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INTRODUCTION

Finding appropriate models for development and development assistance represents challenges in all contexts, but the challenges are multiplied when it comes to development for indigenous peoples (Blaser, Feit, and McRae 2004). The emergence of an international indigenous movement has brought these issues to the forefront during the last decades. Core issues are the question of representation, the way indigenous peoples are perceived and perceive themselves, and the need to gain control over their own development and self-representation (Saugestad 2001a, IWGIA 2004).

A decade ago, at the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences conference in Mexico, a popular session was held and later a book was produced entitled *Speaking for the Bushmen* (Sanders 1995). Probably the title would not be used with the same ease today, as 'speaking for' is no longer politically correct. However, this is still what many of us do. This paper will examine some aspects of 'speaking for' the Bushmen, the good intentions and unintended consequences of speaking for the Bushmen or other indigenous minorities. Through the examination of two cases of engagement, I will try to bring out some contrasting assumptions about how to influence national policies.

The two empirical examples are a programme of bilateral development cooperation at the state-to-state level between Norway and Botswana, and the current international campaign of Survival International. In terms of strategies followed they represent fundamentally different approaches. In both cases I will contrast the images that are being conveyed with the realities of the ensuing effects. An underlying theme in both examples is the questions of *representation*. While the San are there as the object of concern, I ask whose voice is being heard, and how the dominant voices define the situation.

CASE ONE: REMOTE AREA DEVELOPMENT AND THE CHALLENGES OF DIPLOMACY

From soon after it gained independence in 1966 up to the early 1990s, Botswana was a main partner in Norwegian development cooperation. The model for state-to-state development cooperation was guided by two principles: *Recipient orientation*, meaning that goals, values and objectives should be set by the recipient country, not imposed by the donor; and recipient responsibility for the implementation of all development activities. Norway, through its agency for development cooperation — NORAD — entered an agreement with the Government of Botswana in 1988 that made NORAD the main financial donor to the Remote Area Development Programme.

This programme through which support was to be channelled had already been in operation for more than a decade. The target group was described as people living in remote areas, and the programme's main components were the provision of clinics or mobile health-posts, the building of small schools and hostels, water supply for new settlements, road building, and some incentives for income generation and training. All these are conventional development measures, of obvious practical benefit.

However, despite a comprehensive government programme, and ample funding from a well-intended donor, the problems identified at the beginning were still present when evaluations were made (Kann, Hitchcock, and Mbere 1990; Christian Michelsen Institute 1996). While there were significant achievements in terms of physical infrastructure and sincere efforts for poverty alleviation, the programme did not to any significant extent contribute to those objectives that may be subsumed under the labels of community development and empowerment. The problems were seen to be on two levels. Within the group there were weak institutions and leadership, while among the majority there were negative public attitudes. And the San remained 'the poorest of the most desperate poor.'

To understand the lack of achievement, we need to take a closer look at the official definition of the target group, that is to say the image of the San that informed the policy. Remote Area Dwellers are basically defined as citizens who live in small communities outside the traditional village structure and who tend to be poor, to have no or inadequate access to land and water, to be culturally and linguistically distinct, to have egalitarian political structures, and to be a 'silent' sector politically (Saugestad 2001b:125).

This is a descriptive definition that reads like a catalogue of social problems. In line with the government's non-racial policy, the target group is not defined in cultural terms, but according to socio-economic characteristics. The few cultural characteristics that are included are perceived as part of the problem: it is a *problem* not to speak the majority language, Setswana, and a *problem* to have an egalitarian political structure. The emphasis is on what the target group is *lacking*, in terms of important resources and (efficient) organisation and leadership. Thus, the

programme not only defines a situation of scarcity, it also defines a target group in terms of its perceived shortcomings and defects (Saugestad 2001b).

Implicit in the Norwegian involvement was a belief that the situation in Botswana offered a parallel to the relationship between Norway and the Saami minority. But the recipient orientation and respect for Botswana's non-racial policy prevented explicit statements on what a recognition of the Basarwa as a distinct cultural, indeed indigenous, minority might mean, and what the policy implications of such recognition might be.

In making the decision to support the Remote Area Development (RAD) Programme, Norway formally accepted the definition of the target group as laid down by Botswana. The carefully worded neutrality of the RAD programme did in effect deprive the target group of a recognised cultural identity. It also deprived the target group of dignity as its members were reduced to passive welfare recipients. Moreover, by disregarding cultural characteristics, cultural knowledge became, by definition, irrelevant. As underdevelopment and poverty were seen as contemporary manifestation of their 'nomadic disposition,' indigenous knowledge was not only ignored, it was devalued. It was not so much that the San were ignorant; they had the *wrong* sort of knowledge.

Did the Norwegian partner in development cooperation agree on this approach? *Not quite*. NORAD's thinking, however, was that the best way to assist the Basarwa was through formal cooperation with the authorities. It was tacitly assumed that over time it would be possible to steer the RAD programme in the 'right' direction, that is to say towards a process whereby internationally recognised standards for indigenous human rights would gradually be taken into consideration. If this meant 'swallowing some camels,' as one programme officer expressed it, this was seen as a small price to pay for the opportunities provided for presence and dialogue.

This might have been a good strategy, if it had been followed up. However, in the mid 1990s — at the very time that indigenous issues were for the first time taken up in public discourse in Botswana — Norway withdrew its development assistance. It was on the most cordial terms, and for reasons that had nothing to do with San development, but rather with some very positive aspects of geo-political development in the region: the fall of Apartheid in South Africa, and economic prosperity in Botswana.

However, this withdrawal meant that the significant diplomatic influence that had been achieved, in terms of being present and having the ear of the government, were abandoned. What remained was a programme justified by the *needs* of the San, not by their rights.

CASE TWO: SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL AND THE PROBLEM OF THE DOMINANT VOICE ¹⁾

On just about all counts Survival International (SI) follows a different strategy. It is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with an extremely efficient publicity

apparatus, including a Web site, an e-mail list, letter campaigns, advertisements, and public vigils. Survival International works for tribal peoples' rights in three ways: education, advocacy, and campaigns, and identifies as its main activities:

- to offer tribal peoples themselves a platform to address the world, and
- to work closely with local indigenous organizations, with special focus on those most recently in contact with the outside world (<http://www.survival-international.org>).

Survival International presents itself as 'the largest organisation, and one of the oldest working for tribal peoples' rights.' Significantly, 'It is also the only one which makes use of public opinion and public action to secure long-term improvement for tribal peoples.' Survival speaks strongly on behalf of indigenous and tribal peoples. It not only *informs* the 'outside world,' but also encourages the general public worldwide to speak up, take action, and write letters on behalf of specific cases.

Survival's ideology is confrontational, and goes somewhat along these lines: Attempting to influence governments by dialogue or persuasion does not work; what is needed is a radical approach whereby governments are forced to make real changes. The means to achieve this is through media pressure and negative publicity that may force governments and corporations to concede rights to endangered indigenous peoples. According to this logic, efforts on the ground are relatively unimportant as the key decisions are made elsewhere. The strategy is to mobilise so much outside pressure that the strength of international public opinion leads to the desired changes²).

Survival International has waged a highly publicised campaign in support of the |Gui, ||Gana and Bakgalagadi of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). The reserve was established before Independence in 1966, to secure a protected area for the residents and the game and wild plants that provided their sustenance. During the 1980s the government of Botswana argued increasingly that the inhabitants of the game reserve could not coexist with the wildlife, and moreover that the high costs of bringing services inside the reserve was prohibitive for further development. As a result, it was decided that the residents should resettle outside the reserve.

In 1997 the majority of the inhabitants were resettled. A few hundred stalwarts remained. In January-February 2002, all services were terminated in a rather dramatic exercise where people's houses were demolished, water tanks emptied and people and their belongings transported to the new settlements.

In April 2002 an application was first brought to the High Court. The State counsel raised a number of technical objections, and the application was dismissed. The Court of Appeal readmitted the case and it came to court in July 2004. The residents argue that the termination of services to the CKGR by the government in January 2002 was unlawful and unconstitutional. They further assert that those who have been effectively forced to move from CKGR due to the termination of basic and essential services, should be able to return to their homes in the reserve, as they have been unlawfully dispossessed of their land³).

The position of the applicants is that the people in question have ‘traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used’ the territory in question, uninterrupted since time immemorial. According to the criteria set out in ILO Convention 169, the Draft Declaration on Indigenous Rights, and numerous other documents, the inhabitants of Central Kalahari should have a right to occupation. The position of the Government of Botswana is that it is not bound by these declarations. The stated intention of the Government is to bring the standard of living of the Basarwa up to the level that obtains in the rest of the country as well as to avoid land use conflict in the CKGR, as people and wildlife can not coexist (www.gov.bw/basarwa/background.html).

In the context of the present paper I shall not go into further details of this case. It is, however, of relevance to ask what sort of conflict we are dealing with, using Aubert’s (1961) distinction between conflict of interest and conflict of value. In my view we see a conflict of values, as expressed in a typical statement from the Minister of Presidential Affairs, made after the international community had protested against the 2002 relocation:

We strongly object to this form of selective morality and racial superiority by those who advocate that Basarwa should be allowed to live side by side with game and survive by chasing wildlife dressed in hides as they used to live a 100 years ago” [Claiming that due consultation with the inhabitants of CKGR has been taking place, he continued] “The exercise has been declared successful and what remains is for these people to be allowed to resettle, re-establish themselves and lead normal and decent lives without interference.” (*Mmegi*, February 22, 2002)

I see the terms ‘normal and decent’ as expressions of a persistent *value* held by the government: It is for their own good that the people are to be resettled to villages, where they can lead a normal (read: desirable) life. Survival International would probably not disagree with this interpretation, but their international campaign put a much stronger emphasis on a perceived conflict of *interest*: The government is removing the inhabitants of Central Kalahari in order to make room for extensive diamond prospecting and mining. The publicity campaign is consistent with their basic strategic model: To identify an area where the government is vulnerable, in this case to juxtapose diamonds and human rights, branding diamond mining with the sinister association of ‘conflict diamonds,’ and hitting the government where it hurts most — the purse⁴).

This approach creates two problems. One is that the Survival voice becomes overwhelming. When Survival assumes the role of a loudspeaker for tribal peoples, it is hard to know exactly whose voice is being heard. The very sophisticated information strategy brings to the world authentic snippets of statements by the Bushmen, but at the same time it decides which narrative should be heard and how it should be presented.

Another problem is the inherent limitations to the potential of outsider activism. It goes for all kinds of social movements in all countries that if unpopular issues are

raised by, or in collaboration with, outsiders, governments will try to dismiss such issues as outside interference. However, the attitude of Survival International is that the power to change things lies less with the peoples directly affected, than it does with those outside (mostly in the West, connected to the Internet) who have much stronger voices.

Tshepho Mphinyane in her analyses of this relationship uses a gender metaphor to characterise the asymmetrical relationship between the helpers and those who are being helped.

In the same way that government handouts make Basarwa inescapably dependent on it, as they have no sustainable income, Survival's voice makes the same Basarwa inescapably dependent on 'loudspeakers,' as they are without a sustainable voice.

By portraying Basarwa as desperately in need of a 'man' to stand up to the bulldozer, Survival is justifying and legitimating itself. Speaking man to man, the government and Survival can change things. (Mphinyane 2002:81)

Unfortunately, this image of helplessness gives credence to the Botswana government's claim that opposition to relocation from Central Kalahari is a case of 'outside' influence. The most noticeable effect of the current campaign is that the outside involvement has created divisions inside Botswana. By an unfortunate domino effect the government perceives all voices *of* and *in support for the* San as variations of Survival's international campaign, which they vehemently dismiss. Local NGOs, most notably human rights organisations, find themselves in a situation whereby in order to dissociate themselves from the confrontationalist strategy of Survival International, their efforts at dialogue may at times give the San the feeling they share the views of the government. In fact, local NGOs do not have the ear of the government, which — despite claims to be open for consultations — has made itself unavailable for negotiations.

IN SUMMARY

Both approaches to advocacy are well intended. Neither has been quite successful. The Norwegian experience shows that a state-to-state model has great potential, but one must be aware of the limitations inherent in its very nature: A bilateral agreement with a sovereign state must accept *the state* as the legitimate representative and custodian of the interests of the minority groups within its territory. Paradoxically, the basis for the international indigenous movement is precisely the recognition that even democratic states do not adequately protect the special needs of indigenous minorities though their normal majority-based structures. That is why special measures, as laid out in ILO conventions, the UN Draft Declaration, and a number of other international instruments, are required.

However, for 'silent diplomacy' to persuade Botswana of this position, sustained involvement would have been necessary for a much longer period than the

time actually invested (only five years of regular programme support). In this particular case it was some much-desired geo-political events (the end of Apartheid in South Africa and Botswana's achieving the status of a middle-level income country) that officially led to a withdrawal — on the most cordial terms. But the picture is more complicated than that. Other areas of development cooperation were continued as separate agreements, most notably as projects targeting research and intervention in health-related issues. Development cooperation continued linked to programmes within the Ministry of Health and justified by global concern for the implications of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Health is an uncontroversial development issue, and the Government of Botswana gives priority to the fight against HIV/AIDS. Support in this area has continued.

Support of indigenous peoples, and the recognition of the target group as indigenous, is, as we know, much more controversial throughout Africa than it is in Europe. It is a fair assumption that some bureaucrats were relieved to see Norwegian busybodies withdraw from programme discussions. The Remote Area Development Programme has continued as a conventional, low-intensity, rural development programme. Even minor concessions to cultural diversity, for instance use of mother tongue for the first years of instruction in primary schools, are withheld.

As for Survival International, its analysis of the situation is clear enough. There is a recognition and description of a distinct culture. This is also a culture under siege. In its efforts to speak up in defence of San culture, Survival's strategy has been criticised for being both patronising and essentialising. Whether its strategy will work in the long run is open for debate. But the organization is persistent, and prepared for a long haul.

The immediate effect, however, has been a strained relationship between a London-based organisation and NGOs in Botswana with a different mode of operation. The lack of local links is further demonstrated by the prominent role given to diamonds — conflict diamonds — in the analysis of government motives. Few in Botswana believe this to be the decisive reason for the relocation. Many feel that the arguments divert attention from the basic problem: An authoritarian and patronising model for development, elevating the preferred lifestyle of the majority to the national norm. When local NGOs like DITSHWANELO/Botswana Centre for Human Rights feel they must distance themselves from Survival — to the extent this is possible — it means that Survival's campaign has not worked the way it was meant and hoped for.

SO WHAT IS THE BEST APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT?

Both 'outside agents' subscribe to the development objectives of empowerment and self-determination, as these are brought out by the international indigenous movement. NORAD said it softly, and added a lot of carrots in terms of development assistance. Then it left. Survival says it loudly, and brings in the international community as one big angry stick with no carrots. Both models leave

the target group somewhat on the sidelines, 'between a rock and a hard place.'

It is easy enough to criticise, and I am hardly saying anything original when I point out that the main weakness in both models cited above is the lack of participation of the target group itself. 'We are the government's children,' say the San, and that is not meant as a compliment. It means they are not permitted the ways and means to decide for themselves, and as children are dependent on handouts and outside support.

We need to recognise the asymmetry between those who know and those who are known about. This also applies to knowledge generated through advocacy. 'Outsider' involvement may represent a shift from manifest to more latent forms of domination, through a muting of voices. It is particularly the unintended muting we need to be careful about.

ILO Convention 169 says that tribal and indigenous peoples "...shall have the right to decide their own priorities for the process of development...and to exercise control...over their own economic, social and cultural development." Within the broader framework of development cooperation, special attention must be given to the role of knowledge and capacity building (Hitchcock 2004). One of the challenges facing the San, like other indigenous peoples, is the need to preserve and protect their tradition, culture and indigenous knowledge, and at the same time to develop and diversify new capacities that can ensure social and economic sustainability in the 21st century (Nthomang 2004, WIMSA 2004).

By an ironic coincidence, the timing of the last relocation from Central Kalahari Game Reserve overlapped with a major conference in Gaborone hosted by the United Nations in collaboration with the Government of Botswana and NGOs, entitled *Multiculturalism in Africa: Peaceful and Constructive Group Accommodation in Situations involving Minorities and Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations 2002). Two development models were juxtaposed: that of the Government, as quoted above from the speech of the Minister of Presidential Affairs who opened the conference, and a vision statement from the Botswana Centre for Human Rights:

To have access to development, communities have been moved. However, were the development model in Botswana rooted in a rights-based approach, the form of development indicator would be empowerment, manifested in the decrease in dependence on hand-outs, [and] participation in decision-making about their lives.

It must remain for other papers and contexts to discuss how such alternative approaches can be implemented in ways better than the two examples analysed in this paper, so that development ceases to be implemented by those speaking *for*, but increasingly *with*, and *by* the people in question.

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NOTES

- 1) This paper has been slightly revised in 2004, to incorporate some aspects of Survival International's handling of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve court case. At the time of writing this case is still ongoing. A verdict is expected in 2006, but if the case is appealed, it will go on into 2007.
- 2) Stephen Corry, personal communication.
- 3) The formulation of the claim has been spearheaded by two organisations: First People of the Kalahari (FPK) and the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA Botswana), together with representatives from the Central Kalahari settlements, and supporting human rights and San organisations.
- 4) See, for example, the infamous front cover of *The Ecologist* of September 2003: "Dying for de Beers." Diamonds constituted 80% of export earnings for Botswana in 2002.

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