

# CBNRM IN NAMIBIA: GROWTH, TRENDS, LESSONS AND CONSTRAINTS

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## INTRODUCTION

Namibia has a total land area of approximately 825 000 sq. km and a population estimated at 1,8 million, with an annual growth rate of 3%. Namibia is the driest country south of the Sahara, with average rainfall varying from above 600 mm in the northeast to less than 25 mm in the Namib Desert to the west. Rainfall is erratic both temporally and spatially leading to large localised differences in precipitation and large fluctuations from one year to the next. Drought is a regular occurrence.

The shortage of water is the main limiting factor on Namibia's economy, which is almost entirely reliant on natural resources. Two-thirds of the population live in rural areas and are directly dependent upon the soil and living natural resources for their livelihoods (Brown 1996).

Although Namibia is classified as a low–middle income country with a relatively high per capita income (US \$1,956 in 1995), the distribution of income is highly skewed. Namibia has a Gini coefficient measuring 0.67, which is the highest value recorded worldwide (UNDP 1998). The richest 10% of society receive 65% of income.

Land distribution in Namibia has been skewed by the country's colonial history. Under German rule from 1888 to 1917, white settlers appropriated much of the central part of the country, and began the process of developing "reserves" for black tribal groups. The South African Administration, which replaced the German colonial government under a League of Nations Mandate, continued this process and consolidated the reserves into a system of black homelands based on South Africa's own *apartheid* policy. In many instances the land allocated to black tribal groups was amongst the least suitable for crop growing and livestock farming, constituting large parts of the arid north-west and of the Kalahari sand veld in the east and north-east<sup>3</sup>.

A dual tenure system exists as a result of colonial settlement policies. What has been called "commercial" farmland is held under freehold title, while the state owns communal land. At independence in 1990 the freehold sector (almost exclusively white) comprised 43% of land, communal areas 41% and conservation areas and other state land 15%. Close to a million people live on communal land while a few thousand people own freehold land.

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<sup>3</sup> Large parts of this land have on the other hand turned out to be major attractions for photographic and hunting safaris

## HISTORY OF THE CBNRM APPROACH IN NAMIBIA

The influences on the Namibian CBNRM approach are partly indigenous, partly the experience of neighbouring countries with similar programmes, and partly the body of theory that has developed around common property resource management. Within Namibia, the success of private conservation on commercial (freehold) farms demonstrated how a combination of economic incentives and proprietorship could create appropriate conditions for sustainable use of wildlife. A reversal of wildlife's decline on freehold farms followed the 1968 decision to give private farmers conditional rights to exploit wildlife on their farms. Backed up by legislation in 1975, this decision gave a form of proprietorship over wildlife to freehold farmers, which included the right to retain all income derived from the use (including sale) of game animals. With farmers enabled to take management decisions over the wildlife on their land and to realise more benefits than costs from wildlife, a multi-million dollar wildlife industry has developed (Barnes and de Jager 1996) and species that disappeared from freehold land, such as lion, elephant and rhinoceros, have in some cases been returned. On freehold land the number of game species increased by 44% over twenty years while the total number of animals and biomass increased by 80% between 1972 and 1992 (Ashley and Barnes 1996).

A significant development on freehold land has been the tendency of individual farmers to realise that even their large farms (5000 ha and above) are inadequate for proper wildlife management in Namibia's arid environment. They have begun pooling their individual land, financial, human and natural resources to manage wildlife more communally. They have formed common pool resource management institutions called conservancies which have a committee of landholders to run them, a constitution with a set of operating rules, defined membership and defined boundaries. As freehold farmers they are in a strong position to enforce their entitlement both to the land and the wildlife on it.

Since 1982 NGO efforts to involve rural people in wildlife conservation in the Kunene Region of north west Namibia have demonstrated the viability of community-based approaches to natural resource management on communal lands. The NGO, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), worked with local traditional leaders and other community members who were concerned at the decline of wildlife due to heavy poaching and drought. IRDNC, working with individual conservation officials, helped local communities establish a network of community game guards and established a pilot project to bring tourism revenue to a particular community as an incentive for conservation of local wildlife. Significantly community leaders and many residents agreed to take on some responsibility for conserving wildlife before there was any prospect of economic benefit. The conservation commitment of local communities has played a major role in allowing wildlife numbers in Kunene

Region to recover and has been crucial in the recovery of the region's black rhino population (Durbin et al 1997).

Of the CBNRM programmes in neighbouring countries, Zimbabwe's Communal Areas Programme for Indigenous Resource Management (CAMPFIRE) has had the most influence on the development of the Namibian programme. Whereas the Namibian experience in Kunene Region demonstrated the importance of other incentives, the CAMPFIRE emphasis on the critical link between community income and wildlife conservation has also been significant. Where rural communities in the CAMPFIRE programme directly received income related to use and management of wildlife and perceived that the benefits of wildlife exceeded the costs, they were conserving their wildlife and its habitat (Murphree 1997). An important lesson from CAMPFIRE was that management authority and rights to benefit needed to be devolved to the lowest possible unit to have the maximum impact on peoples' behaviour. In some cases Rural District Councils (to which 'appropriate authority over wildlife had been granted) were holding on to revenue and management authority and not following policy guidelines for devolving to the lower Ward level. CAMPFIRE personnel also advised Namibian officials to ensure that communities could retain 100% of revenue from wildlife and not share the income with government as done in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. Otherwise it was difficult to generate sufficient income to have an impact at household level and the sharing of revenue represented an unfair tax on wildlife not applied to other land uses such as livestock farming.

At the same time as the Namibian Government was able to learn from indigenous and neighbouring CBNRM activities, the lack of resources for conservation authorities to adequately patrol vast and inhospitable tracts of country was a strong incentive to try alternative approaches to conservation.

In designing new policy and legislation Namibian government officials were able to draw upon important advances in common property resource management theory and practice (e.g. Bromley and Cernea 1989, Ostrom 1990). New ideas about the design of common property resource (CPR) management institutions helped answer some of the questions about how to devolve proprietorship over a common resource such as wildlife, to a group of individuals on land owned by the State. The new theory suggested that successful CPR institutions needed to have a defined membership, a set of agreed operating rules and resource use rules, the ability to monitor compliance with rules and enforce them, a defined area in which the resource is 'owned' and managed, and legitimacy from the resource users as well as from the State.

These various influences led to the development of CBNRM policy and legislation that provide for rights over wildlife and tourism to be given to communal area residents who form a conservancy. In order to form a conservancy, a community needs to define its membership, define its physical boundaries, elect a representative committee, agree on a plan for the equitable

distribution of benefits and adopt a legally recognised constitution. The following is a summary of the major steps in the development of the Namibian CBNRM approach:

- From 1990-92 the newly created Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism (MWCT) carried out with IRDNC and other NGOs a series of participatory "socio-ecological surveys". These identified key issues and problems from a community perspective concerning wildlife, conservation and the MWCT. They led to the development of several localised community-based conservation projects to address these issues and problems. Government officials and Namibian NGO partners realised that policy and legislation must change for these projects to be successful.
- 1992: MWCT developed the first draft of a new policy providing for rights over wildlife and tourism to be given to communities that form a common property resource management institution called a "conservancy".
- 1993: Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Programme brought major donor support (USAID and WWF) to CBNRM in Namibia. Evolution of a 'National Programme' involving a partnership between government, NGOs and rural communities.
- 1995: Cabinet approved the new policy for communal area conservancies. Work began on drafting legislation to put the policy into effect.
- 1996. Parliament passed the new "conservancy" legislation.
- 1997: First communal area conservancy gazetted.
- Mid 1998: Three more communal area conservancies gazetted. Planning workshop to launch a national CBNRM co-ordinating body.
- September 1998: Official public launch of Namibia's Communal Area Conservancy Programme by President Nujoma.
- Mid 1999: Start of 2nd phase of LIFE Programme for a further five years.
- July 2000, CBNRM Association of Namibia (consisting of MET and NGOs) Secretariat established.
- By January 2003, 15 communal area conservancies (covering more than 4,000,000 hectares) registered with more than 30 others being formed.

## KEY PRINCIPLES TO EMERGE FROM IMPLEMENTATION

### *Policy, legislation and practice should be rooted in local needs*

For CBNRM policy, legislation and practise to be successful, they need to be rooted in the needs of local people. The socio-ecological surveys carried out in the early days of the Namibian programme enabled policy planners and others to gain a good idea of problems faced by local communities and of the communities' own vision for wildlife and conservation. Policy arose as a response to the needs identified by the communities. Importantly there was a considerable overlap between the agenda of the government officials and NGOs on the one side and the local communities on the other. All communities visited during the socio-ecological surveys expressed the desire to maintain wildlife on their land for future generations, as well as the desire to gain some form of financial benefit from wildlife in the same way as freehold farmers had done. This provided a solid base from which to develop new policy. Further, the development of local projects and the reform of policy and legislation in tandem were important for policy development. The community projects that resulted from the socio-ecological surveys acted as pilots for the overall approach, helping to develop and test methods of community mobilisation and organisation, benefit distribution plans, partnerships with the private sector, etc. The experiences of these projects helped feed back into the development of policy and legislation which was taking place in parallel at the national level.

The development of policy, legislation and practice in Namibia has therefore been grounded in experiences at grass roots level and was not the product of theorists and planners removed from practical implementation issues (Jones 1999a). Policy and legislation benefitted from the opportunity for debate and discussion among a variety of stakeholders and affected parties. There is a need for similar processes to be embarked upon as MET carries out a new round of policy and legislative review.

### *CBNRM policy should provide incentives and frameworks*

Namibia's conservancy approach is significant because the policy and legislation provide a framework and incentives to which communities can voluntarily respond. If a community does not choose to form a conservancy, then it has that choice. The legislation provides opportunities that communities can weigh up and they can make their own trade-offs between wildlife and tourism and other land uses and livelihood strategies. The legislation does provide some basic conditions for conservancy formation and the devolution of rights to use wildlife, but in many respects provides a flexible framework within which communities can shape their own conservancy.

Thus the legislation does not try to define a 'community' but leaves this to communal area residents themselves. It also does not prescribe who should represent a community on the conservancy committee. This enables residents to choose their own representatives and, if desired, to use an existing institution as their conservancy committee. It also allows communities to provide for strong involvement of traditional leaders if they so wish. Rights are devolved directly to the community and do not pass through levels of local government, as in some neighbouring countries. The community is able to gain income directly and keep all of the revenue generated through hunting and tourism. The conservancy policy does not prescribe how communities should use their income, leaving it to the community to decide whether wildlife and tourism income should be used for community projects or as dividends to individual households. The only legal requirement regarding income is that communities should have a plan for the equitable distribution of income. The element of choice provided for by the policy and legislation is an important aspect of empowerment and control over a community's own affairs.

#### *The conservancy approach as an institutional model*

The wildlife and tourism conservancy policy has proved important in Namibia beyond wildlife conservation because it is providing an institutional model, based on common property institutional principles, which can be used for the management of other resources. Both the forestry and water sectors, for example, are devolving authority to community committees based on the conservancy model. New forestry legislation makes provision for the establishment of community forests. A community forest would be managed by a community forest committee with similar attributes to a conservancy committee. The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development is promoting the establishment of Community Water Point Associations which are gradually taking over responsibility for the operation and running of infrastructure as well as the allocation of water. The proposed institutional framework for these committees is again similar to that of conservancies.

#### *The importance of scale in CBNRM*

The development of the CBNRM programme in Namibia demonstrates some of the problems of dealing with scale in common property resource management. In particular, there is a need to match appropriate sized social units with appropriate sized wildlife management units. Common property theory (e.g. Ostrom 1990, Murphree 1993) suggests that small social units are most appropriate because decision-making is easier and transparency and accountability are more likely to be achieved where residents regularly meet face to face and know what is happening in their local area. However, the semi-arid and arid conditions in much

of Namibia necessitate that wildlife moves over large areas in search of food and water. This has two implications. Firstly wildlife and its habitat have to be managed over a large area of land (larger than most conservancies) and secondly there are problems in defining "ownership" of wildlife that moves from one community's land to another.

Jones (2001: 169) suggested that a number of factors lead to the conclusion that the boundaries of conservancies in north west Namibia and elsewhere "will change over time as communities adjust to the different requirements of social cohesion, practical organisational constraints, and viable areas for resource management... Future adaptations and adjustments might lead to smaller conservancies with more socially cohesive human populations and sub-units within the conservancy, with these conservancies forming the building blocks for co-operative management across larger resource management units." In Kunene region, at least one emerging conservancy has split into three smaller ones that do in fact remove the organisational constraints of a widely distributed population, and major settlements separated by long distances. The split has also created more socially cohesive units, whereas the original single unit contained a wide diversity of groups that were engaged in considerable internal conflict. Some conservancies elsewhere in the country have a membership of several thousands and are beginning to show the strains of trying to achieve transparency and accountability in such circumstances.

#### *Devolution to the lowest appropriate level*

Although the devolution of rights over wildlife and tourism in Namibia directly empowers local communities, there is a strong argument for further devolution to sub-units within conservancies. The conservancy committees tend to become accountable upwards to the organisations that provide funding and technical support rather than downwards to the organisation's members (Child *et al* 2001). Empowerment, in terms of greater technical knowledge and understanding of wildlife management and the tourism industry, enhanced skills in organisational management, and exposure to new ideas and arenas tends to be concentrated in the hands of the committee members. Devolution within the conservancy to sub-units appropriate to each conservancy would provide the opportunity to develop localised forms of participatory democracy. Such an approach would increase the likelihood of accountability downwards from the conservancy committee, and would place more responsibility on individual members. It would increase the involvement of individuals and enable them to take a greater part in major decisions such as how to use the income generated by wildlife and tourism. It would also enable support agencies to provide capacity building at more local levels and to more individuals. The sub-units could take decisions over local resource management issues and could link very effectively to other resource management institutions being established such as water point committees and community forests. The sub-units would provide building blocks for joint

management and joint decision-making over resources and issues that need to be managed at a larger scale.

### *The importance of intrinsic incentives for conservation*

The experience of CBNRM in Namibia has helped to focus attention on intrinsic incentives for conservation. The early conservation successes in Kunene Region described above were achieved without the prospects of large amounts of income being derived by residents from conservation. Although there was considerable poaching, there was evidence of community-level concern at the disappearance of wildlife and local headmen wanted to halt the decline. The exercise of responsibility, regaining of some control over wildlife and wanting wildlife for its existence value, appear to have provided sufficient incentive for residents of the Kunene Region communal areas to conserve wildlife (Jones 1999a, Jones 2001). In the case of the Uukwaluudhi conservancy in north-central Namibia and the Salambala conservancy in Caprivi, local leaders were keen to see the re-introduction of wildlife that had disappeared. Evidence suggests there is a shifting balance between intrinsic (cultural and aesthetic) and instrumental incentives such as economic benefit (Jones 2001). In Kunene Region economic benefits have taken on more significance and have become central to CBNRM. However, the intrinsic value of wildlife to local residents and the benefits of community empowerment should not be ignored while the incentive of cash in the pocket is being promoted. Important in facilitating the shift in balance is the difference found in many communities between village elders and youth concerning the value of wildlife. In instances where the existence of wildlife was threatened, village elders expressed a strong cultural value around wildlife and a desire for wildlife to be maintained or returned so their children's children would not have to learn about wildlife in a book. In contrast, village youth who did not grow up with wildlife viewed the return of wildlife with greater economic considerations in mind, perceiving the return of wildlife as an opportunity to generate employment or financial returns from such activities as tourism or trophy hunting. The CBNRM programme has effectively harnessed the aggregated values of different community age sets as an incentive for fostering the return of wildlife to previous densities in many areas.

### *The balance between process and product*

An important principle that has emerged from the Namibian CBNRM programme is that implementation needs to be based on process rather than the achievement of pre-determined "products" or "outcomes". A process approach to CBNRM focuses as much on the way products are produced as on the products themselves. Experience has shown that in the long-run a good process is more likely to lead to a good outcome than a quick-fix approach that leaves many issues un-addressed. A process-oriented approach implies sufficient participation



in decision-making by residents themselves, giving residents time to come to their own conclusions, enabling them to shape the outcome rather than presenting them with a fixed package, and acknowledging and dealing with their concerns. Much of the flexibility of the Namibian policy and legislation described above enables a process-oriented approach to be followed in conservancy formation and operation. For example, the self-definition of communities is an important issue for ensuring appropriate social units for managing natural resources. However, self-definition has resulted in the exposure of a number of underlying boundary disputes between different groups. This has delayed conservancy formation considerably in several cases. Yet, the process of working through such issues is important. Firstly because these disputes could lead to future conflict if left unresolved and secondly, as Davis and Jacobsohn (1999: 24) put it: "Intervention by outsiders to speed up the process could result in the sort of problems created by the arbitrary colonial boundaries inherited by independent Africa." Thirdly, resolution of these conflicts and agreement achieved around boundaries ultimately leads to greater social cohesion and direction, effectively forming more unified development building blocks around the country.

#### *The importance of light touch facilitation*

Experience has also shown that the best way to develop a process-oriented approach is through what has been called persistent and consistent "light touch" community empowerment and facilitation (Hitchcock and Murphree 1995, Jones 2001). This approach involves working directly with communities and not only through local government institutions or traditional leaders. It includes regular visits to the communities concerned, staying in touch with community power shifts and internal dynamics. It requires assisting communities to identify key issues and potential problems, providing information and asking appropriate questions to help them work through these issues and to develop appropriate decisions, solutions and actions. It involves understanding the various interest groups within a community and ensuring that they also have a voice in decision-making or are not ignored when discussions about benefit distribution take place. A danger in the provision of regular support and facilitation over a period of time to communities is that the NGO or other organisation providing the support retains a dominant role and becomes a "gatekeeper" between the community and other outsiders. The need for persistent and consistent facilitation and for communities and support organisations to develop mutual trust and good working relationships over time needs to be balanced by ensuring that facilitators expect to decrease their support, and by ensuring that support is demand-driven.

## GROWTH OF THE NAMIBIAN PROGRAMME

In January 2003 there were 15 communal area conservancies in Namibia covering just over four million hectares of land (LIFE 2002). This is an increase from four conservancies in 1998 covering an area of 1 682 100 ha. In late 2002, the government was poised to register and gazette an additional five conservancies. The land encompassed by the five new conservancies will amount to 721,629 hectares and will bring the total land under communal area conservancies to 4,792,929 hectares. An additional 28 conservancies, covering an estimated 5,000,000 – 6,000,000 hectares are also forming.

This represents significant growth in a period of four years given that forming a conservancy can be lengthy and time consuming process (particularly negotiating boundaries with neighbours and registering members).

Since communal area conservancies began to be registered by government in 1998, total income to conservancy committees has risen from N\$326 378 or US\$32 637<sup>4</sup> (three conservancies at an average of N\$108 792 or US\$10 879) to N\$3 221 578 or US\$322 157 (15 conservancies at an average of N\$214 771 or US\$21 477) in September 2002. The use of averages masks large differences in current earnings between the 15 conservancies. The highest earnings for example (Nyae Nyae Conservancy) are N\$956 500 (US\$95 650) and the lowest income (four conservancies) is zero. In some cases low earnings can be attributed to a lack of development where there is some potential for tourism and safari hunting. In other cases low earnings are linked to a lack of income generation potential.

In late 2002 there were four conservancies that had become financially independent i.e. they can pay all of their staff salaries, vehicle operating costs, and infrastructure maintenance costs, while at the same time allowing for benefits distributions to conservancy members (LIFE 2002).

Significantly a number of communities that do not have much potential to generate income from wildlife and tourism have formed conservancies. Although in some cases there might be unrealistic expectations concerning income generation, in others other motives appear to be important. Residents seem to believe that conservancies can provide useful institutional arrangements for managing other resources such as grazing and for gaining a stronger claim over their land.

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<sup>4</sup> Based upon an exchange rate of N\$10/US\$ 1

## CONSERVATION BENEFITS

### *Maintenance of Wild Habitat and Promotion of Wildlife and Tourism as Legitimate Land Uses*

The development of conservancies has contributed to the maintenance of wild habitat and has helped to promote wildlife and tourism as legitimate land uses. Most of the registered conservancies have inventoried their existing land uses and zoned specific areas of their conservancies as dedicated wildlife management areas in which trophy hunting and/or tourism is being promoted. This zoning precludes the use of these dedicated wildlife areas for settlement and cropping and, in many cases, for the grazing of livestock. Two conservancies fenced off areas of land in order to hold re-introduced species. As a consequence, there is growing awareness at both the local and national levels in Namibia about the validity of wildlife as a legitimate, land use alongside subsistence agriculture and livestock production. Further, this zoning process provides a long-term future for the welfare of wildlife throughout Namibia, as it puts in place an incentive-based land management system to promote the presence of wildlife.

### *Escalating Demand for The Recovery of Wildlife Populations*

The tangible financial benefits that conservancies are receiving (see socio-economic benefits, below) are creating increased demands for wildlife to be re-introduced on to communal lands. Since 1999, more than 2,500 mixed plains game animals have been re-introduced into six communal conservancies. This major re-introduction effort is being broadly supported by the MET, private sector (who have donated many animals), the LIFE Programme, and international donors. As recently as 1995, the re-introduction of wildlife into communal areas would not have warranted such extensive attention. However, the change in community attitudes and attendant drops in poaching have created a fertile and safe environment for game re-introductions. As a consequence, the MET is now even considering the possibility of experimental re-introductions of white rhino into some of the proven conservancies.

### *Biodiversity Benefits of Conservancies*

The increased community stewardship over wildlife is leading to a recovery of wildlife populations across large parts of northern Namibia, in particular the north-west (see Figure 1). Not only are wildlife numbers increasing, but distributions of many rare and/or valuable species are expanding. In particular, the population growth of such endangered species as black rhino and Hartmann's zebra are well documented in north west Namibia, while elephant ranges are expanding in

both the north west and north east of Namibia. In many instances, wildlife population increases are being expedited by the introduction of fast-breeding plains games species (i.e., springbok, kudu, oryx, etc.), whose increased presence serve as a buffer to reduce pressure on slower growing populations of rare and high-value species such as roan antelope. A spin-off benefit of such game population recoveries is the positive impact this generates for neighbouring park systems. There is a knock-on benefit to park populations, as the introduced game moves freely between such open systems as the Nyae Nyae Conservancy and the adjacent Khaudom Game Reserve National Park.

### WILDLIFE POPULATION TRENDS IN NORTH-WEST NAMIBIA

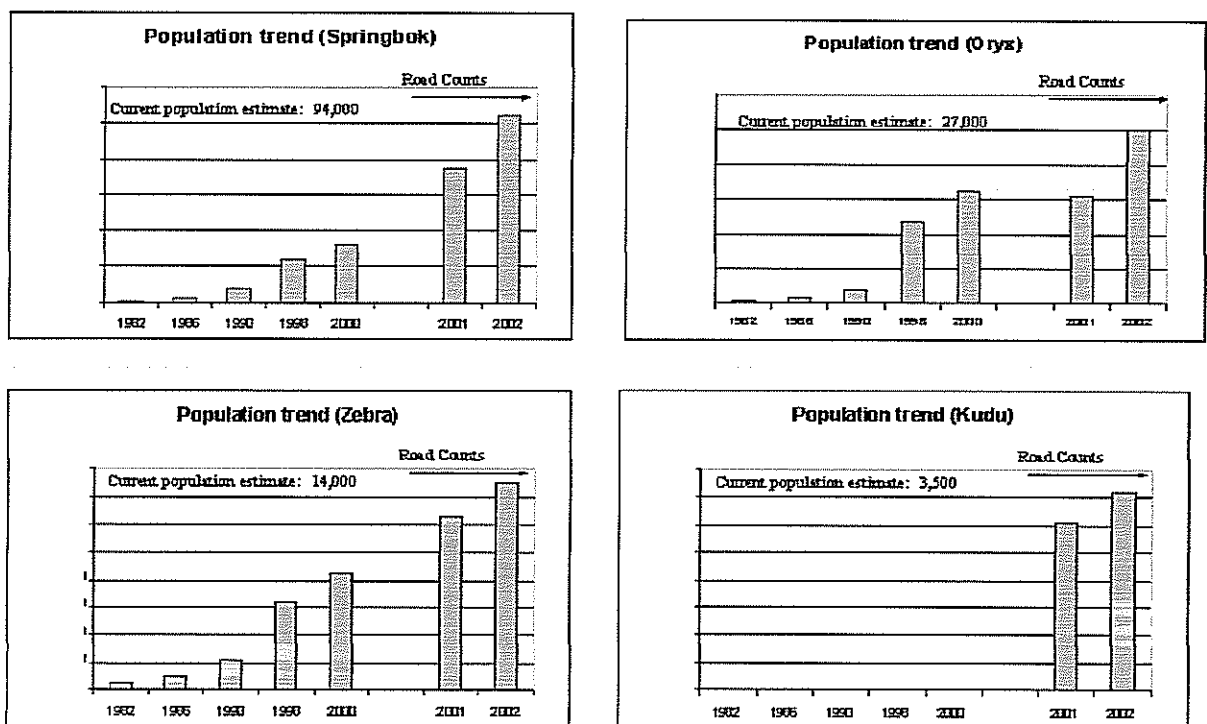


Figure 1. Growth trends (1982-2002) for springbok, oryx, Hartmann's zebra, and kudu in Northwestern Namibian registered and emerging conservancies.

Source: LIFE Project Semi-annual Report April 01 – September 30 2002

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The 2002 year saw exceptional growth in the amount of benefits and income generated by the National CBNRM Programme. The benefits generated in 2002 amounted to N\$11,129,952 (US\$1,112,995) versus N\$6,124,195 in 2001. This is an increase of 82% for the year. This marks the third time in the last four years that programmatic benefits have almost doubled in a one year period (LIFE 2002).

The diversity of benefits being generated by Namibia CBNRM enterprises remains a programmatic strength, with 2002 benefits and income being broken down as follows (LIFE 2002):



Cash income to conservancies also experienced a dramatic increase, with direct cash receipts to conservancies amounting to N\$3,221,578 during 2002, versus N\$1,433,342 and N\$484,886 in 2001 and 2000, respectively. During the year, a total of 11 conservancies received cash revenues with cash flows ranging from a low of N\$25,682 in Purros Conservancy to N\$920,500 in Nyae Nyae Conservancy, with the average income for conservancy receiving cash revenues amounting to N\$292,871 per conservancy.

A recent estimate of the total revenues generated by CBNRM-supported enterprises (i.e., joint venture lodges, trophy hunting concessions, thatching grass industry, CBTEs, crafts, and live game sales) shows these enterprises conservatively produced an annual turnover of N\$37,532,152 over the past year. These enterprises have resulted in the employment (through self-generated funds) of 374 full-time and 3,136 part-time employees (LIFE 2002).

The conservancies with high wildlife numbers and good scenic attractions have the highest potential to generate income. Torra conservancy in Kunene Region, on the margins of the Namib Desert in north-west Namibia, is a good example of this potential.

Torra has a small number of residents, only 120 households, within an area of around 352 200 ha. In late 2002 the conservancy distributed a dividend to members of N\$630 (US\$63), the first such household distribution the conservancy has made (Baker 2003). It is the first conservancy to become almost fully responsible for all its own costs (start up costs for most communal area conservancies are provided by NGOs and international donors). It has a number of income generating activities including a successful joint venture agreement with a reputable southern African photographic tourism company, to operate an upmarket tourism lodge.

Figures from LIFE (2002) show that the rental and percentage of turnover from the lodge was N\$303 000 (US\$30 300) in 2002; income from trophy hunting was N\$180 000 (US\$18 000); and the live sale of game generated N\$132 300 (US\$13 230). This gives a total income to the conservancy of N\$615 000 (US\$61 500). Wages from the lodge were worth N\$250 000 (US\$25 000) and wages from temporary employment by the safari hunter were worth N\$6 600 (US\$660). For the same period, the value of meat distributed was just more than N\$53 830 (US\$5 383), and the value of game hunted for own use was N\$41 878 (US\$4 187).

A socio-economic survey of 38 households in Torra in 1999 found that 53% were earning an income from activities related to wildlife (Jones 1999b). The main sources of income were working in a tourism lodge (35 %), wages to community game guards (26%) and crafts (13%). The average monthly income from wildlife and tourism related activities was N\$365 (US\$36).

The size of the conservancy (352 200 ha) means that it could certainly develop two more lodges without causing environmental damage or spoiling the wilderness experience for tourists. This would more than double the existing income, making considerably more money available for the 120 households once operating costs of around US\$18 000 have been covered. The amounts earned by the conservancy and the household dividend appear small in US\$ terms. Their significance becomes clear when one considers that the average income of subsistence farming households is estimated at US\$700 a year and for the poorest 20% of households around US\$200 a year (Ashley and Barnes 1996).

## LESSONS AND CONSTRAINTS

### *Lessons*

An overall lesson from CBNRM in Namibia is that implementation is a complex and sometimes difficult process on communal land. This is because of the large numbers of people, different communities, different groups within communities and the different institutions that already exist. Often these differences lead to competition over the rights, revenues and resources that conservancies bring to

the local arena (Jones 1999c). However, the evidence presented in the preceding sections indicates that conservancies present an attractive institutional option for local residents to manage renewable natural resources and to gain income from sustainable use. In some cases competition over rights, revenues and resources has led to disputes and conflict that have delayed conservancy formation for several years. However, local leaders and residents have persevered over time and have succeeded in resolving conflict and moving ahead with conservancy formation.

A number of other key lessons have emerged:

- The temptation to centralise all decision-making within the conservancy committee should be avoided. It should be recognised that: a) smaller units promote better accountability; b) traditional leaders and other institutions might have authority over resources at sub-levels within the conservancy; and c) not all resources are managed at the same level or scale as wildlife. Conservancies need to devolve to lower levels in order to cater for this institutional and jurisdictional complexity
- Traditional authorities are important because they are “owners” of the land in the minds of many residents, they allocate land, have authority over natural resources, and they play an important role in local dispute resolution and the administration of justice. Although some individual leaders might lack honesty and integrity, most rural residents support the *institution* of traditional leadership. Traditional authorities need to be included in the process of conservancy formation and conservancies need to build formal relationships with these authorities.
- Conservancies should be assisted to develop their own vision and plans *for integrated rural development* (not just wildlife and tourism) through which service provision should be coordinated. Service providers should work jointly in response to the conservancy plan and vision.
- There is still a need, however, to prevent the proliferation of sectorally-based organisations working in isolation and competition. Conservancies need to be more proactive in developing formal and informal relationships with bodies such as water point committees, community forests, village development committees, etc. Policy and legislation need to provide for better integration or complementarity in this regard.
- The Namibian programme has benefitted considerably from a strong partnership developed between various implementing agencies including government and NGOs. The partnership was developed initially through the LIFE Programme Steering Committee, and has evolved into a formal organisation, the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO). This body has proved to be a useful coordination mechanism for

structuring relationships between different organisations and agencies, within CBNRM as well as preventing duplication of activities. Its members have developed a common vision for CBNRM in Namibia and one of the organisation's major strengths is the sense of common purpose that has been developed among members.

- Conservancies have found it difficult to deal with the issue of benefit distribution and in some cases, income from tourism and trophy hunting has sat in the bank without being used or distributed as a dividend to households. Problems regarding benefit distribution relate partly to the problems faced by a loosely representative group of people who have to try and satisfy the needs of diverse groups and interests within the community. Devolution of greater authority to lower levels within conservancies as suggested above, could help bring decision-making over benefit distribution closer to members and their needs. It is important that use of income meets the needs of members if they are to perceive wildlife as providing more benefits than costs

### *Constraints*

Government officials in Namibia have shown themselves reluctant to give up power to conservancies and through implementation and reinterpretation of policy and legislation have placed additional restrictions on the ability of conservancies to take crucial management decisions (Corbett and Jones 2000, Jones 2002). A large body of work suggests that strong property rights are important incentives for people to invest in resource management (e.g. Murphree and Hulme 2001, Cousins 2000, SASUSG 1996, Lynch and Alcorn 1994, IFAD 1994). However, the proprietorship given to Namibian communal area conservancies is limited and conditional and most management decisions (when to harvest, how to harvest, off-take levels, species to be harvested) are still taken by government. Proposed revisions to wildlife legislation would remove the limited rights that communities currently enjoy. Bond (2001) has explored the relationship between strong proprietorship and financial benefit in Zimbabwe. He suggests that strong proprietorship can act as an important incentive where financial benefits are low and that high financial benefits can be a significant driver when proprietorship is weak. Currently in Namibia (and most of southern Africa) the financial benefits from wildlife and tourism to *households* remains low, costs of living with wildlife remain high and community proprietorship over wildlife remains weak. This situation remains the main constraint to implementing CBNRM in Namibia. Although rural communities have embraced the conservancy approach with enthusiasm so far, this initial burst of interest could wane if household income and benefit do not increase and proprietorship over wildlife is not strengthened. Government threatens to undermine the conservation and socio-economic gains detailed above by either holding on to power or taking back what it has already devolved.



Another major constraint is the lack of secure and exclusive group land tenure. Local communities are finding it difficult to keep outside livestock owners from moving into their land zoned for wildlife and tourism. Essentially policy and legislation have given local communities in Namibia rights over wildlife (and increasingly forest and water resources), but not over the land itself. If communities cannot prevent other people using the land they wish to set aside for wildlife and tourism then there remains little incentive to maintain wild habitats. There is little likelihood that management inputs and investments will be rewarded and the land might as well be converted to grazing for livestock or crop lands. Further, a lack of secure land tenure means that communities cannot easily raise capital loans themselves based on their land as security. It is also more difficult for communities to attract investors as partners in tourism joint ventures where rights to the land are not secure and the investment risk is therefore higher.

A third significant constraint is the unclear and unstable institutional environment in which conservancies are functioning. There is an array of institutions that claim overlapping authority over land and natural resources, including, traditional leaders, government departments, regional governments and, in the future, land boards that will be created under new land legislation. Conservancies are competing in this arena to establish their own authority over land and resources. If the responsibilities and scope of authority of the various institutions is not clarified in relation to conservancies there is potential for ongoing conflict over authority.

Fourthly there is a lack of capacity of NGOs and government to provide adequate support to the growing number of conservancies. The government and NGOs provide different forms of capacity building to communities managing various resources and to those wishing to form conservancies. This support has included institution building, organisational capacity building, business development and management, wildlife monitoring and management, development of joint ventures and funding support. However, despite the considerable financial and technical support from the USAID-funded LIFE Programme and other donors there is still insufficient capacity to meet the needs of all existing conservancies and those communities likely to want to form a conservancy. It will be difficult to give new conservancies the same level of support that was enjoyed by the first to emerge. One problem is lack of financial resources, but another is the lack of qualified and experienced Namibians involved in the CBNRM sector. With a population of 1.6 million, a large proportion of which was left poorly or uneducated during the apartheid era, there is only a small pool of expertise to be shared by government, the private sector and NGOs, throughout all sectors. The government in particular, is hamstrung by the lack of personnel to work in CBNRM and also faces problems in institutionalising within the MET what is still to many personnel a new and unfamiliar process. The MET has not always in the past been able to provide the necessary support to communities and NGOs, and

despite the dedication of some individuals much of the burden of field implementation has fallen to NGOs.

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