

# Centre stage in wildlife conservation

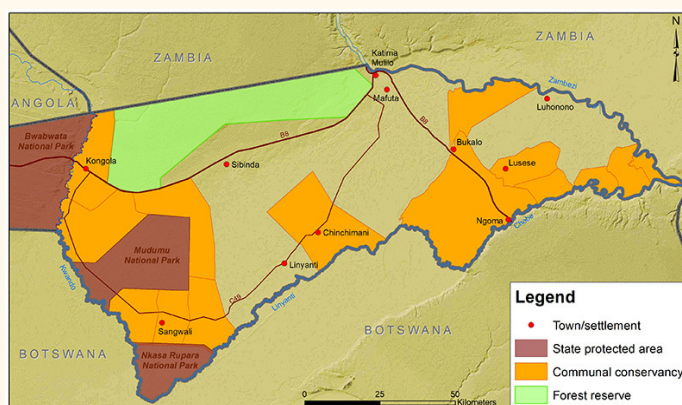
Combatting wildlife crime in Zambezi Region – Namibia



Wildlife crime is at the top of the international conservation agenda. In Namibia, a total of 86 communal conservancies manage wildlife outside of 12 national parks and rural Namibians earn income from tourism, related to high value species such as elephants and rhinos.

The Zambezi Region in the northeast of Namibia is at the centre of the Kavango-Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA), including parts of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This makes the Zambezi Region a crucial partner in combatting wildlife crime across international boundaries in southern Africa.

The region has 16 communal conservancies and a community association inside a national park. These include some of Namibia's most successful conservancies, earning the highest income from wildlife



Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), the pioneer non-governmental organisation in Namibia's CBNRM programme, supports conservancies in Zambezi with training in natural resource management, wildlife protection, conservancy governance and business enterprise development. IRDNC also supports and maintains six transboundary forums between Namibian conservancies and their neighbouring communities in adjoining countries.

Wildlife crime prevention plays centre stage in wildlife conservation. IRDNC has partnered with the Combatting Wildlife Crime Project (CWCP) to assist conservancies and rural communities in Namibia as well as neighbouring communities from bordering countries in fighting wildlife crime. The project is funded by the Southern Africa USAID Regional Office and IRDNC, with 11 other project implementation partners. Collectively, these organisations are working toward significantly reducing poaching and illegal trade in wildlife, to enhance law enforcement capacity, and to promote sustainable natural resource utilization in the KAZA TFCA over a five-year period.



It has been two years since the CWCP project started and IRDNC in Zambezi Region has already made impressive progress. Community game guards have been trained in improved wildlife monitoring techniques and scene of crime procedures.



Community workshops have improved the awareness of conservancy members on the values of wildlife, and governance and leadership training for conservancy management committees have helped them to understand their role in addressing wildlife crime.



Transboundary wildlife crime awareness events now take place, and a new Trans-boundary Natural Resource Management Forum involving four community-based organisations from three countries: Namibia, Angola and Zambia has been established. Joint anti-poaching patrol in Zambezi conservancies are conducted with law enforcement officers and community game guards.

These activities, under the CWCP funding, have unlocked the potential of community members at the grassroots level, especially through community wildlife crime awareness events which have been conducted across all the Zambezi conservancies.



Everybody from the youth to elders is involved, with school visits to national parks and traditional authorities strengthening support for action against wildlife crime

IRDNC has made tremendous strides and has significantly contributed to combatting wildlife crime in Namibia and the KAZA region. With the help of donor partners such as USAID, IRDNC is optimistic that its community work will make lasting impact in wildlife protection in southern Africa.



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