Zambezi valley. This sub sector is largely run by cooperatives and to lesser extent individuals. Most of these cooperatives are registered with the local authority and also with the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises. Most of these cooperatives are into Kapenta fishing and some are in gill netting. According to the Cooperative Union, it indicates that permits are given as per the rig and not as individuals.

Some cooperatives have been registered but have not been able to operate due to lack of funds to purchase engine powered fishing rigs. The boats are very expensive and require high capital investments. These are some of the factors which limited the involvement of the local communities at the inception of the commercial kapenta project other than discrimination. The number of cooperatives which have been registered, offered permits but are unable to operate supports this.

Livestock sector:

The common livestock species kept by the farmers in all the three livelihood zones are cattle, goats, chickens, guinea fowls, donkeys and sheep. Key informants from the Department of Veterinary Services revealed that Binga district has the highest populations of cattle and goats in Matabeleland North province (Sarupinda 2010). However, they did not have the statistics at hand to prove the assertions. Cattle production is generally dominated by men, women control poultry while goats are managed and controlled jointly. In general women and men jointly owned and managed livestock in 63 % of households, by men only in 19 % of households while women had control in 18 % of surveyed households.

Livestock ownership patterns in the livelihood zones

Characteristic	Livestock ownership in different livelihood zones		
	High Cotton Potential- Upper Dobola	Low Cotton Potential- Siabuwa	Low Resource Kariba Valley Kariangwe.
% of HH owning cattle	50	40	50
% of HH owning goats	40	60	80
% of HH owning poultry	99	99	99
Numbers of cattle owned by different wealth classes	Very poor: 0-3 Poor: 4-7 Middle: 7-15 Better off: >15	Very poor: 0-3 Poor: 4-10 Middle: 10-20 Better off: > 20	Very poor: 0-3 Poor: 3-5 Middle: 5-15 Better off: 15- >40
Number of goats owned by different livestock classes	Very poor: 0-4 Poor: 5-9 Middle: 10-15 Better off: >15	Very poor: 0-4 Poor: 5-9 Middle: 10-15 Better off: >15	Very poor: 0-5 Poor: 6-10 Middle: 10-15 Better off: >15
Number of chickens owned by different livestock classes	Very poor: 0-7 Poor: 7-15 Middle: 15-25 Better off: >25	Very poor: 3-8 Poor: 8-15 Middle: 15- 20 Better off: >20	Very poor: 3-10 Poor: 10-15 Middle: 15-20 Better off: > 20

The livestock sector previously contributed about 25% of the total value of the agricultural output in 1999, of which the communal areas contributed more than 50%. In Binga district, apparently there are more goats than cattle because of high tsetse infestation which affect cattle. The goat population continues to grow mainly because it is not affected by tsetse and also because it is not capital intensive to invest in and this makes many households to afford to own goats. According to ICRISAT (2007), an average household in Binga district has a minimum of 16 goats. Goats play an important role in the livelihoods of small scale farmers in the district. They contribute to food security and can reduce variability and availability directly through milk and meat production and indirectly through cash earned from sale of their products. In semi arid areas, goats have comparative advantages over cattle since they are more tolerant to drought, they utilise wider diversity of plants and their higher reproductive rate allows population to recover quickly (ICRISAT 2007).

Tourism

The tourism industry plays an important role in any economy by providing the much needed income. As in Binga, not much income is earned by the locals, yet it is one of the economic drivers. The bulk of the economy's inflows in the district come from tourism. Tourism is a broad term that covers the hotel industry, lodges, hunting and photographic safari.

2.0 METHODOLOGY:

2.1 Introduction

Qualitative research method, namely focus group discussions were used to provide an in-depth understanding of the beneficiaries' views on fishing cooperative approach to development. The focus group discussions also enabled the researcher to gain more insight into how different individuals amongst the beneficiaries think about fishing cooperatives. Individuals from the partners, represented by field level staff were interviewed.

2.2 Study Population and Sample

The target population consisted of 10 fishing cooperatives (with an average of 12 members per cooperative), 1 local leader, and 7 Binga district stakeholders from government departments, 2 Non-Governmental organisation representatives (Basilwizi and Zubo Trust). The total number of respondents was 130.

Study Sample

Sample Category	Sample Size
Fishing cooperative members (10 Groups with 12 members each)	120 fishermen
Key Informants - Local Leader	1 Councillor
NGO – Officers from Implementing Organisations	2
Key Informants – government departments (DA, RDC, Parks, Min of SMECD, Min of Youths, Zimra and Lake Navigation)	7

3.0. Statement of the problem.

According to the Fisheries Management Science Programme (2008), Fisheries, especially in developing countries, contribute to livelihoods in a range of ways: directly as food, as a source of income and through other social benefits, such as reduced vulnerability to poverty. Whilst fishers are often poor, the cash income generated by the sale of fish can give them access to basic goods and services such as education, health, food and other assets. Fisheries can reduce economic and food vulnerability. Fishing has been practiced for a long time in Binga district, but its success especially among the locals has not been very convincing except just for a few but they are also struggling. This research therefore seeks to find out why the fishers in Binga district are failing to realise some of the benefits that are being enjoyed by other fishers elsewhere in the world.

4.0. LITERATURE REVIEW.

4.1 Introduction

The chapter outlines and discusses work by other scholars in respect of the investigation on the contribution of fisheries to food security, employment and as a form of nutrients.

4.2 Literature Review

4.2.1 Fisheries as a weapon against hunger and poverty.

In his book, *“Food Security: Definition and Measurement”* Per Pinstrup-Anderson (2009) notes that although there has been an increase in food availability over the past decades, food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preference for an active and healthy life. In this case, many people in along the Zambezi valley fall off as not all of them have “physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food...” Bene *et al*, (2007), notes that while there is little precise information on the real contribution of small scale fisheries to livelihoods and economies in developing countries, and although many small scale fishing communities are poor and vulnerable, it is now widely acknowledged that small scale fisheries can generate significant profits that prove resilience to shocks and crisis, and make meaningful contribution to poverty alleviation on food security in particular. In The few households that engage in fisheries have managed to stand the pressure of food insecurity. Bene *et al*, (2007) further notes that wealth generated through small scale fishing or related activities such as fish trade may also be a powerful factor in reducing poverty at local level. Moreover, it is stated that for people who cannot afford to buy food especially not meat, fish obtained through the households' own effort is essential and thus can make a difference between food security and starvation.

In his book *“The People of the Great River,”* Michael Tremmel (1994) discusses the socio-economic impact of the forced removal of the Tonga People but however fails to state the contributions of fisheries to the food security of the people of the Great River. Through focus groups, Tremmel (1994) further noted that with the exception of some men who went for work in the mines or in towns, the Tonga were basically isolated from the rest of the people of Southern Rhodesia and lived a very traditional way of life. Being isolated had advantages such as being free to hunt without control by colonialist policies. The Tonga people took advantage of their fertile gardens and fields along the banks of the Zambezi, and also enjoyed a variety of ways to catch fish for relish. They had their own leaders and life was governed primarily through the Chief's court and his police, rather than by colonial authorities. The implication

therefore is that fishing has been a major source of food for humanity. Thus the Tonga people were comfortable with fishing in the Zambezi River. Consequently, they got their food and relish from fisheries and agriculture. Thus the study becomes unique from Tremmel (1994)'s in the sense that it assesses the input of fisheries to the food security in Simatelele ward whereas the former discusses the socio-economic impact of the forced removal of the Tonga People.

Fisheries despite contributing to the food security in the form of protein, it is also a source of income. When people have a source of income they have a voice in the community. They become empowered and are able to accumulate funds that can be channelled to purchase assets thereby reducing the poverty levels. DFID's Policy Brief 3 acknowledges that 38 million people worldwide are employed in fisheries of which 95% of these are in developing countries. This then contributes to the reduction of the vulnerability of the poor households.

4.2.2 The poor soils of Zambezi valley as 'unfriendly' for farming purposes

The Save the Children Fund (UK) (2008) *Food Assessment Survey*, notes that the people of Zambezi valley are frequently struck by periodic droughts and famines and even in a normal year of good harvest, 85 percent of the households cannot produce crops enough for the whole year. Thus have resorted to fishing which they feel has contributed to their food security. Jos Martens (2010) notes that before the Kariba dam was built in the 1950's the Tonga people lived a varied lifestyle of agriculture, fishing and hunting on the edges of the Zambezi River. As the waters rose, the Tonga people were compelled to relocate up the escarpment, with poor soil, little rainfall and soaring temperatures. They were compelled to eke out a below-subsistence life amidst marauding elephants and other wildlife they were, and still are, forbidden to hunt (Jos Martens 2010). As a result, they are forced to resort to fishing because their lands are not good enough for farming purposes. Barter, gifts, purchases and labour exchange are some activities that the communities venture into as a means to get food to complement to their food sources (CAFOD LIME report May 2011).

In her book, "*Kariba Studies: Social Consequences of Resettlement*," Colson (1971) notes that the eviction of the Tonga people from the Zambezi Valley following the construction of the Kariba Dam in the 1950s by the then Rhodesian government impacted negatively on the socio-economic, cultural and political fabrics of the Tonga communities in general. Through interviews, Colson (1971) noted that the Tonga people's agricultural aspect was largely affected as their land for cultivation had been reduced. In the past they would on a larger scale supplement their stocks through lack shore farming known as *incelela* in Tonga. Her conclusion was that due to erratic rains and problem animals destroying their crops the households resort to fishing.

4.2.4 Fisheries as a solid provider of nutrients.

Bene *et al*, (2007), fishing has been a major source of food for humanity and a provider of employment and economic benefits since ancient times. For those who cannot afford to buy food particularly meat, fish obtained through the household's own efforts is essential, thus can supplement meat. Thus nutrients which are said to be found in meat can still be found in fish. According to the LIME report by CAFOD 2011, people in Simatelele rarely slaughter livestock thus they rely on fish for proteins. In addition to this fish can be barter traded for cereals to cater for the carbohydrates. In the same interest, in the NAGA *Journal of 2005*, entitled "*World Fish*" postulates that about 60 percent of deaths in the under five age group are attributed to malnutrition, with mineral, vitamin and protein deficiencies being standing leading causes. However, it is said that in many parts of the continent, fish has been the main source of these vital nutrients. Fish consumption during pregnancy and lactation further improves the nutritional and health status of the women thus reducing susceptibility to diseases. The promotion of fisheries will therefore help combat or reduce the mortality rate for the adults as well as boosting the immune system for the

pregnant and lactating mothers. It will also contribute to the reduction in the deaths of the under five due to malnutrition as the fish is said to have the nutrients that lack of them results in malnutrition. Thus Bene *et al*, (2007) concludes that fisheries become a source of nutrients.

DFID notes that fish are often the cheapest protein sources available in developing countries. Small fish are especially important for poor consumers as they can be purchased in smaller quantities at low cost. This becomes an advantage to the poor households they cannot afford to buy other protein sources which are sold in larger quantities like chicken (Gameiro and Wilson). The poor households rarely buy chicken and opt for fish which is affordable for them. The households of Zamabezi valley engage in small scale fishing as well and are largely to benefit through the fisheries.

4.2.5 Fisheries restrained in the contribution to food security

Michael Tremmel (1994) acknowledges the socio-economic impact of the forced removal of the Tonga People. These people relied on the river where they could fish and get means to survive thus the displacement and deprivation of land use and access has shown significant negative impact in the contribution of fisheries towards food security. There now areas which they are expected to venture into. According to the fnvhazin@ufrpe.br website the poor and low living standards also contribute to the issues that restrain fisheries from contributing towards food security. The unavailability of markets results in the undervaluation of the fish thereby promoting poverty as little is realised and the price is too low. The poor handling methods also contribute to the high losses, low quality and low prices thereby compromising the contribution realised from fisheries towards food security

5.0 FINDINGS

5.1. Rationale of fishing cooperatives in Binga

The cooperatives scheme was introduced in Binga to address unemployment rate and the economic gap among the rural poor people. The government took upon itself the responsibility to spearhead the establishment of these cooperatives by providing trainings, rigs and start-up capital through the Ministry of National Affairs. The rural poor were a very vulnerable groups; poor people struggling to afford social services like education, food, health and other essential needs). Yet, these rural people could have afforded their needs if ever they had been sufficiently employed, hence the idea of cooperatives as to abate the anomaly. However, during economic recession which was experienced in Zimbabwe since 2008; the social fabric was worn out as cooperative members individually tussled and competed for fewer resources and working together for the interest of the cooperative was no longer an option and challenges emanated in cooperatives.

5.2 Policy Issues

Cooperatives in Zimbabwe are regulated by a statutory instrument called Cooperative Societies Act (Chapter 24:05). The Act requires every group that wish to be a cooperative to be registered. According to section 13 of the Cooperative Societies Act Chapter 24:05, there are stipulated requirements for a cooperative to be registered. The Act clearly states that not less than 10 people are allowed to form a cooperative. Therefore, it is the demand of the Act that a cooperative should be formed by 10 and above people. The members who wish to form a cooperative are also expected to receive pre-registration education training. This training is usually done in a period of 5 days and conducted by the ministry responsible of cooperatives. Members during the training will be taught of the cooperative principles and core values. The act also stipulates of the need for a proper documentation with regards to the papers that are submitted for registration together with a deposit of registration fee amounting to \$10. The major challenge that the cooperatives in the district are facing with regards to registration is the pre-registration education. The district is very wide spread, that some points are almost 120km from the district offices. As such, the ministry responsible for cooperatives find it difficult to reach to these areas as they don't have transport. Hence forth it becomes a burden to the members who will have to wait long to receive that necessary training for them to register.

As a recommendation, it is felt that if the office is availed with reliable mode of transport to reach out to the areas the challenge will be abated. From the analysis, it was suggested by stakeholders that transport in form of motor bikes and rough terrain cars can be the best solution to the challenge.

The second policy issue that is striking in the fishing industry is the access to fishing permits. The fishing cooperatives after being registered, it is required to apply for a permit from another Ministry that is responsible for wildlife and natural resources management under the department of National Parks.

The major challenge that is there is the bureaucracy that is involved for one to get the permit. The authority responsible indicated that the permits are only accessed from head office that is Harare. Most of the cooperative members find it very expensive to reach Harare which is almost 1000km away from Binga. Since the permit is sort before operations, therefore, it is a big block as the members find it difficult to raise money for transport and subsistence. The other challenge is that the permits are not allocated according to the regions or districts but it is only at national level that this process is done. Local authorities also appeared not to be having proper and adequate information as to how and when the permits are released. The other grey area is also about the qualification for one to get the fishing permit.

The proposed recommendation is to regionalise the office with the responsibility to issue permits. There is need for vigorous lobbying in relation to the decentralisation of the service according to the new constitutional provisions. There is also need for a proper documentation and information dissemination of the process involved for one to get the permit. Furthermore, there is also need for clear understanding of the qualification expected of for one to be able to get the permit. This issue is of serious concern even calls for a parliamentary attention. This challenge was confirmed by Chief Pashu at the recently held National Tourism Indaba held in Binga where he had no kind words for the Department of National Parks and called upon them to decentralise the issuing of permits and to allow the locals to be given first preference.

5.3. Overview of challenges faced by fishing cooperatives in Binga

There was a general consensus among all the respondents that the fishing business in Binga is currently dwindling as compared to the past years. A flash back sort of reference was made where the cooperative members mentioned that their business was now in a nose dive state owing to quite a number of reasons as will be discussed below. The concept of cooperatives was generally accepted by numerous stakeholders as a noble idea to empower rural poor

people. Government stakeholders outlined that cooperatives were a government initiative that was aimed at reducing unemployment rate and also to enhance incomes for the poor rural people of Zimbabwe.

The National Parks Department indicated that before the economic down-turn in Zimbabwe in late 90s, the cooperatives were performing fairly well as poaching incidents by Zambians were very low allowing for better breeding of the fisheries. Therefore the rampant poaching being done by Zambians and being witnessed by the locals are all contributing to low yields. However locals were also fishing in undesignated areas and this compromised reproduction of both kapenta and the bigger fish. The idea of suspending fishing operations by both Zambians and Zimbabwean fishermen for at least three months had reached at an advanced level but this idea just died a natural death. However, this really showed the seriousness of the matter.

From key interview with Ministry of Youth, it was revealed that in there is a high chance of cooperatives doing quite well if a few issues involved in their collapse are resolved. The ministry of youth was the ministry responsible for cooperatives in the past 10 years. They made observations that disputes among members are one of the key challenges that is being faced by the cooperatives. Lack of proper accounting systems is also another vital factor that requires attention if the cooperatives are to do well.

5.3.1. Conflict among members.

The key stakeholders interviewed aired about togetherness and maintained that trust should also be built on group cohesion. It was generally observed that one greatest challenge was that in most cooperatives the founder members are no longer members some due to deaths and others to old age. Henceforth the nominees who succeed them fail to click well with other members. Thus chances of division within a society becomes very high compromising the performance of the cooperatives. A respondent from Ministry of Youth identified 5 cooperatives that are nose diving due to the differences created by the members themselves in their societies.

5.3.2. High levies being charged by the Government and the Local Authority.

The other striking challenge being faced by the cooperatives is in regards to levies charged on the fisheries. It was highlighted that there are quite a number of authorities who are highly levying the cooperatives to the detriment of their business. The authorities like, ZIMRA, Local Authority, Parks, Navigation and campfire all tap from the same poorly performing cooperatives resulting in failure for the cooperative to operate as their working capital is scraped from them by these authorities. It was further indicated that, almost every cooperative is living in debt from not less than three authorities which the cooperative members felt is strongly affecting them as they sometimes go for months without fishing as they will be afraid of being apprehended when found doing business. From a discussion held with Lainah Dube who is the Treasurer of Mizezo Co-operative, she had this to say: *'we really do not know who to pay. The RDC demands something from us, the Department of National Parks will also come breathing on us and so is ZIMRA, such that at the end of the day we don't take anything home. Why don't we just deal with one institution so that we are not over burdened? Is it a crime to be involved in fishing in Binga? Are we being punished for something that we are not aware of?'*

The levies charged by authorities:-

AUTHORITY	CHARGE
National Parks	\$2000/year/unit
Council Lease	\$0.10/m ² /per annum
Council Trading License	\$70/ month
Lake Navigation	\$75 per annum
Zimra -	\$350 paid in every 3months
Gillnet licence	\$30/month for 3 permits

5.3.3. Fuel shortage.

Intermittent fuel shortages in the district have been a major blow to the smooth functioning of cooperatives. In the entire district there is only one fuel filling station that is run by CMED. It was the general observation by 90% of the respondents that the fuel supply by the filling station is a major challenge as there are more months of in a year when there is barely any drop of fuel at the station. As a result the cooperatives are compelled to travel to Hwange to purchase fuel which is about 210km. such unnecessary cost leads to the realisation of very low profits.

Owing to the same factor of fuel shortages, 30% of the respondents realised that cooperatives end up failing to do their business as their operations rely on fuel. It was further observed that hand, for those who may be operating will be doing that at the benefit of the scrupulous individuals who will be charging exorbitant prices for their fuel which will be a day light robbery to the helpless poor cooperative members. Fuel will be made available on the black market attracting a sort of barter trade payment, whereby fish and Kapenta will be used as payment. One respondent said, for each 210liters bought on black market 90kgs of Kapenta are required as payments. However by the time of writing this report, a second filling station had been opened at Kulizwe Lodge.

5.3.4. Limited access to the market.

All the respondents concurred that, unavailability of reliable market for Kapenta and breams has greatly impacted negatively on the cooperatives. 100% of the cooperative members agreed that there are times when they can make good catches of Kapenta and breams but they don't have a ready market to supply their products. What usually happen is the reduction of the price as there will be more supplies than buyers, hence one will be having more choices leading to cooperatives resorting to sell at lower prices that gives very little profit.

Key informants expressed great concern in this regard; they argued that its very painful to them when they see a buyer coming from outside determining the price of which he/she wants to buy fish at. The cooperatives end up agreeing with that price as may be determined by the buyer because they would end up not selling thereby failing to pay their expenses. If it was for a situation that there were ready good markets for them, the key informants believed that cooperatives would be very viable business units in the district and nation at large. The interviews

lamented on the ineffectiveness of the District Union whose mandate was to look for a better market on behalf of its members. With the support from Basilwizi Trust, a ware house has been constructed at Binga centre where cooperatives are supposed to be taking their produce and then the Union looking for a better market. There are also some refrigerators that gill net cooperatives could use to store their fresh fish whilst still looking for a market. However, this facility is being under-utilised. Doctor Ngwenya had these words to say: *'We cannot use the Union facilities as gill nets because of high joining fees that were pegged by the management committee. The Kapenta cooperatives pegged the fees beyond the reach of most gill net cooperative and we are not benefitting at all. We are seeing a situation where the building is going to be a white elephant if the committee does not go back to the drawing board'*.

5.3.5. Number of fishing permits inadequate.

All the interviewed cooperatives indicated that, the number of permits that they have is also contributing to their poor performance. It was propounded that, for those cooperatives that have one permit while being a total membership of 13 people it is not easy for them to handsomely benefit from the business. 4 cooperatives who have 3 permits expressed that they see themselves as better than the others as their income levels are a bit better due to the number of permits that they have.

A discussion with some members of the gill-net also highlighted the inadequacy of fishing permits. It was highlighted that most gill-net cooperatives were issued with three permits that permitted them to use only 15 nets. With a membership of at least fifteen people, this means that each member had a share of just one net compared to their individual counterparts who were issued a permit each and were entitled to use five nets each. Therefore coming as a group was a disadvantage. Because of the delicacy of the industry, at times they would spend some days without catching anything. One member Mr xx (preferred to remain anonymous) had this to say: *"If each gillnet cooperative with a membership of at least 10 people was allowed to use at least 45 nets, this would enhance our production levels."*

On the same note, the department of national parks indicated that the number of permits that were issued to the fisheries is now more than the capacity of which the lake can accommodate. The more these permits are going to be increased would mean that there will be unsustainable extraction of these precious resources. Therefore it was highly felt from the perspective of national parks that issuing of permits should be not placed as a priority for better performance of the fisheries as this can lead to depletion of the Kapenta and breams in a short space of time.

5.3.6. Limited fishing grounds.

Another aspect that came out from the gill-net fishing cooperatives was on the limited geographical areas for fishing. For example, if the cooperative was designated Mbila fishing camp, it is not allowed to move out of Mbila fishing camp as compared to their kapenta fishing groups who can travel from Binga to Simatelele or as far as Chibuyu where the production levels are high at that particular time. The gill net cooperatives highlighted that there was need for them also to be allowed to fish in some other camps where there were not staying as long as production was high in that particular area. A related issue was on some of the fishing camps that were closed during the armed struggle and these have not yet been opened up to now. Some of the fears according to Doctor Ngwenya were that: *"They are refusing to open fishing camps in areas such as Chete for fear that we will be involved in the poaching of wild animals but we know very well that Zambians come at night and fish in the very same places where we*

Zimbabwean fishermen are being denied the right to go and fish. If National Parks is afraid that we are going to finish their animals, they can as well open up an office that will be monitoring our activities. There is nothing as painful as being denied access to the resources that belong to you but foreigners come and enjoy them. Is that fair?"

Another issue that was raised by gill net cooperatives was on the stipulated time that they need to cast their nets and when to remove them. According to the regulation, fishermen are supposed to cast their nets in the late afternoon and remove them by seven in the morning. The reasons that they have been given to justify this position is that they have to give way to speed boats during the day since the areas are tourist attractions. This has increased the workload and has compromised their production levels. The most affected fishing camp is Mbila which is over monitored by the Department of National Parks because of its proximity to their offices.

5.3.7. Unavailability of nets spares for their engines and rigs

90% of the interviewed cooperatives further highlighted that the absence of a reliable spare parts supplier in the district often affected their business. Cooperatives are sometimes made not to go fishing due to the absence of spare parts following break downs. The fishermen expressed the concern that even for some simple parts one would have to travel to Bulawayo to procure that part which would become very expensive again to the cooperative. The most affecting part is that the rig will be parked for more days waiting repair which would maybe have done in a day if there was a supplier for the spare parts required by the cooperatives.

In addition to that, the issue of unscrupulous individuals comes in, who will capitalise on the desperation of these cooperative members to charge high prices for the spare parts and at times to repair the rigs. Such expenses are very detrimental to the operations of these cooperatives.

Gill net cooperatives expressed concern of the non availability of fishing nets and boats locally. The nets are only available in Harare (Ropes and Nets) and this made accessibility very difficult. These nets are going for about twenty five dollars in Harare but the same net is going for about thirteen dollars in Zambia. Non motorised boats were also only manufactured either in Kariba or Bulawayo. Lainah had this to say; ' *We have heard people going to South Africa and Botswana to buy goods. Why can't we be allowed to go to Zambia to buy the fishing nets? We do not know who to approach for advice and we don't know if it is allowed?"*

Out of all the respondents, there was a general consensus among 80% of them who felt that the major challenge also faced by the cooperatives pertains to their capacity to run their businesses. Key informants observed that the systems used in the cooperatives left much of the deserved skills for a proper business. There was a realisation that the accounting systems and management system used by the cooperatives are far below standard that monitoring of their performance is also compromised.

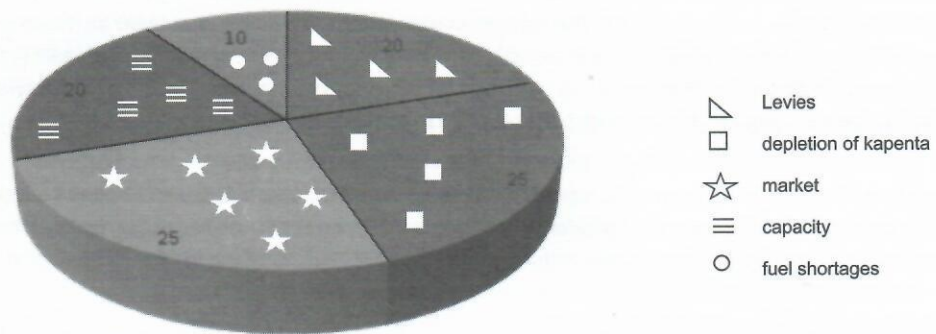
5.3.8. Limited access to loans and grants.

Another challenge mentioned by new cooperatives is the high levels of investments needed to venture into the kapenta fishing industry. Information sourced from one of the rig manufactures in Binga district indicated that one needed about 18 000 USD to have just one rig and this excludes other consumable such as fuel and salt to start the project. It is against this background that even though the groups will have been registered and will have acquired some permits, access to capital to start the business becomes a very big challenge. Information got from old cooperatives such as Twite and Chunga Cooperatives indicated that even though they got loans from the

government, interest rates were high and in some cases, they would be luck and get some grants. However, in as much as this appears to be on the higher side, a capital injection of about fifty thousand in a kapenta fishing cooperative will go a long way in setting up a viable kapenta fishing cooperative. From this investment, a cooperative with a membership of about 15 members will be able to purchase two rigs and start fishing.

The gillnet cooperatives also lack access to loans/grants. Their investment needs are a bit on the lower side. In order to start up a viable venture, a gill net cooperative needs two none motorised boats, 45 nets, and four life jackets. However, because of labour involved a motorised boat would be more ideal. An initial investment of about ten thousand dollars would suffice to start a gill net cooperative in Binga district.

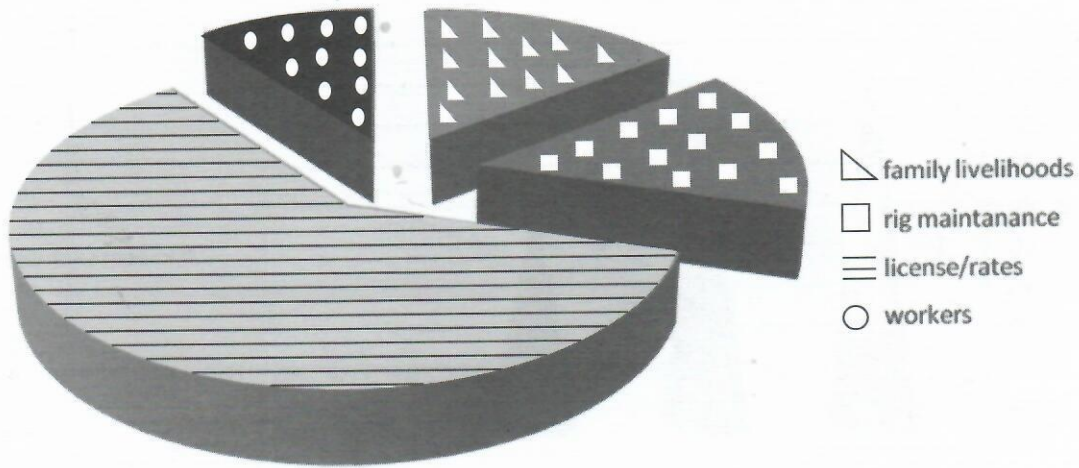
challenges faced by cooperatives in %



The majority of the interviewed cooperative members indicated that most of their challenges come into being because of the low incomes they realise by the end of the month. It was clearly spelt out that, the highest percentage of their money goes to the payment of licenses and rates, followed by maintenance of rigs, family livelihoods and lastly workers. The rates charges are too high that they take the greatest chunk of the income realised leaving cooperatives with very little that is used by the family livelihoods.

Use of cooperative income

uses of income

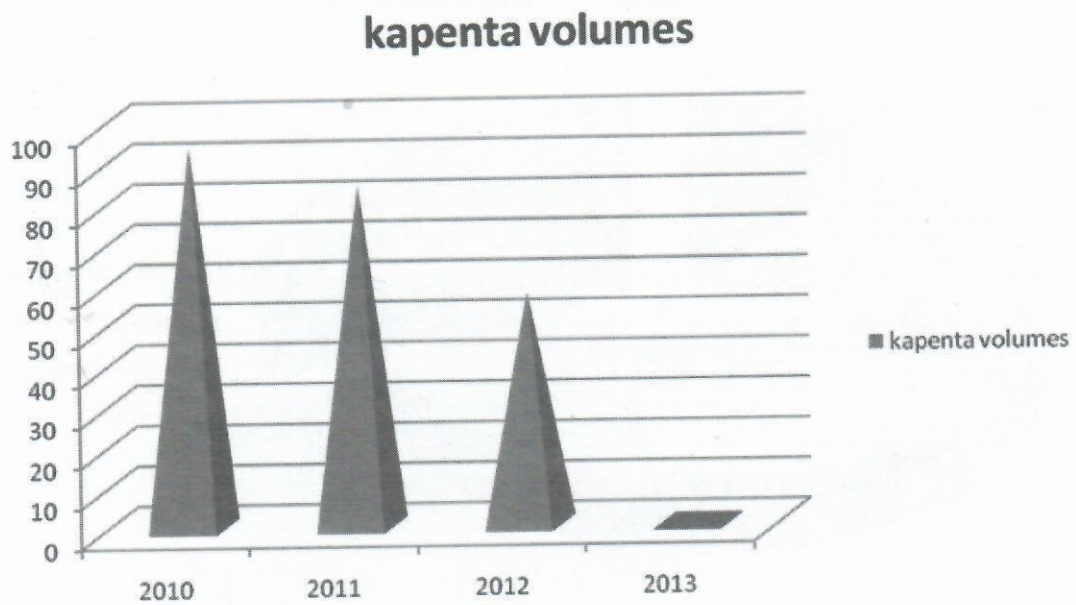


The chart therefore shows that there is nothing that is left or that is channelled towards further development and advancement of the cooperative. Therefore the challenges perpetuate as the same routine repeats itself.

5.3.9. Depletion of Fish volumes in the lake.

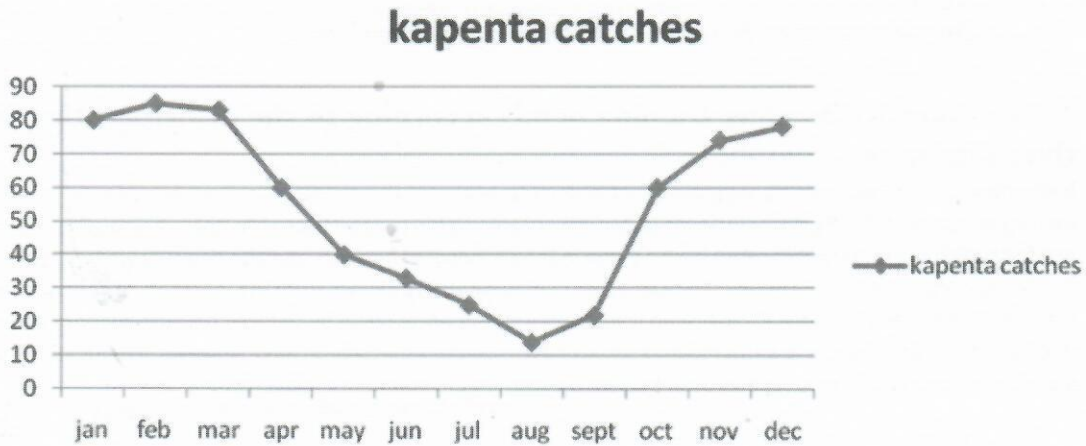
The department of National Parks also indicated that the other major challenge is the depletion of the Kapenta in the Zambezi River. There has been great decrease in the volumes of the resource in the river. There are considerably a number of contributing factors to the depletion of the resource. The factors include increased number of fishing rigs and use of under recommended net sizes.

Decrease in the volumes of Kapenta resource



The second major cited problem in relation to the volumes of Kapenta pertains to the irregular distribution of catches throughout the year. Cooperatives indicated that the better part of the year the catches will be very low resulting in low returns being realised that are wholly blown by the expenses. It was expressed that there are only better catches during summer.

An analysis of the depletion rate of the Kapenta fish in the lake as shown by the catches in a month fishing period in a year.



6.0 CONCLUSION.

In as much as the future of the industry looks gloomy, this has been one of the backbones of the district especially for Kaani ward. The number of people who are formally employed in this venture is quite substantial and most retail and clothing businesses at Binga centre are relying on the income from this industry. This is one industry if supported could increase the economic situation of Binga centre. A few successful cooperatives have built houses and some individual members have opened up businesses at Binga centre. All these are positive signs that there are some potential benefits from this sector.

Most of the challenges highlighted in this document are very much solvable if different players put their heads together and make a contribution and play their parts.

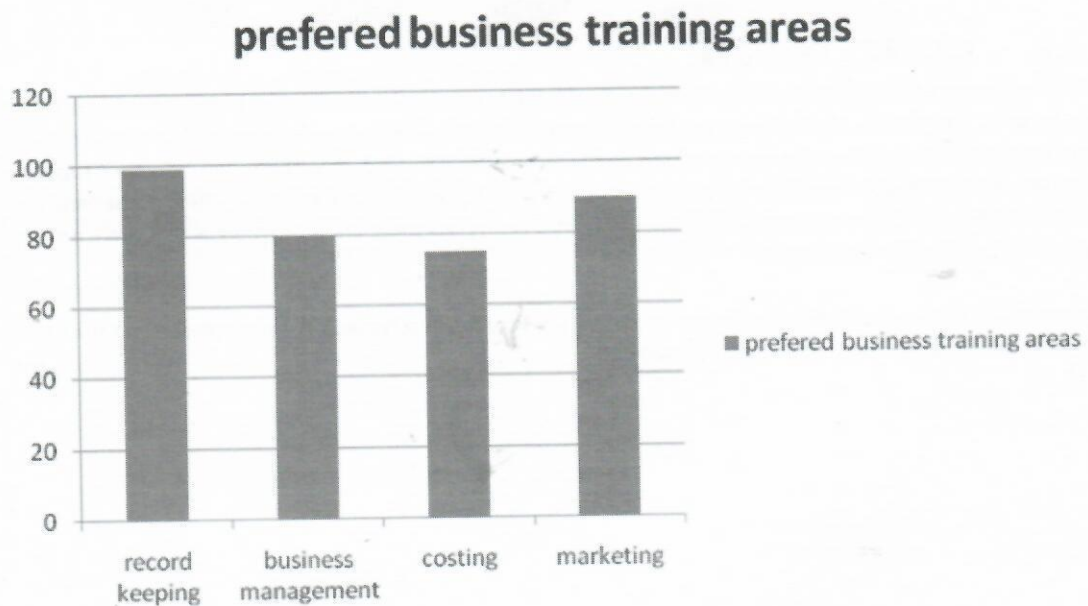
7. RECOMMENDATIONS.

This section looks at the recommendations that have been suggested that will address the plight of the Fishers of Binga district with reference to those in Kaani ward. The recommendations are going to be Institution specific.

7.1 Department of Small and Medium Enterprises.

7.1.1. Capacity building training needs according to the priority rating by the cooperatives members.

Both categories of respondents suggested that it is quite noble for the cooperatives to take capacity building training courses. A full SIYB package needs to be administered to the cooperatives as to open their business mind and focus. This can empower them to have a vision in their conduct of business and also diversify where possible. The Ministry responsible for cooperatives can assist in offering such trainings to all the members of cooperatives and the stakeholders. If held at fishing camp level, workshop expenses could be reduced because cooperatives at that fishing could contribute towards meeting some of the expenses especially on food. However, if funds are made available, these could be held at Binga centre where the learning environment could be conducive.



7.1.2. Conflict management training.

The combination of founder members and new members continue to create unnecessary conflicts among the members. Some of the conflicts affect production as members take too long trying to come up with solutions. It is recommended that members undergo conflict resolution sessions so that they are fully equipped on how to handle conflicts. Members should also be accustomed to the labour act so that employee disputes are solved amicably. The Ministry could seek for guidance from NGOS such as Basilwizi and ZIMCodd to give advice on how to go about it.

7.1.3. Skill development

It was suggested by the stakeholders that, cooperatives can also cut on their cost if they are trained in vocational skills. Such skills as welding, basic mechanics and weaving need to be afforded to the cooperative members. Lots of money is being lost to the maintenance of the boats and nets, hence if such jobs are done by members they can reduce the money lost. Lessons can be drawn from the training that was jointly organised by Basilwizi Trust and Silveira house who trained some of the cooperatives on basic welding. If such trainings could continue to be funded, they will go a long way in equipping the members with some of the needed skills.

7.2. Department of National Parks.

7.2.1. Awareness campaigns

It was also equally recommended by the stakeholders that, the Department of National Parks should engage into vigorous campaigns in educating the cooperatives on the dangers and effects of fishing in undesignated areas and using the nets that are not recommended. This being solved would ensure fast multiplication of the highly depleting special resource in the valley. Making arrests is not the only solution but it should only be used as the last resort. Dialogue is very much needed between the Department of National Parks and the Fishers. This dialogue is currently missing and this has led to a lot of mistrust between the two groups. According to Doctor Ngwenya, he had this to say *'The Department of National Parks is very cruel and when they see fishermen, they see poachers. We are not poachers but people who are making a living through legal means. If they are any issues, we need to sit down and talk.'*

However, there is also a big concern of the Zambians coming to fish into the Zimbabwean side and the cooperatives recommended that the department of national parks should intensify their patrols to minimize the movements of Zambians to the Zimbabwean side.

7.2.2. Decentralisation of fishing permits.

The Department of National Parks should also decentralise the issuing of fishing permits for Kapenta so that prospective members do not struggle to travel all the way to Harare. They should be an allocation for Binga district. One observation that has been made of recent is that people from outside Binga come having some permits but the locals are struggling to get them.

7.2.3. Opening up of fishing grounds that were closed during the war.

It is recommended that the Department of National Parks seriously considers the reopening of the fishing grounds that were closed during the armed struggle. This is going to give better opportunities for gill net cooperatives to increase their production levels.

7.2.4 Increase fishing permits

The issue of catches was highly recommended that it may be best answered if the cooperatives are given more permits so that they can use more rigs in the lake to increase the catches they get by the end of the month. This increase would mean better performance of the cooperatives in the long run.

7.3. ZIMCOPP.

Advocacy and lobbying

Numerous challenges being faced by the cooperatives have their roots in the institutional policies. Henceforth, there is a real need to make some lobbying and advocacy as to bail out the cooperatives from the hands of the greed institutions that charge high and at times unnecessary fees. A series of meetings and gatherings are very necessary to ensure that there is harmony among the authorities and the agency of development. The fishing industry is one of the backbones of the economic activity in the district but this is being let down by unnecessary levies which makes the venture unviable.

Financial assistance

Cooperative also indicated the issue of low incomes being realised, hence it is recommended that if financial assistance may be availed in the form of loans or grants this would go a long way in helping the cooperatives. Cooperatives have potential for doing better and diversifying and hence they really need the monetary assistance for them to function well.

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Investing in people for Social and Economic Justice

About ZIMCODD

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) is a socio-economic justice coalition established in February 2000 to facilitate citizens' involvement in making public policy and practice pro-people sustainable. ZIMCODD views Zimbabwe 's indebtedness ,the unfair global trade regime and lack of democratic people-centred economic governance as root causes of socio-economic crises in Zimbabwe and the world at large. Drawing from community based livelihood experiences from its membership, ZIMCODD implements programs targeted at: Educating the Citizen Facilitating policy dialogue among stakeholders; Engaging and acting on socio-economic governance at local; regional and global levels

ZIMCODD headquarters are in Harare with regional offices in Bulawayo and Mutare.

Vision

Sustainable socio-economic justice in Zimbabwe through a vibrant people based movement

Mission

To take action in redressing the Debt burden and Social and Economic Injustices through formulation and promotion of alternative policies to the neo-liberal agenda.

Objectives

- To raise the level of economic literacy among ZIMCODD members to include views and participation of grassroots and marginalised communities;
- To facilitate research, lobbying and advocacy in order to raise the level of economic literacy on issues of debt, trade and sustainable development;
- To formulate credible and sustainable economic and social policy alternatives;
- To develop a national coalition, and facilitate the building of a vibrant movement for social and economic justice.

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