

# Chapter 8

## Bridging the Gap: Community Conservancies in Namibia and Zimbabwe



*We need to see process as an end as well as a means, and to accept that the core objective of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) is increased communal capacity for adaptive and dynamic governance in the arena of natural resource use. It is about local capacities to handle change and to negotiate the human impact on nature from past to future. It is as much about resourcefulness as it is about resources ... The core objective of CBNRM is increased communal capacity for adaptive and dynamic governance in the arena of natural resource use.*

Marshall Murphree, quoted by Rowan Martin (2009)

### 8.1 Introduction: The Parallel Development of Community Based Natural Resource Management in Southern Africa

This is the story of two remarkable initiatives rooted in a common concern – how to ensure sustainable benefits to rural communities while conserving the natural resources of remote arid ecosystems in southern Africa. It is a story of ‘rare combinations of people and circumstances’ (Child 2019).

These parallel narratives have as their actors a handful of people of great passion, fortitude and unwavering commitment to overcoming challenges. To the west of southern Africa, in the Kaokoveld of Namibia, Garth Owen-Smith was driven by a socio-ecological perspective – a romantic vision of an arid Eden occupied by Herero and Himba pastoralists living in peace with elephants, rhinos, oryx, springbok, cattle and goats, sharing dramatic desert landscapes. Owen-Smith’s point of departure was empathy with rural subsistence pastoralists living without legal title to land nor access to the values of the wildlife among which they lived (Owen-Smith 1971, 2010).

To the east, in the Zambezi valley of Zimbabwe, Rowan Martin, Russell Taylor and Brian Child, using economic and ecological principles, sought the transformation of the degraded rural rangelands surrounding national parks into profit centres

based on a sustainable-use model financed primarily through trophy hunting (Martin 1986; Child 1988; Taylor 2001). Their initial worldview was that of managers of protected areas – threatened islands of biodiversity in a sea of rapidly degrading landscapes.

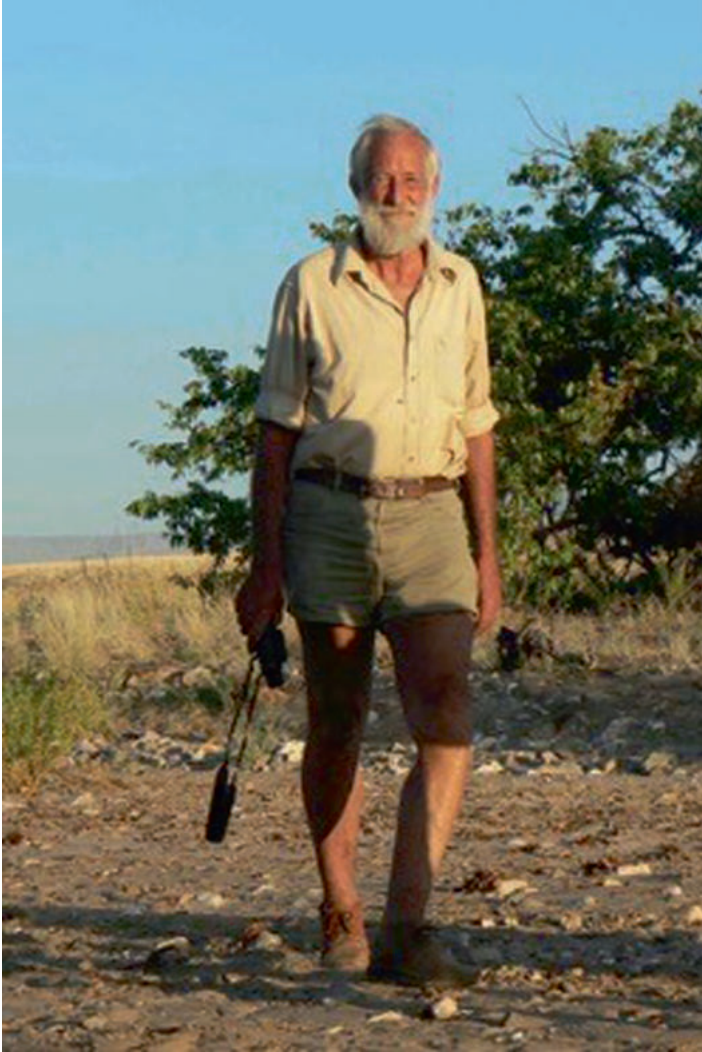
Across southern Africa, these young visionaries of the 1980s were seeking the ultimate nirvana of sustainable, well-governed community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) systems. Observing the failure of prevailing ‘command and control’ or ‘fortress’ approaches to conservation, they sought new paradigms. Their transformational agendas required over two decades of commitment, building on the firm tradition of wildlife conservation in the region.

During the 1950s and ‘60s, southern Africa had established a world-class body of conservation professionals. Pioneers such as Jack Vincent, Ian Player and Tol Pienaar in South Africa, Reay Smithers and Roelf Attwell in Zimbabwe, and Bernabie de la Bat in Namibia had built globally respected national park organisations. They were followed by a younger generation influenced by the writings of Aldo Leopold on wildlife management, and by visitors such as Ray Dasmann, Archie Mossman and Thane Riney on the sustainable use of wild ungulates (Leopold 1933; Dasmann and Mossman 1961; Riney 1964; Mossman and Mossman 1976). In the 1970s, Graham Child sowed the seeds of community engagement in Zimbabwe, Ken Tinley had championed ‘peripheral development’ to involve the communities living in and adjacent to parks in Botswana, Namibia and Mozambique, and John Hanks promoted the importance of extending conservation benefits to people surrounding the protected areas of Zambia. But it was in the Kaokoveld and the Zambezi valley that the real crucibles of new paradigms were gaining heat. It is on these regions that this narrative will focus.

## 8.2 Passion, Vision and Strategy – Taking the Long View in Namibia

In August 1967, 23-year-old Garth Owen-Smith (Fig. 8.1) made his first brief visit to the Kaokoveld of north-west Namibia (then the mandated territory of South West Africa). Having dropped out of university in early 1962, he had worked as a forester in KwaZulu-Natal for several years before taking a shaft-setter job in a copper mine at Tsumeb, Namibia – a far cry from the life of a game ranger envisioned in his youth. A chance visit to the basalt hills, gravel plains and sandy grasslands of the arid Kaokoveld was to change his life. Abandoning his brief mining digression, and to clear his mind, he bought a bicycle and headed off across the Kalahari – through central Namibia, across Botswana and into and across Zimbabwe – and then back through South Africa to KwaZulu-Natal.

On reaching home, Owen-Smith promptly applied for a posting in the Department of Bantu Administration and Development – the Apartheid-era organisation responsible for the Black ‘Homelands’ of South Africa and Namibia. Somewhat miraculously, through good luck and good timing, he was offered a position as an



**Fig. 8.1** Garth Owen-Smith – a visionary in community-based natural resource management. (Photo: John Mendelsohn)

agricultural officer in Opuwo in August 1968. This placed him back in the heart of the Kaokoveld, which stretches from Namibia northwards across the Cunene River into Angola (Figs. 8.2 and 8.3). He spent the next three years studying the region’s landscapes, geology, vegetation, animals, and most importantly, getting to know the local tribal people, their culture, lifestyles, grievances and expectations. His genuine empathy with the Himba and Herero pastoralists soon placed him at loggerheads with the deeply conservative administrators of the Apartheid institution into which he had, opportunistically, placed himself.



**Fig. 8.2** The intermontane plains of Iona National Park, Angola, stretches across the Cunene River as the Marienfluss of the Namibian Kaokoveld



**Fig. 8.3** The Cunene River cuts deep gorges through the mountains that straddle the border between Namibia and Angola. Garth Owen-Smith and two companions walked down the final 100 km stretch of the Cunene River, through the Kaokoveld as seen in this aerial view

In the 1960s, the wildlife populations of the Kaokoveld were healthy – Garth estimated 5000 Burchell’s and 1200 Hartmann’s zebra, together with thousands of springbok and oryx and hundreds of kudu and elephant. The Himba and Herero cattle herds numbered over 120,000 head. He was soon the best-informed authority

on the general ecology and peoples of the region, which due to its isolation and the prohibition of entry to all but government-approved visitors, had long remained a *terra-incognita*.

In 1970 the South African government implemented a major programme of social engineering in Namibia. The Odendaal Commission de-proclaimed the western section of Etosha Game Reserve to create the Apartheid homelands of Damaraland and Kaokoland. These vast territories soon became a hunter's paradise for resident government officials and visiting VIPs. Quick to offer outspoken criticism of the government's Apartheid policies and the absence of control of poaching practices, Garth was transferred out of Kaokoveld in 1971. He landed back in KwaZulu-Natal and decided to return to university. He endured three months of what he described as 'Stone Age Biology', and was soon once more an unemployed dropout. But once again good luck and good timing came his way. He was encouraged by friends to write up his Kaokoveld work and present it at the annual congress of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science. The audience included Nolly Zalumis, soon to become president of the Wildlife Society of South Africa, and a key player in Garth's future. Nolly introduced Garth to Neil Alcock, a revolutionary thinker testing pasture restoration by rotational grazing in one of the most degraded tribal lands of the Tugela Valley. Neil's wife, Creina Bond, dynamic editor of *African Wildlife*, arranged for the publication of Garth's report.

*The Kaokoveld: An Ecological Base for Future Development and Planning* (Owen-Smith 1971) challenged both the government's controversial Odendaal Report, and the proposals of the leading ecologist in Namibia at the time, Ken Tinley (Tinley 1971). Garth drew 13 conclusions, including:

- 1. Although considerable numbers of elephant, zebra, kudu, impala and springbok still survive on the Kaokoveld plateau, a realistic assessment of the position on these fertile highlands, *dictates that the requirements of the human population must take precedence in any conflict of interest* – even if it means the disappearance of much of the local fauna.
- 5. In the context of South West Africa's rapidly expanding tourist industry, a game reserve in the western Kaokoveld has vast potential as a tourist attraction. In time this potential can be turned into an economic asset to the country as a whole, *but particularly to the people of the neighbouring homelands*.
- 10. Conservation education is essential, and local participation should be encouraged at all levels. *In future a considerable portion of any revenue derived from tourism should be channeled directly to the existing tribal trust funds* and when established, to the homeland treasuries. (My italics).

The report caused some controversy, but presciently foresaw key elements of a future community-based approach to conservation.

Ever restless, Garth then took off for nearly a year wandering across Australia. He was in search of answers to arid zone rangeland management questions, but as described in his fascinating autobiography (Owen-Smith 2010), he failed to learn anything from the unsophisticated cattle ranchers of the outback of the vast country. Soon after his return to South Africa, he was back in Namibia, to assist in an

ethnobotanical study of the Kaokoveld. But his attempts to obtain employment in the then South West Africa administration was blocked by his lack of a security clearance, a consequence of his critiques of government policies. He was able, however, to obtain a post at the Cwaka Agricultural College in Zululand – a college reserved for Black students – where he would teach ecology. Despite having twice dropped out of university, he was a typical autodidact. Through reading widely and through observant field work he soon developed as good a grasp of the fundamentals of ecology as any graduate. As a teacher, he realised he had to bring ecology “down from its scientific pedestal and make it into a commonsense subject that anyone could understand.” He delayed taking up the Cwaka post until after a brief trip to Iona National Park in the Angolan Namib, during July 1974. The objective of the visit was to walk down the final 100 km of the Cunene River as it passed through the deep gorges that separate Namibia and Angola on its way to the Atlantic Ocean at Foz do Cunene (Fig. 8.3). Here he recorded the poaching, in Angola, of elephant by helicopter-borne South African soldiers. His photographic evidence reached me in Luanda within weeks. At the time I was ecologist to the national parks of Angola, and I was able to present the incriminating photos to the South African Consul General in Luanda – triggering quick but probably ineffective disciplinary actions within the military based in the Kaokoveld.

By early 1975, Garth had left Cwaka and had joined the Wildlife Society’s African Conservation Education project based in Mtunzini. But this rich experience of working with Zulu school children and teachers did not last long. In late 1976 Garth had moved to Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) – to the vast Leibig’s Ranch in the war-torn eastern Lowveld. Responsible for thousands of head of cattle on the most extensive private ranch in Africa, he learnt much about animal husbandry and commercial farming operations. Key to his experience was his work with innovative range scientist Allan Savory, who was testing his ‘Advanced Rotational Grazing’ system (Savory 1988) of non-selective, high intensity grazing in arid savanna.

As Rhodesia descended into full-scale civil war, the call of the Kaokoveld proved too strong, and Garth headed back to Windhoek early in 1980. Bernabie de la Bat, Director of Nature Conservation, enticed Garth with the hint of a possible posting in Kaokoveld. But the only vacancy available was in the south, based at Keetmanshoop. Here he learned about commercial small-stock farming on the margins of the Namib desert – about farmers, poachers, legislation and the machinations within government departments. As he notes: “Another decade had drawn to a close ... it had been a nomadic experience ... in four countries and many different fields ... government, NGOs and the private sector. I learned most ‘on the job’ from three visionary men: Nolly Zaloumis, Neil Alcock and Allan Savory.”

From Keetmanshoop Garth proceeded not to the Kaokoveld but to Etosha National Park. Here he did not settle well in the competitive circle of professional egos. In late 1981 he was offered a position in a new NGO – the Namibia Wildlife Trust (NWT). He joined on a two-year contract, funded by the South African Endangered Wildlife Trust, in March 1982. His posting was at Wereldsend (World’s End). “The last farm before rainfall became too low even for karakul sheep” and 120 km from Khorixas, the last petrol depot.

The objective of the NWT Damaraland/Kaokoveld project was to stop poaching, a problem that had accelerated in the decade since Garth had left the area. In 1982, Garth's colleague in the Department of Nature Conservation, Chris Eyre, reported that 76 lions, 33 cheetah and 9 leopards had been killed by farmers and trophy hunters. Unknown numbers had died of starvation, as drought devastated the wildlife and domestic stock of Damaraland and the Kaokoveld in the late 1970s and early '80s. Estimates in 1977 for Kaokoveld wild ungulates gave 1199 Hartmann's zebra, 667 Burchell's zebra, 1191 oryx and 4 859 springbok. For 1982 the counts gave 193 Hartmann's zebra, zero Burchell's zebra, 164 oryx and 217 springbok. Although not truly comparable, these estimates gave a clear indication of trends. More alarming to conservationists was the poaching of Namibia's charismatic 'desert' elephants of Damaraland and the Kaokoveld (Fig. 8.4). In 1980/82 over 100 elephant carcasses were found, and estimates reflected a decrease in the elephant population of north-west Namibia from 1200 to less than 300 over the 12 years since 1970. The majority had been poached for ivory. The incidence of poaching of black rhino was also rapidly increasing.

The anti-poaching approach taken was unconventional. Garth Owen-Smith insisted that the prevailing paradigm of conservation being a 'whites only' profession had to be changed. Rather than having khaki-uniformed (white) rangers hunt the poachers, he insisted that members of the local Himba and Herero pastoralists be drawn into the project. His approach was incremental. He first engaged with the tribal headmen that he had grown to know over more than a decade, and who respected his genuine concern for their welfare. While arguing the potential benefits of restoring the devastated wildlife populations, through the prospect of tourism and



**Fig. 8.4** Elephant in an arid valley in the heart of the Kaokoveld. (Photo: John Mendelsohn)

ultimately the sharing of harvested game, Owen-Smith was well aware of the Himba's perspectives. Traditional headman Joshua Kamgombe confided: "It is easy for us who have full stomachs to talk about protecting wild animals, but it is hard for a man to put his firearm away if his children are hungry. When a man has no cattle left, his stomach is the only thing he listens to" (Owen-Smith 2010).

Owen-Smith convinced his NWT trustees that neither they, nor the government Department of Nature Conservation (DNC), should employ the 'community game guards' (CGGs). These should be selected by, and report to, their traditional leaders, not the government or an NGO. NWT would provide rations for the guards, and would mentor and train them, receive monthly reports from them, and keep them actively engaged in the dynamics of the anti-poaching project. While the CGGs revealed multiple illegal hunting events, they ensured that each investigation was conducted with respect for the dignity of the perpetrators, avoiding the antagonisms resulting from conventional law enforcement approaches. The first year of CGG project cost the donors less than US\$1000.

It was not long before the activities of the NGOs started to irritate some ultra-conservative members of the DNC. Owen-Smith's open fraternisation with the Himba pastoralists, and his involvement with anti-poaching activities (seen as the exclusive responsibility of the DNC) led to the termination of the Damaraland/Kaokoveld Project in early 1984. The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) threw him a lifeline until the end of 1984, and provided funding for the CGGs. Sadly, the highly competent DNC senior conservation officer, Chris Eyre, a strong supporter of the NWT, was transferred out of the north-west to the conservation Siberia of Keetmanshoop. Ever financially straightened, Owen-Smith limped through 1985 and into 1986. Slender support kept the CGGs operational, and the effective poacher control and improved rains brought rapid growth to the game populations. Between 1982 and 1986, aerial surveys showed a 90% increase in Hartmann's zebra, 180% for oryx and 300% for springbok. In Garth's view: "The populations of the desert-adapted ungulates were well on their way to recovering."

In 1986 Garth Owen-Smith met a new life-partner, journalist and ethnologist Margaret Jacobsohn. While accepting Garth's belief that local people did *care* about wildlife, Margie challenged him to show how they could tangibly *benefit* from conservation. How would his impact extend beyond the older generation of Himbas and Hereros, to the young school children who had grown up in urbanising communities, isolated from the natural environment and the traditions that regarded wildlife as part of their cultural heritage? How could black people, excluded from any benefits from wildlife for generations of colonial policy, be expected to adopt protective measures for troublesome elephants, rhinos, lions and leopards? Margie negotiated with the Endangered Wildlife Trust, whose new director, John Ledger, promised to fund Garth and the CGGs from April 1987. After a break of two years, Garth was again earning a salary. He set about writing an article for the EWT magazine *Quagga*. Reflecting on the gulf between conservation thinking, policy and action as applied within privileged white and disadvantaged African communities in the three southern African countries (Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe) he made several key points (Owen-Smith 1987):



- “With few exceptions, no attempt has yet been made to promote wildlife utilisation to the material benefit of African subsistence farmers.
- Far too many game rangers/nature conservation officers still carry out their duties with an arrogance that implies little sympathy or concern for rural blacks and their legitimate endeavours in overgrazed and overcrowded ‘homelands’.
- In many areas wild animals still prey on black subsistence farmers’ livestock and damage crops.
- With the rural black man on our side, wildlife could once more take its rightful place as one of Africa’s greatest resources. With the him against us, little of what conservationists hold dear is likely to survive the twentieth century.”

Owen-Smith’s article concluded: “Only the government has the authority to change legislation, and in the long-term only it has the financial and staff resources to undertake effective conservation and education programmes. Non-Governmental Organisations can and must accept this challenge. It is not their role to usurp the legitimate functions of government, but to act as pathfinder and catalyst. Once a new way has been tried and proved, the NGO should withdraw, leaving it to the government agency to entrench and extend those projects that were successful.”

Shortly after his article appeared in *Quagga*, Garth and Margie attended an IUCN conference in Harare on ‘Sustainable economic benefits from wildlife utilisation and its contribution to rural development’. Here they learned of the emerging community-based conservation projects CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe and ADMADE in Zambia. While differing in drivers and approach, there was much in common across these initiatives. Most importantly, they met up with the key innovators in Zimbabwe – Rowan Martin, Russell Taylor, David Cumming and Brian Child. Garth wondered how different things would have been if the relationships with tribal leaders and communities had commenced much earlier in Zambia and Zimbabwe, before the mass killings of elephant and rhinos in those countries. He also regretted that Namibian and South African conservation authorities, still locked in ‘command and control’ paradigms, had not attended the workshop.

Garth and Margie returned to their Kaokoveld base at Purros, where Margie was studying the life of the Himba community, and Garth continued his CGG project, wrestling eternally with the bureaucrats in Windhoek. In 1989 he applied for funding from WWF headquarters in Switzerland, where John Hanks was conservation director for Africa. John had spent his formative years as a wildlife ecologist in Zambia and Zimbabwe and had written extensively on the importance of the sharing of rights and benefits of natural resources with local communities (Hanks 1976, 1979). In 1990, this fortuitous connection between Garth and John resulted in a new era of funding from WWF, via the EWT, to continue the community game guards project in Kaokoveld and in the Caprivi. At last, implementing the Kaokoveld vision had the promise of strong and predictable funding.

### 8.3 Changing Tides: Independence and Innovation

On 21 March 1990, independence was celebrated in Namibia, with Sam Nujoma, leader of SWAPO (South West Africa Peoples' Organisation) as its first president. The winds of change sweeping across Africa since 1960 had finally reached Windhoek – the 'windy corner'.

The first sign of real change was the response Garth and Margie received to an article that they had published in *The Namibian* newspaper the day before the final election results were released. It concluded: "The challenge now facing wildlife conservationists is to reconcile the needs and aspirations of people – particularly those communities that are living in or around our wildlife areas." Brian Jones, a former journalist who had frequently promoted Garth's views, had joined DNC. He asked Garth and Margie to meet with him and Chris Brown, a leading young progressive voice within the still conservative department. The meeting formed the basis of a formidable partnership that changed the face of conservation policy and practice in Namibia over the following decades.

Change was further propelled by the appointment of a new Minister of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism, Nico Bessinger, a SWAPO veteran who turned to Brown and Jones for assistance in drawing up conservation policy within the country's new constitution. The appointment of Chris Brown as head of the newly created Directorate of Environmental Affairs reinforced the transformation process. The CGG project was gaining momentum, and soon needed an institutional home to receive funding from the British High Commission. When asked by the High Commissioner what he and Margie were doing in the Kaokoveld, Garth replied that they were trying to "integrate rural development and nature conservation". The informal, nomadic, somewhat chaotic project that had been stumbling along for over a decade became a new NGO – Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC). Three decades later it continues to serve Namibia and the world as a model for Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM).

In the 1990s the CBNRM concept was on steroids, as major donors leapt to support the concept of communities – formerly excluded from wildlife conservation agendas – being given centre-stage. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) invested hugely in IRDNC's projects until 1998, when the UK's WWF took over as main sponsor, while WWF US implemented the USAID programme together with a network of Namibian NGOs, the government, and other sponsors. CBNRM was transforming from a small personalised vision of people like Garth Owen-Smith and Rowan Martin into a rapidly growing industry. A workshop in Zimbabwe formulated the 'Hwange Principles', bringing together the thinking of socio-economists Elinor Ostrom (1990) and Marshall Murphree (1991), with the idealistic visions of Garth Owen-Smith (1987) and Graham Child (1995), the pragmatic experience of conservation ecologists such as Chris Brown, Russell Taylor (2001) and Rowan Martin (Martin and Taylor 1983; Martin 1986), and economists such as Brian Child (1988) and Ivan Bond (2001) and social scientists such as Brian Jones (Jones 1999, 2016; Jones and Murphree 2001). The thinking was

elegantly summed up by Martin Holdgate's words in his preface to Graham Child's (1995) book *Wildlife and People*: "If wildlife and protected areas are to survive, they must be socio-politically acceptable, economically viable and ecologically sustainable."

The Hwange Principles can be reduced to four main legs:

- Maximisation of economic benefits from the valorisation and sustainable use of natural resources to achieve both conservation and development goals;
- Devolution by governments of authority, proprietorship and decisions over wildlife resources to the de facto land users, including rural communities;
- Collective ownership and responsibility for, and inclusive, face-to-face governance of all common property resources; and
- Adaptive policy frameworks and collaborative management strategies embracing cross-scale learning from the bottom up, building local capacities.

The development of CBNRM from an ambitious vision into a formal socio-ecological science was progressing in parallel, in Namibia and Zimbabwe through the 1990s. As Garth Owen-Smith had stated in his 1987 *Quagga* paper, only governments could create the legislation needed to formalise the CBNRM process. Such legislation would build on the conceptual thinking and testing of models initiated through the innovation of free-thinkers in NGOs, unconstrained by the rigours of bureaucracies. Having originated much of the thinking, Garth Owen-Smith and Margaret Jacobsohn, stepped back from centre stage, allowing new players to take the lead. In 2010, after a collective 60 years of dedication to the Kaokoveld, they stood down from the leadership of the IRDNC.

In 1993, Chris Brown and Brian Jones started to formulate outlines for future CBNRM policy in Namibia. They had strong models to follow. The Hwange Principles drew on a wide base of theoretical and regional experience. Further, Zimbabwean and Namibian legislation had granted freehold farmers rights over the wildlife on their farms in 1975. After initial challenges, the new policy soon resulted in a massive increase in game numbers and a surge of benefits to land owners from trophy hunting and tourism. If similar wildlife ownership rights could be extended to rural communities, could they not share in the benefits? The road forward was not smooth, but Chris Brown and Brian Jones were a powerful team, drawing on the experience of the drivers of the Zimbabwean CAMPFIRE project – Rowan Martin, Russell Taylor, David Cumming, Brian Child and Ivan Bond. These were all optimistic visionaries, and within Namibia Brown and Jones became labelled, somewhat ironically, 'the dream team'. But their seemingly unrealistic dreams came to fruition after three long years of consultation, negotiation, forceful debate and compromise. In 1996 the Nature Conservation Amendment Act was approved by the Namibian National Assembly and National Council. Key changes introduced by the Act were the devolution of rights over wildlife to rural communities (denied before independence), including sustainable use through adaptively managed extractive (hunting) and non-extractive (tourism) approaches. The barriers to effective CBNRM had been removed.

Two years later, the first three communal conservancies were gazetted. In September 1998, President Sam Nujoma received the WWF-US Gift of the Earth Award for his support of the Namibian CBNRM programme. But in reality, it was Garth Owen-Smith, Margaret Jacobsohn, Chris Brown and Brian Jones, and many traditional leaders of the Kaokoveld, who deserved the highest accolade as the real 'dream team'.

#### 8.4 From Vision to Reality – Community Conservation in Namibia

In 2020, twenty years after the first communities were entrusted with the management of wildlife and natural resources, and were to directly derive benefits from them, the network had expanded to 86 registered communal conservancies and 43 community forests, covering 180,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with over 233,000 rural residents participating in the programme (NACSO 2021, Fig. 8.5). The protected area system of Namibia covered 14% of the country at independence in 1990. By 2018, 44% of the country was under recognised conservation management systems. Community

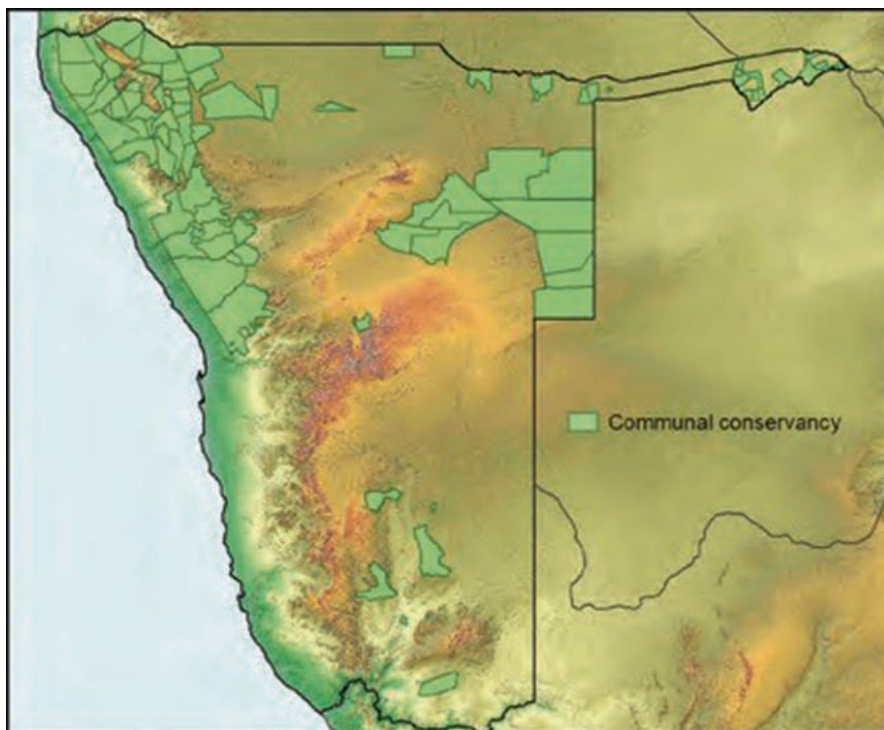


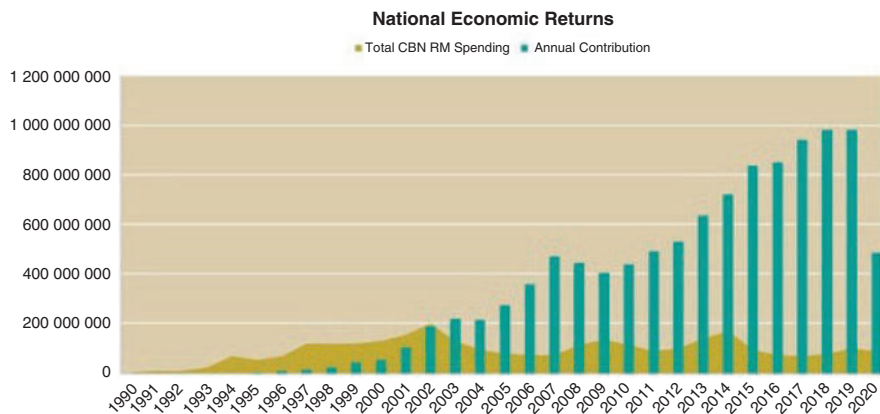
Fig. 8.5 Community Conservancies occupy over 20% of Namibia. (From NACSO 2021)

conservancies account for 20% of the nation's total land area and 53% of communal land.

The ranges of many species were re-established following the impacts of severe droughts and intense poaching in the 1970s and early 1980s. Giraffe, black-faced impala, Burchell's zebra, blue wildebeest, eland, sable and black rhino populations were re-introduced or reinforced by translocations by the Department of Nature Conservation (DNC). The magnitude of these exercises can be gauged by their results. From 1999 to 2013 a total of 10,568 animals of 15 species were translocated to 31 registered conservancies. According to official census data, the elephant population grew from 7500 in 1995 to around 22,800 in 2016. Populations of predators also fared well, with 'desert' lions increasing from 25 individuals in 1995 to 150 in 2017. However, the good rains of the 2005–2011 period were followed by extended droughts, taking a heavy toll on herbivores in the northwest of Namibia, ultimately having an impact on predator populations. But the dynamics of rainfall, grazing production, local migration or dieback of wildlife, and recovery, are typical of arid ecosystems.

Guided by the Hwange Principles and real-world experience, three pillars of Namibia's community conservation programme evolved: innovative resource management; good governance; and incentive-based conservation. As the concept and its implementation developed, so too did the institutional arrangements face complex challenges, transition, and ultimately, achieve consolidation as a national cooperative endeavour. Today the programme comprises a diverse set of partners led by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO). Annual Community Conservation Reports, published since 2004, provide a rich resource on the performance of the programme. A few indicators of results illustrate the progress made in the implementation of the programme.

- Since the beginning of 1990 to the end of 2020, the programme has contributed an estimated N\$10.8 billion to the country's net national income (NACSO 2021, Fig. 8.6). During the same period, an estimated N\$2.9 billion was invested in the programme, mainly by international donors. Conservancy income is derived from two main sources: tourism and hunting. Total cash income and in-kind benefits to rural communities increased from less than N\$1 million in 1998 to over N\$96 million in 2020 (NACSO 2021).
- Prior to independence, while many tourism ventures within or adjoining the rural communities of the Kaokoveld had been initiated by the private sector, benefits to the communities were negligible, even though these communities carried the costs of losses of livestock to predators or damage to crops by elephants. The new legislation, and support from NGOs, donors and government agencies, created the enabling conditions for conservancies to benefit directly from joint-venture lodges and conservation hunting concessions. By 2020, 64 joint-venture tourism enterprises had been established, employing 902 full time and 62 part time staff. NACSO describes the joint ventures as the 'engines of economic growth' in conservancies (NACSO 2021).



**Fig. 8.6** Estimates of the yearly contribution to national economic returns from Namibia's CBNRM programme compared with economic investment costs. The sharp decline in 2020 was due to decreases in tourism receipts due to the COVID 19 pandemic. (From NACSO 2021)

Formal agreements oblige operators to share profits and train staff, while the communities are responsible for wildlife management and anti-poaching activities. Typically, 8–12% of lodge income and 30–75% of trophy price is received by the conservancy. Overall returns to conservancies from lodges and from hunting were more or less on par until recent years, with lodges responding positively to a surge in tourism before the Covid 19 pandemic dramatically placed severe challenges on the global tourism industry. Fortunately, the Namibian government responded immediately to assist conservancies and lodges, through the Conservation Relief, Recovery and Resilience Facility. As a result, conservancies are now recovering from the downturn of 2020/2021 (NACSO 2021).

Given the great diversity of landscapes, climate, ecosystems, game populations, human demography and communication infrastructure, the benefits accrued by conservancies differ widely. A detailed analysis of the 77 conservancies established by 2012 (Naidoo et al. 2016), found that 25 were reported as not generating any benefits. Of 52 conservancies deriving some benefits from wildlife, 28 derived all or almost all benefits from hunting, and six mostly from tourism. The role of highly experienced lodge, tourism and hunting operators, providing technical support, employment, capacity building and mentorship to community members, has been critical to success. Tourism operations, although taking longer to move from establishment to full financial activity, generate more cash income to households through employment than that received from hunting.

Forty-five conservation hunting concessions employed 109 full time and 25 part time staff in 2020. Conservation hunting generates higher fees to conservancies, more rapidly from the date of establishment, contributing to operational costs, development projects, and in-kind benefits of game meat. Many conservancies would not be able to cover operational costs if trophy hunting were discontinued. Trophy hunting is especially important for conservancies in areas that lack

spectacular landscapes or other attractions to photographic safaris. Conservation hunting, strictly managed by quotas set by MET, utilises an insignificant percentage of the wildlife and is unlikely to have a negative impact on any species. Of 303 animals harvested in 2013, Naidoo et al. (2016) found that buffalo and elephant accounted for 78% of hunting revenue, and elephants alone contributed 55% to the total.

Dependence on trophy hunting is potentially vulnerable to changes in global policies on animal rights such as their influence on CITES, and on national policies on the import of trophies. However, the incentives from sustainable income sources, such as those from conservation hunting, are critical for the long-term viability of conservancies. Without them, rural communities might return to the downward spiral of subsistence livelihoods – goats, cattle and minor crops, supplemented by poaching, which would lead the ultimate extinction of rare species in hyper-arid ecosystems. At the same time we should not underestimate the importance of the intrinsic value that rural Africans place on wildlife. Jones (1999, 2010) points out that in every Namibian community he has worked with, they all said they wanted to keep wildlife for future generations. Furthermore, there are often spiritual and cultural associations with different wildlife species. Essentially the Namibian approach was founded on agreement between rural people and external conservationists that wildlife should be conserved for its intrinsic value and for the potential benefits from sustainable use.

Beyond the impact of conservancies on the local and national economies, less tangible benefits are reported by NACSO (2021), including:

- *Environmental sustainability*: sustainable use, reduced poaching, a precautionary, science-based approach to management, landscape-scale connectivity, reduction of land degradation and deforestation, etc.;
- *Good governance*: empowering previously disenfranchised communities through instituting democratic systems of participation in decisions, strengthening accountability, transparency, capacity enhancement, in-service training, business development; and
- *Social transformation*: increased gender equity and empowerment of women, improved health facilities and health education, improved household food security and the promotion of cultural pride.

The above outline of benefits derived from the CBNRM programme should not suggest that it has been free of any challenges, or that significant rewards have reached all 233,000 members of the 86 community conservancies. Despite the encouraging return of N\$96 million to conservancy communities in 2020, after deductions for operating costs such as game guard salaries, vehicles, office administration and management committee grants, little is actually left for individual community members. As is frequently the case in rural communities, ‘elite capture’ of benefits, decision making and information sharing can lead to financial mismanagement and conflict. The Namibia CBNRM project has experienced all of these challenges, inherent in managing the commons – it remains a ‘work in progress’. But unlike the

fate of so many similar ventures in Africa, the Namibian model deserves the many accolades that it has received from the global conservation community.

## 8.5 CAMPFIRE: Has the CBNRM Gold Standard Lost Its Glitter?

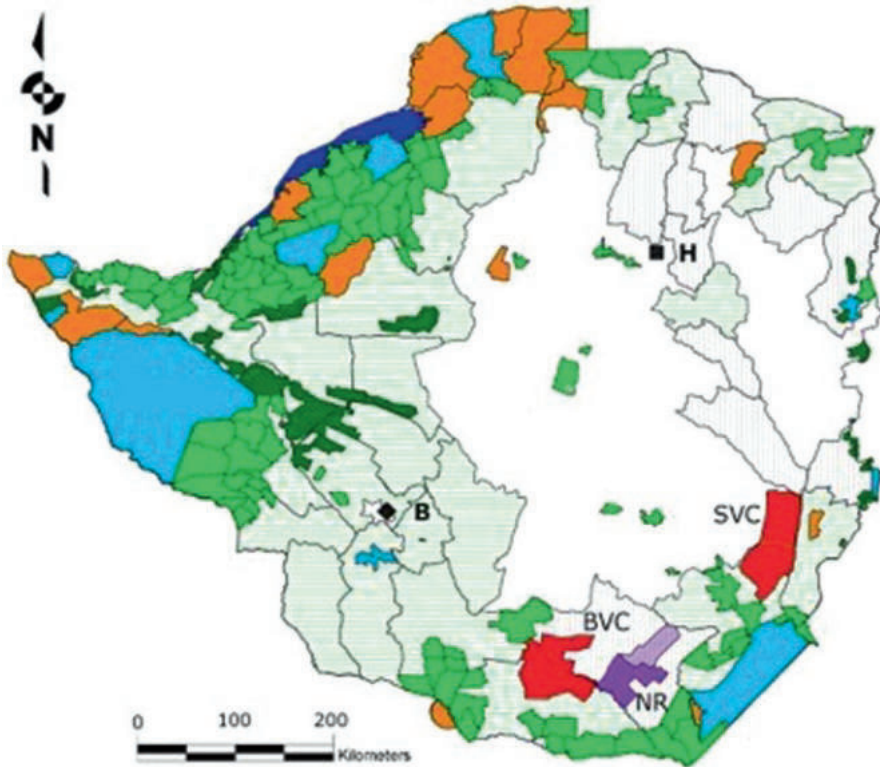
Any discussion on CBNRM projects must refer back to what is arguably the foundational and most widely cited initiative of its kind in Africa – the Zimbabwean CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources) project. CAMPFIRE has been described as a major turning point in global conservation (Borgerhoff Mulder and Coppolillo 2005). For two decades it was the Gold Standard of CBNRM and it has contributed enormously to the development of the principles and practises of community-based approaches to natural resource conservation in poorly resourced countries.

The magnitude of the challenges confronting the founders of the CBNRM approach in Namibia and Zimbabwe, and more broadly, of biodiversity conservation in tropical countries, are elegantly explored by Barrett et al. (2001). However, their comprehensive review of the problems facing CBNRM does not give due emphasis to the pivotal role of politics in Africa, and of governance at all levels of society. As described later in this chapter, governance is the Achilles' Heel of CBNRM.

The CAMPFIRE project reached its zenith at the start of the 2000s, when it encompassed 36 of Zimbabwe's 57 districts and included 13% of the country's area (Fig. 8.7). From the early 2000s, its activities were challenged by the political and socio-economic turmoil of the increasingly dysfunctional regime of the former Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe. The CAMPFIRE model is instructive, because it demonstrates the vulnerability of CBNRM approaches in countries where governance systems fall prey to the vicissitudes of politics, power play and personal greed. It provides a sobering lesson for those who are unfamiliar with the dynamics of African institutions and the rapidity with which robust conceptual models and effective programmes can be overturned.

Few conservation ventures in Africa have enjoyed the deep conceptual analysis and philosophical debate that the CAMPFIRE project stimulated. From the founding studies by Martin and Taylor (1983), Martin (1986, 2009), Child (1988, 2004), Murphree (1991, 1993, 1994, 2009), Metcalfe (1994), Hulme and Murphree (2001), Child and Murphree (2004), Taylor (2001, 2009), Bond (2001) and many others during the 1980s and '90s, to the recent major synthesis of Child (2019), CAMPFIRE has been the subject of intense self-analysis. What has emerged is a rich body of lessons learned, principles and guidelines. The initial simplicity of objectives – that CBNRM should be economically, ecologically and socially acceptable – has evolved into a complex of 'best, promising and emerging practices' (Tambara and Chiles 2016) with no less than 54 guiding practices for policy, governance, economic, socio-political and ecological viability.





**Fig. 8.7** The location of CAMPFIRE areas (in light green) relative to National Parks (blue), State protected Safari Areas (orange), Forest Areas (dark green) and Conservancies (red). (From Booth 2016)

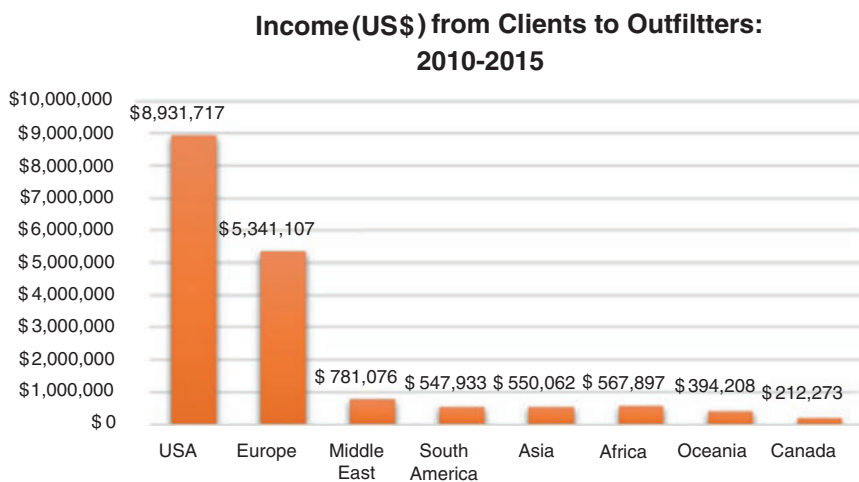
While much has been written on the mechanisms of CAMPFIRE during its hey-day, few studies comment on the fortunes of CAMPFIRE since its peak in 2002. By that year, according to a study by Khumalo (2003), it encompassed 53 Regional District Councils with ‘appropriate authority’ over wildlife use. Even at its peak, however, only 23 districts really functioned as intended, while only 12 received regular income from wildlife (Khumalo 2003). Between 1989 and 2001, CAMPFIRE’s self-generated revenues approximated US\$20.3 million, of which 97% came from the original 13 districts established with appropriate authority. Of this, 49% was dispersed to communities in these 13 districts (121,500 households – equivalent to 850,000 persons) amounting to a trickle down of less than US\$2 per capita per year. During the same period, investments in CAMPFIRE by donors included US\$40 million for start-up costs, consultants, capacity building, safari hunting operations, joint venture lodges, the establishment of the CAMPFIRE Association and the development of natural resource products. The concept’s fragility given its dependence on donor support was obvious, with donors contributing close to twice the self-generated income resulting from CAMPFIRE activities.

Donor support collapsed to a total of US\$515000 between 2003 and 2016 (Booth 2016). The promise and scale of sustainable and meaningful income streams to local communities had not been realised, even at the peak of CAMPFIRE’s success.

Problems of scale relate not only to that of own-generated to donor funding imbalances. With specific reference to CAMPFIRE experience, Cumming et al. (2006) draw attention to the problems resulting from the mismatch between the scale of management intervention and the scale of the ecological processes being managed within socio-ecological systems. They also point to the critical importance of devolution of authority to local communities, a factor also emphasised by Taylor (2009). Russell Taylor, one of the pioneers of CAMPFIRE, provides a detailed assessment of the project to 2006, noting declines in hunting income and of the transfer of benefits to communities, governance failures, and lack of government commitment to strengthening the devolution of authority through policy changes supported by legislation.

What is lacking in all the recent syntheses of CBNRM experience in Africa is an example of a CAMPFIRE project that has survived and prospered since the Mugabe era. Most reviews of CAMPFIRE focus on the processes and results of the golden years of the project, while reports for more recent activities tend to focus on site-specific impacts and case studies. Four papers (Booth 2016; Pole 2016; Muyengwa and Child 2017; Tchakatumba et al. 2019) provide insights into the more recent performance of community-based conservation in Zimbabwe.

In a detailed review of the role of elephant trophy hunting (mainly by foreign – mostly American hunters, Fig. 8.8) in supporting CAMPFIRE, Booth (2016) makes some interesting statements. He notes that CAMPFIRE projects embrace about 13% of Zimbabwe’s land area and benefit 25% of Zimbabwe’s households (5,439,000 persons), providing incentives to conserve wildlife and prevent poaching. The report, prepared in order to answer challenges raised by the US Fish and

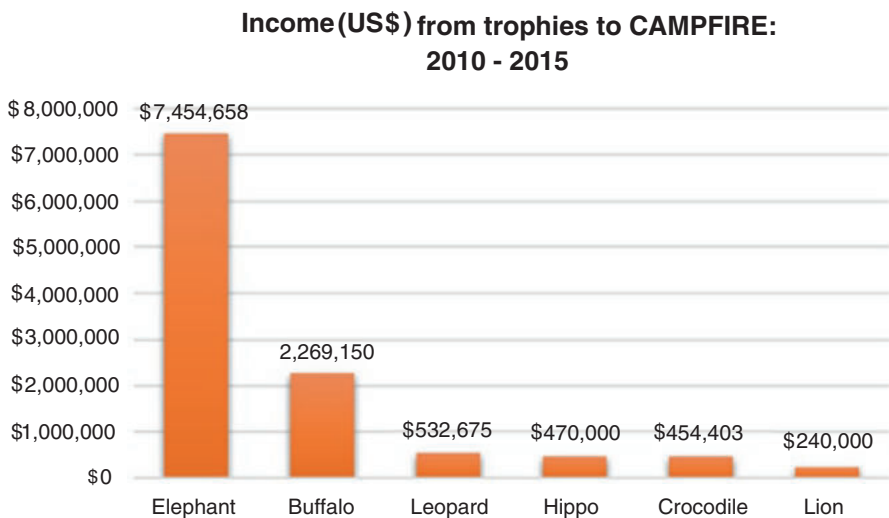


**Fig. 8.8** Contribution of hunting clients to the CAMPFIRE programme. (From Booth 2016)

Wildlife Service (which had imposed a ban on the import of elephant trophies to the USA in 2014), notes that about 90% of CAMPFIRE’s revenue comes from hunting, to which elephants contribute 64%. The hunting quota approximates 0.5% or 400 elephants of the national total of 80,000 elephants. Trophy fees from elephants approximated US\$1.2 million per year (Fig. 8.9). Removing the income derived from elephant trophy hunting by Americans removes the incentives to local communities to conserve wildlife, and will ultimately result in their return to unsustainable pastoralism and agricultural practices and the degradation of ecosystems and the wildlife and livelihoods that they sustain (Booth 2016). As is the case elsewhere in Africa, human/wildlife conflicts will not be tolerated by local people living adjacent to protected areas, unless compensation is provided, in cash or in kind. Booth also points to an increasing human population and the lack of investment in infrastructure and human capital in the CAMPFIRE areas as challenges to sustaining the benefits of the programme.

In the Zambezi valley, one of the most successful CAMPFIRE projects – Masoka – collapsed as a result of ‘elite capture’ between 2009 and 2011, with a reversal of the socio-economic and environmental benefits embedded over the previous decade by the project (Muyengwa and Child 2017). The Masoka CAMPFIRE project had changed from a highly participatory model (Taylor 2009) to a personalised programme controlled by the elite.

A study of 569 households in the southern lowveld of Zimbabwe in 2014, during the post-donor period, found that income from CAMPFIRE was less than 0.5% of total household income (Tchakatumba et al. 2019). The wildlife income for the study area in 2014 totalled US\$305000 and was directed mainly to community facilities, with less than 30 full-time jobs provided within an estimated population of 28,000. Tchakatumba concludes: “These aggregate amounts are considerable,



**Fig. 8.9** Income (US\$) generated from key trophy species (2010–2015). (From Booth 2016)

compared to what is trickling down to households.” Community perceptions indicated that benefits decreased and costs in terms of human-wildlife conflict increased in the post-donor period. Communities were considered the last to benefit from CAMPFIRE, when compared to safari operators, hunters, district and ward councillors and government. The household survey found a lack of transparency resulting from a top-down approach from the district and community leadership with a lack of devolution of power. In short, the findings contradict the best intentions of CAMPFIRE.

It is not only the rural community-based conservation projects that have suffered as a result of collapsing systems of governance. The large private land conservancies (e.g. Save Valley Conservancy (SVC) in the semi-arid south east Lowveld of Zimbabwe (Lindsey et al. 2009) have experienced serious challenges due to policy changes driven by the then Mugabe regime, a process described in detail by Pole (2016). The SVC comprises a mix of private, local community, and government properties, originally totalling 3442 km<sup>2</sup> (but later reduced to 2500 km<sup>2</sup> by land invasions). Developed as a cattle ranching area in the 1970s, the industry collapsed during an extended drought in the 1980s. After private (white) landowners were granted rights over wildlife in 1975, it was found that exploiting the commercial value of indigenous wildlife exceeded that of domestic stock. From the early 1990s, a consortium of 18 ranchers formed the SVC through a complex process of negotiation between partners, motivated and financially supported by the rhino conservation project. Donor funding was raised to re-introduce black rhino, elephant and 11 other species – a total of 3128 head of game – to repopulate the savannas. By 1995 the 350 km boundary of SVC was game-fenced and provided with effective management systems, particularly focused on reducing poaching from neighbouring communities. The combination of teamwork, donor funding and highly skilled technical advice, led to rapidly increasing wildlife populations, with significant income flows from safari hunting and photographic tourism.

This positive trajectory of the Save Valley Conservancy suffered a reversal from 2000, with the start of Mugabe’s Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). By 2003, SVC had lost 33% of its land area through government-sanctioned land occupation by 4500 households. Much of the fencing was torn down, often to be used for wire snares. A continuing series of government interventions placed impossible challenges on maintaining the conservancy, with the once coherent cooperative team beginning to collapse in response to land occupation, poaching, cancellation of hunting permits and absence of donor support (Pole 2016).

Despite the reverses suffered by the CAMPFIRE programme during the 2000s, strategic opportunism seemingly came to the rescue during the 2010s. In September 2013, the mass poisoning and death of over 100 elephants in Hwange National Park attracted international media attention and public outrage. Furthermore, the Zimbabwean Minister of Environment was coming under severe pressure from traditional leaders due to dissatisfaction with the CAMPFIRE programme. The urgent and existential crisis triggered a thoughtful and perhaps opportunistic response from the Zimbabwe government and from the CAMPFIRE Association. The latter approached donor agencies for support. Generously funded by the European Union,

a national stakeholder's review of the CAMPFIRE project was commissioned. The review was led by a team of consultants with wide experience in CBNRM and their findings published in 2018. The review revealed that the programme was experiencing institutional, operational, legal and external challenges (GoZ 2018).

Exactly seven years after the mass poisoning of elephants, and following five years of workshops and deliberations, on 15 September 2020, the Zimbabwe government released the following Cabinet Statement (GoZ 2020): "Cabinet considered and approved proposals to re-focus and revitalize the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). Implementing the proposals will result in a more effective and transparent CAMPFIRE that will benefit communities and further operationalise the devolution concept." The statement recognised that 90% of CAMPFIRE income came from trophy hunting and that there was need to diversify income streams. The proposed solutions focus on legislative and administrative arrangements between levels in local government to strengthen the devolution principles described 30 years earlier by Murphree (1991). Devolution should not end at District Council level, but at the local communities most effected by the costs and benefits of wildlife conservation. Prominent in the language of the review was the need for strong and effective – and scale sensitive – governance. CAMPFIRE, in policy at least, had come full circle.

## **8.6 The Lowveld Conservancies: Different Approaches Produce Different Outcomes**

The ongoing socio-economic turmoil during the Mugabe era was not devoid of conservation success stories. Somewhat surprisingly, the project that has achieved the most notable and sustained success is that of the Lowveld Rhino Conservation project, implemented in the heartland of the Save River and adjoining conservancies. Despite the challenges faced by the Lowveld conservancies through the early 2000s (land invasion, human population growth, poaching, rejection of the CAMPFIRE system by traditional leaders) remarkable success has been achieved through a focused programme of rhino capture, translocation, reintroduction and protection within the conservancies. The project developed in parallel to CAMPFIRE, but with a different design and more focused objectives.

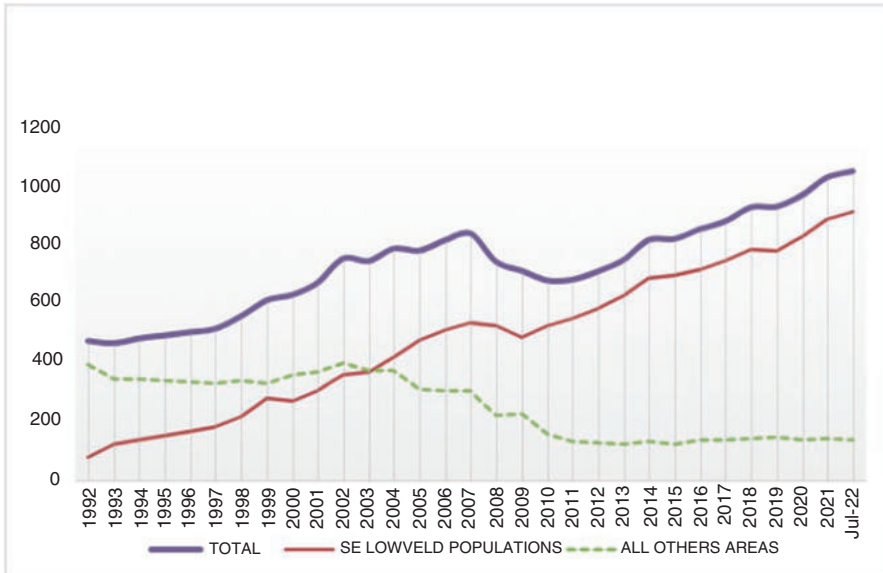
In the 1980s, the poaching of black rhino in the Zambezi valley was reaching alarming levels. The drama and intrigue that characterised the rhino poaching saga that embraced southern Africa is described in captivating detail by John Hanks in his book *Operation Lock and the War on Rhino Poaching* (Hanks 2015). In the late 1980s Hanks was Director for Africa at WWF International. Hanks sought funding to implement a proposal made by Zimbabwean ecologists Raoul du Toit and David Cumming to translocate the remaining rhino in the Zambezi valley to more secure areas, particularly the privately owned ranches of the arid southeast of the country. The rhino conservation project was instrumental in triggering the conservancy

concept among some owners of very large cattle ranches. As described earlier, severe droughts in preceding years had convinced cattle ranchers that the more resilient and species-rich wild ungulate populations offered better returns on investment than monospecific livestock. But the cost of capture, translocation and protection of rhino and other species rescued from the Zambezi valley and other vulnerable areas was a major financial challenge.

Serendipity catalysed an unexpected solution. In early 1988 John Hanks was alerted to a possible source of funding – the UK-based Beit Trust. The Trust, founded in 1906, had strong ties to Zimbabwe, where it had generously supported education, health and welfare projects over many decades. In 1988, Sir Alfred Beit, the nephew of the Trust's founder, learned of the plight of rhinos in the Zambezi Valley. He lobbied other Trustees to support a conservation project to save the rhino, a proposal that differed markedly from the long tradition of directing grants to people-focused applications. John Hanks, always agile in responding to such opportunities, worked with Raoul Du Toit, the scientific officer in Zimbabwe of the IUCN's African Elephant and Rhino Specialist Group, in preparing a compelling proposal to the Trust. The Trustees replied promptly, and ultimately approved not the usual US\$50000 level of grant, but a major US\$1 million grant which extended over eight years, on condition that the funding was administered by an NGO, and led by professionals such as Hanks and Du Toit. A protracted process of negotiation followed, with Zimbabwean government officials endeavouring to control both the project and the funding. The 87-year-old Alfred Beit did not compromise, and Hanks and Du Toit were respectively appointed Project Director and Executive Director of the Beit/WWF initiative from January 1991. Through a process reflecting all the elements of strategic opportunism, Du Toit succeeded, over the course of three decades, to rescue the Zimbabwean black rhino population. Globally, the Lowveld black rhino population is now second in number only to the rhino population of Etosha National Park, Namibia.

Du Toit (2016) describes the approach followed by the Lowveld Rhino Trust as a variant of the CBNRM model embraced by CAMPFIRE. His approach is based on a re-think of the traditional CBNRM model, pragmatically responding to a situation in which the essential enabling conditions for CBNRM had been eroded through the Mugabe era. He concluded that what reads well as the golden rules of CBNRM in theory can be untenable in practice (Du Toit 2016). Within the conservancies of the southeast Lowveld, a more sharply defined incentive scheme, targeting selected communities, has been successful. Support is linked to performance indicators such as the proportion of rhino poaching incursions reported by the local community, gradually changing negative perceptions of rhino to their being more useful to household economies. Positive engagement with the selected communities has been fundamental. The results are impressive.

In 1992, the Save Valley and other conservancies in the southeast Lowveld had a population of 81 rhinos (17% of the national rhino population). In mid-2022, the population of both black and white rhino (Fig. 8.10) had increased to 911 (87% of the national population). In common with many conservation success stories in Africa, the recovery of Zimbabwe's rhino population can be attributed to the vision



**Fig. 8.10** Total black and white rhino population numbers in Zimbabwe, 1992–2022. (Graphic: Raoul du Toit)

and leadership of one person – Raoul du Toit – supported by the richness of Zimbabwean conservation experience, expertise and dedication.

### 8.7 Lessons Learned: Good Governance, CBNRM’s Achilles’ Heel

“There are no quick fixes but, properly done, effective CBNRM is attainable and worth fighting for” (Child 2019: p. 356).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to repeat the elements of the rise and decline of Community-Based Natural Resource Management as experienced in Zimbabwe. The message in Child’s scholarly volume, cited above, suggests that the devil is in the detail: ‘properly done’. This sentiment applies to any conservation endeavour, most especially in Africa.

Child’s succinct conclusion reflects the robust body of field experience on which it is built. But it is in the title of his book that his key message is located: “Sustainable Governance of Wildlife and Community-based Natural Resource Management.” His thesis is that without good governance, all approaches to CBNRM will fail. CAMPFIRE, the project in which he played a central role, is a classic example of the critical importance of good governance in community-based programmes. Yet the paramountcy of good governance is ignored by nearly every starry-eyed

conservation biologist who sets grand goals in Africa. It is the topic on which most reporters on the success or failure of projects in Africa prefer to fall silent.

In the broader arena of governance, political history is also key. In southern Africa, especially South Africa, the failure of CBNRM initiatives is seldom attributed to the deep negative legacy of land expropriation (and consequent overcrowding of ‘homelands’) and the criminalisation of wildlife use (poaching) that extended from the 1880s until today. In the case of Zimbabwe, Murphree (2009) points to the dispossession of land and access to wildlife during colonial times, which led to the breakdown of ancient customs of governance of land and wildlife use. CAMPFIRE contributed effectively to the rebuilding of such customs and benefits, only to be eroded by the collapse of governance systems.

Child (2019) devotes a full chapter to the evolution of governance systems. He uses, as examples, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the subsequent declaration of the Bill of Rights of 1689 as the founding transformations leading to modern social order. The divine rights of kings and the feudal systems of land tenure were replaced by the rights of ordinary people to security and the ownership of property. But models of the importance of good governance in sustaining social, economic and environmental health go back much further than the Glorious Revolution, and need no scholarly reading of social history to comprehend.

Good governance is not a new concept, although treated by many conservation biologists as though it were a modern phenomenon – like capitalism, socialism and globalisation. The central role of good governance is nowhere better illustrated than in the fresco panels by the early Renaissance artist Ambrogio Lorenzetti, in the Palazzo Pubblico (Town Hall) of Siena, Tuscany (Lorenzetti 1339). The frescoes are as relevant to contemporary Africa as they were to fourteenth century Europe. Painted in 1339 as ‘The Allegory and Effects of Good and Bad Government on the City and the Country’, these huge frescoes adorn the walls of the hall in which the nine elected magistrates of the city state of Siena would meet to take decisions on government. The frescoes illustrate the benefits and costs of good and bad decisions taken by the nine councillors. Six panels occupy the three principal walls of the council chamber. Four scenarios are presented. A prosperous city with vibrant trade, commerce, teaching, people dancing in the streets and buildings under construction, is compared with a city of corruption, crime, poverty and collapsing infrastructure. A countryside of flourishing crops, forests, healthy livestock and prosperous farmers (Fig. 8.11) is contrasted with a landscape of burning fields and forests, eroded hills, abandoned buildings, roving bandits and mounted soldiers (Fig. 8.12). The contrast of peace and prosperity under the rule of law, with the chaos of anarchy and desolation, was a daily reminder to the city’s governing body. Any observer of the towns and countryside of Zimbabwe today might appreciate the prescience of the allegory.

It is in this context that the Namibian model is so important. As the contributors to two detailed reviews of CBNRM projects across Africa have concluded, despite the general similarity of intent, the projects studied demonstrate wide divergences in approaches and levels of success (Roe et al. 2009; Africa Wildlife Foundation 2016).





**Fig. 8.11** Good governance in the countryside – productive landscapes, with prosperous farmers taking their products to the market. (Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1339): Fresco, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, Tuscany. Wikimedia Commons)



**Fig. 8.12** Bad governance in the countryside -degraded landscapes, ruined villages, roaming bandits. (Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1339): Fresco, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, Tuscany. Wikimedia Commons)

The Namibian model stands apart from all others in several respects (Jones 2016). First, Namibia has a very low population density. Second, it is an arid country with very low agricultural potential. Third, it has a great diversity of spectacular landscapes and charismatic wildlife species. Fourth, community rights over wildlife and tourism have been entrenched in legislation and clearly defined. Fifth, it has enjoyed strong support from government, NGOs and donors for over two decades. Sixth, and most importantly, it has, since independence in 1990, enjoyed a stable, transparent and relatively corruption-free system of governance. It is this last factor that separates it from its neighbours, and from most wildlife-rich countries in Africa. The hope for CBNRM is vested in the hope for Africa: good governance through democracy and the rule of law.

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