

Contestations and struggles in the use and protection of wetland ecosystems in communal areas of Zimbabwe: a case study of Intunjambili wetland in Matobo district

Thomas Marambanyika & Tatenda Musasa

Abstract

Wetland degradation and loss is continuing at an alarming rate in communal areas of Zimbabwe. Although poorly mapped at national scale, communal wetlands have been over utilized and undermanaged posing threats to the existence of these valuable ecosystems. The article examines the contestations and struggles in the use and protection of wetland ecosystems in communal areas of Zimbabwe, with special focus on Intunjambili wetland located in Matobo district. To solicit data, the study adopted a household questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews with key informants and field observations. The Ostrom theory (1990) was used as a lens to explore how contestations and struggles at wetland scale undermine wise use, as guided by the Ramsar framework. The study findings show that the majority of the households (90%) revealed that conflicts related to wetland use are experienced in the area. Chi-square test results show that there is an association between household head's socio-demographic characteristics ($p < 0.05$) and knowledge on conflicts in use and protection of communal wetlands. About 70% households highlighted that crop cultivation is a major threat to wetland protection as it is associated with excessive water abstraction that depletes ground water and disturbs the hydrology. The study recommends that profits obtained from the sale of horticultural products be reinvested to maintain the wetland, for example, buying fence to protect the wetland core area since it has been destroyed.

Keywords: Contestations and struggles, Communal areas, Wetland ecosystem, Wetland use and protection, Zimbabwe