



INVESTIGATION INTO
**TROPHY HUNTING OF
AFRICAN ELEPHANTS**

IN BOTSWANA'S COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AREAS

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JUNE 2022





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1. Introduction

The community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) program in Botswana has been ongoing for exactly thirty years. Its purpose was to promote sustainable use of local resources through delegation of resource use rights to local communities. To be eligible, communities had to form Community Based Organisations (CBOs), through which government devolved resource use and management.¹

Broadly, CBNRM is a concept in which communities organise themselves to sustainably manage natural resources in their surrounding areas. The basic notion of CBNRM is that for a community to manage natural resources sustainably, it must receive direct benefits arising from its use. These benefits must exceed the perceived costs of managing the resources. The assumption is that when community livelihoods are improved, community members would be incentivised to protect natural resources and wildlife, such as elephants.

CBNRM can also be seen as an effort to reduce such human-wildlife conflicts, especially when it comes to African savannah elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) whose population in Botswana is the largest in Africa. The concept aims to ensure that the local benefits from elephants exceed the costs. The costs of living with elephants includes crop raiding, livestock depredation, time and money spent on crop protection, resettlement, psychological cost of fear of wildlife, as well as loss of human life.²



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Economic income from natural resources for Botswana’s CBNRMs largely involves wildlife-based tourism activities such as photographic or wildlife-watching tourism and trophy hunting. In some cases income is generated through the collection of veld (bush) products such as the harvesting of plants and the localised hunting and fishing; financial benefits from tourists and local visitors to historical sites like Tsodilo Hills, and from scenic landscapes such as the Okavango Delta, the Gcwihaba Caves and the sand dunes of the Kgalagadi.

In 2012, trophy hunting was regarded as the dominant CBO income earner ahead of photographic tourism.³ After the nation-wide hunting moratorium in 2014, CBOs diversified their activities towards photographic, agricultural and cultural activities. In 2015, one year after the hunting moratorium was in place, there was a greater variety in income generating activities than in 2012.⁴ Since the lifting of the moratorium in 2019, trophy hunting has not only returned as one of the most dominant CBO activities but has expanded into many areas that were not historically hunted before 2014.

It has been claimed that trophy hunting is only undertaken in ‘marginal’ wilderness areas that are not deemed viable for photographic tourism. It is also claimed that attempts to convert trophy hunting areas not viable for photographic

tourism into photographic tourism areas is a challenge. Areas that are deemed not viable for photographic tourism are remoteness, lower densities of wildlife and monotonous natural landscapes. The argument is that revenues from trophy hunting have resulted in improved attitudes towards wildlife among local communities not involved in photographic tourism activities as well as an increased involvement of communities in CBNRM programs. This has resulted in CBO requests to have land included in wildlife management projects, and in some cases, it is claimed, to have led to an increase in wildlife populations.⁵

However, after a month-long field-investigation, complemented by a detailed literature research, trophy hunting fails to provide tangible financial benefits to local communities, does not assist with an increase in wildlife populations and does not mitigate elephant-conflict incidences. In fact, this investigation shows that trophy hunting continues to impoverish local communities, causes the decline in species and heightens human–elephant conflict situations.

It was found that the financial benefits and employment opportunities for community members in CBNRMs where trophy hunting is the only or dominant activity is negligible to nothing. The majority of community members, especially those not directly employed as trackers or skimmers by

“Botswana remains one of the most unequal countries on earth.”

trophy hunting companies or as members of the CBO management or Board of Trustees, receive no direct income or any meaningful employment within their CBNRMs. Income generated for Botswana’s CBNRMs in 2015, for example, revealed that community members received less than BWP 2 (USD 0,17) per individual for that year.

The situation has not improved seven years later. All community members interviewed during this investigation stated that they receive little to no direct income from trophy hunting. The only benefits from trophy hunting received for the 25 villages within CBNRMs visited during this investigation was the occasional handing out of meat from a trophy hunted elephant, the supposed purchase of a vehicle for the community trust, wages for a handful of trust staff, a fence for a borehole, the possible future construction of a tuck-shop and an upgrade of an airstrip.

Unemployment and poverty levels within CBNRMs are the highest in Botswana. In 2015, when the last census of its kind was taken, the total number of people within CBNRMs living below the poverty line was estimated to be 148,999 with an average poverty rate of 27%. This was above the average for all rural villages (24.3%) in Botswana and much higher than the national average of 19.3%.⁶ Botswana remains one of the most unequal countries on earth.⁷

It must also be stated that most communities within CBNRMs in Botswana rely predominantly on government benefits in the form of income grants, old age assistance and other grants. These funds, in turn, are derived from taxes generated by Botswana’s two largest economic sectors – mining and photographic tourism. This means, that while trophy hunting is presented as being the most dominant direct provider within CBNRM communities, it rarely reaches the majority of community members who must still derive a living from government assistance which is generated by taxes that effectively originates in mining and tourism.

Furthermore, trophy hunting does not provide conservation benefits for the protection of elephants and other wildlife and natural spaces. To begin with the reintroduction of trophy hunting in 2019 was not based on any scientifically sound strategy, despite counter-claims by the government. The government, for example, claimed that there were over



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200,000 and that the country only had a carrying capacity of 50,000 even though a comprehensive aerial survey in 2018 indicated 126,000 elephants.⁸ This assumption was based on a combination of a lack of scientific evidence and an out-of-date hypothesis. The notion of carrying-capacity for a free-roaming population of elephants that migrate constantly across international borders has been discredited.⁹

From various interviews with respondents that were either part-of or privy to the process, the lifting of the moratorium did not involve any new management plans, there were no new leases to communities, no environmental impact assessments or area specific protocols or any general protocol for community engagement. The whole process was governed by a rushed 'consultative' process to a few areas that unashamedly excluded large members of the rural community within the CBNRMs, especially for marginalised groups like the San.

In terms of conservation value, the national trophy hunting quota of 400 elephants in 2022 – a figure probably derived without any scientific basis – is likely to have negative consequences on elephant migration movements, reproductive abilities and conflict incidences. Current biological research points to a probable catastrophic scenario for elephants if the current elephant trophy hunting quota and elephant management policy continues.

Financial benefits for CBNRMs are derived from various activities, and in Botswana they tend to focus around tourism. Tourism mainly centres on photographic tourism and to a far lesser degree trophy hunting. However, trophy hunting tends to dominate within the CBNRMs, primarily because they are deemed 'marginal' spaces. In other words, many CBNRMs are regarded as too remote, the landscapes too monotonous and without large wildlife numbers for photographic tourism. This is a fallacy since this argument ignores a very large sector of the photographic tourism industry, namely the self-drive and mobile traveller sectors. In recent years, the numbers of independent (self-drive) travellers as grown significantly and is especially important for those seeking spaces 'off-the-beaten-track'. CBNRMs and their associated 'marginal' wilderness spaces are potentially a major draw-card for such travellers.

As previous investigations into the efficacy of CBNRMs and the role trophy hunting elephants plays in other countries,¹⁰ the CBNRM concept in Botswana is found to be grossly over-optimistic. In the thirty-years since its inception, the CBNRM program in Botswana has forcibly subjected Botswana's rural communities to a perpetual cycle of impoverishment, has done little for the conservation of wildlife, especially elephants, and has done nothing to mitigate human-elephant conflict.



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2. Methodology

The five-week field undercover investigation spanned most of the range of elephants in Botswana. This centred primarily on community-managed Controlled Hunting Areas (CHAs) in Ngamiland (NG) to the north-west of Botswana and the Chobe (CH) and Central District (CT) in the north

east of the country. The investigation also took place in the urban centres of Botswana namely: Gaborone, Maun and Kasane as well as smaller towns and villages not directly associated with CBNRMs.

Twenty-five villages associated with CBNRMs were visited. Farmers, villagers, herders, tourism stakeholders, lodge managers and staff, shop and craft stall vendors, management authorities, CBO Board of Trustee members, former and current governmental officials, academics, biologists, scientists and associated stakeholders were interviewed in person, at times randomly so as to cover the full spectrum of income, gender, age, social standing and status. In total, there were more than 100 respondents interviewed.

For the purpose of this report most respondents' identities, statuses and exact locations have been withheld to avoid retribution.

As with previous enquiries by this author, this investigation centred on African savannah elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) as an important point of reference in measuring the efficacy of Botswana's CBNRM model specifically as it relates to trophy hunting. Botswana boasts the largest free-ranging

elephant population in Africa with an estimated free-ranging population of around 126,000 individuals spanning most of the northern half of the country.¹¹ The elephants are by no means confined within Botswana, with large proportions of the population migrating between Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Elephants are central to Botswana's wildlife management policies and programs in that they are seen as a principal species both as a high value income source and as a significant wildlife conflict animal. The former is considered in the form of money generated from photographic tourism and trophy hunting, while the latter as a primary cause of property, crop and livestock destruction among rural communities living among them.

Lastly, a detailed literary research and assessment of trophy hunting guidelines, CBNRM reviews, elephant studies and media reports was conducted to complement the undercover field investigations.

3. Botswana's Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Program

The concept of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programs originated in Zimbabwe in the 1980s as the Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). CAMPFIRE sought to provide incentives for the local rural communities to conserve natural resources in their immediate surroundings by providing them exclusive resource user rights and associated benefits. Most subsequent CBNRM projects throughout southern Africa then focused – and still focus – on wildlife utilisation (trophy hunting and photographic tourism) as a means of generating income, but later CBNRM extended to other activities such as harvesting of veld (bush) products, opening of historical sites, use of scenic landscapes and other natural resource utilisation.

CBNRM was introduced in Botswana in 1992 through the USAID funded Natural Resource Management Project (NRMP2). This was followed by the registration of the Chobe Enclave Conservation Trust (CECT), a community-run organisation tasked with managing the natural resources on behalf of the rural villages in the area. This area became known as CH1 (Chobe One), a wildlife management area wedged between the Chobe National Park and Namibia. CBNRM projects in Botswana have grown significantly since then. The last CBNRM review, which took place in 2016, identified a total of 147 CBNRM management entities called Community-Based Organisations (CBOs).¹²

3.1. The CBNRM Concept

The fundamental concept behind CBNRMs is that it “will alleviate poverty and advance conservation by strengthening the rural economy and empowering communities to manage resources for their long-term social, economic and ecological benefits.”¹³ The idea is that local communities living in natural and wildlife areas will have a greater interest in the sustainable use of them than a centralised, distant government or private management institutions.¹⁴ In this case, the core principle for CBNRM is it credits local people with having a greater understanding of, as well as vested interest in, their local environment. Hence, they are seen as more capable of effectively managing natural resources through local or traditional practices.¹⁵ This bottom-up approach has been seen as a far more effective conservation method than the more established top-down approach.

According to Joseph Mbaiwa at the Okavango Research Institute, these assumptions are based on three conceptual foundations: economic value, devolution and collective ownership.

- Economic value refers to the value given to wildlife resources that can be realised by the community.
- Emphasis is put on the need to devolve management decisions from government to the community in order to create positive conditions for sustainable wildlife management.
- Collective proprietorship refers to collective use-rights over resources by groups of people, which then are able to manage according to their own roles and strategies.¹⁶

CBNRM assumes that once rural communities participate in natural resource utilisation and derive economic benefits, this will cultivate the spirit of ownership and the development of positive attitudes towards sustainable resource use. This will ultimately lead rural communities to use natural resources around them sustainably.¹⁷



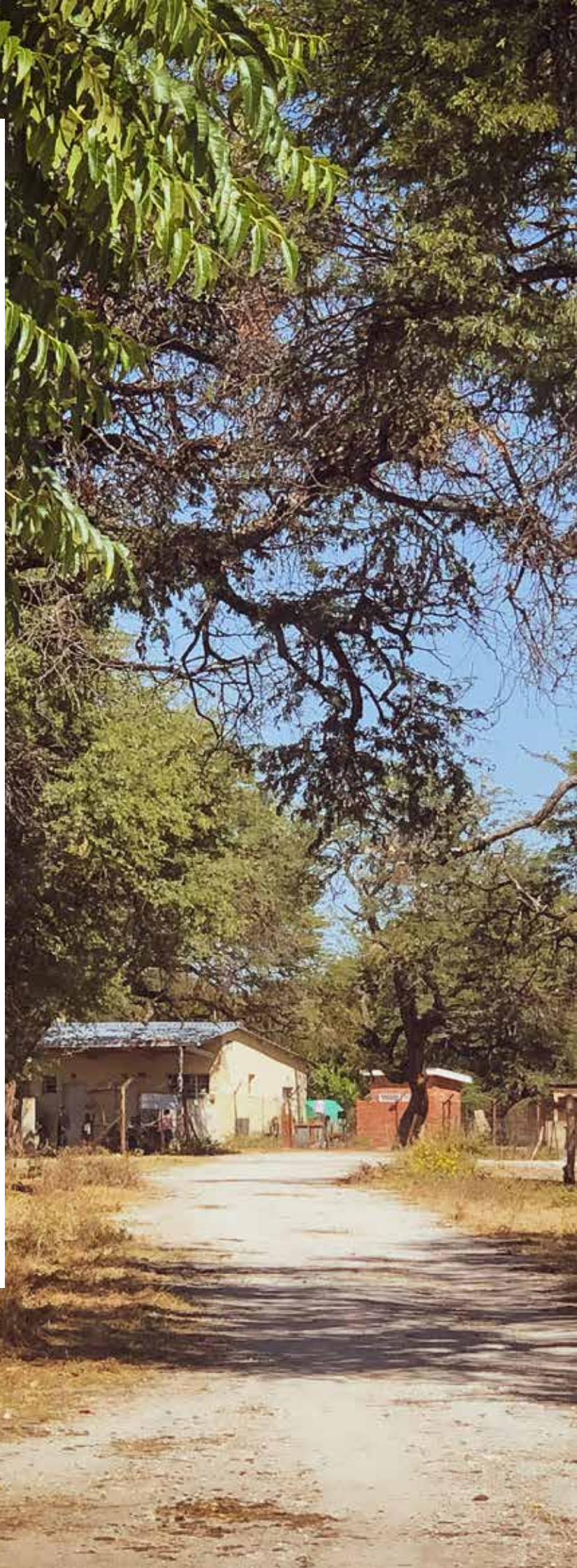
Also, given the human-wildlife conflicts and associated costs, CBNRM can be seen as an effort to reduce such conflict and ensure that the local benefits exceed the costs. The costs of living with elephants in particular are: crop raiding, livestock depredation, time and money spent on crop protection, resettlement, psychological cost of fear of wildlife, as well as loss of human life.¹⁸

For rural communities living in Botswana, preserving elephants is an act of balance – between the costs to humans (limiting agricultural and development space, loss of income and food and enduring the death of a family member by an elephant) and the tangible benefits to humans (preserving elephants as a source of income from proceeds from trophy hunting, or from photographic tourism). Only if benefits of elephants to humans (higher financial income) continues to outweigh the costs (trampled crops), then it is more likely they would be preserved. Ostensibly, the process produces a win-win solution because elephants could be prevented from extermination if they continue to provide greater long-term benefits for humans against potential costs. In brief, therefore, CBNRM seeks to increase human benefits from elephants and to contribute to their sustainable use and management.¹⁹

3.2. Community Based Organisations (CBOs)

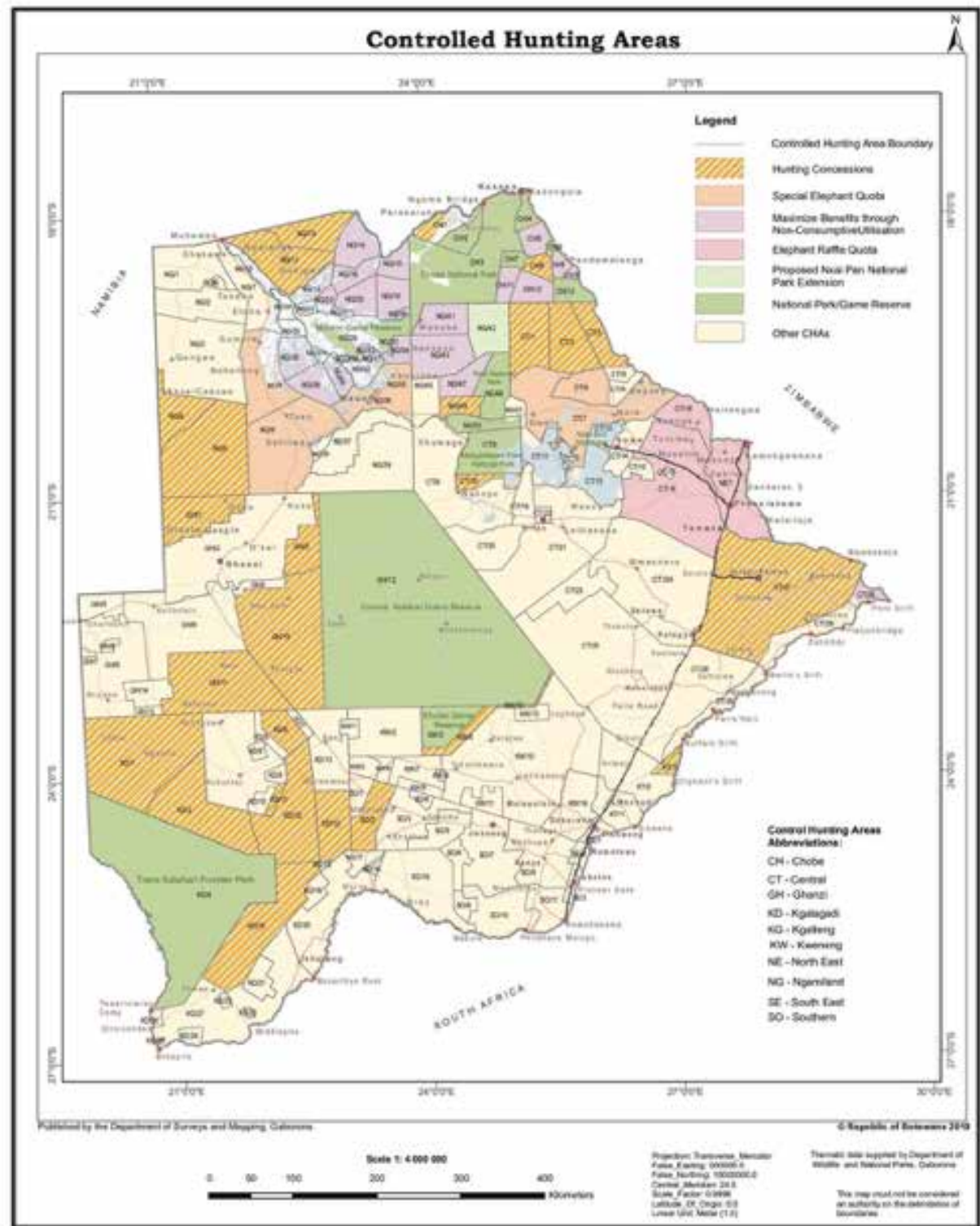
To qualify for a CBNRM in Botswana, communities must form a Community-Based Organisation (CBO), through which government hands over resource use and management of a designated area. Most CBOs operate in the form of trusts with a Boards of Trustees that regularly meet (on average every second month) with an average board size of ten members.²⁰ Trusts are formed by the groups of people living in the same area. CBOs might be made up of one or more villages whose aims are to utilise natural resources (e.g. wildlife) in their local environment. CBOs are registered legal entities and are formed in accordance with the laws of Botswana to represent the interests of the communities and implement their management decisions in natural resource use.²¹

The Board of Trustees of the CBO is considered the supreme governing body of each CBO and CBNRM project. The BoT conducts and manages all the affairs of the trust on behalf of its members, i.e. the local village community. These affairs include the signing of legal documents, such as leases and contracts with safari companies, and maintaining a close contact with the trust's lawyers. It also keeps the records, financial accounts and reports of the trust, and presents them to the general membership at the annual general meetings. They are a key platform for decision-making regarding quotas and benefit distribution, business deals with the private tourism sector, and agreements with support agencies, like donors and NGOs. The Board of Trustees acts as intermediary between government agencies, NGOs and the communities they represent on issues of local participation in tourism development and conservation.²²



To gain access to natural resources, CBOs must submit a Land-Use Management Plan to a Land Board responsible for leasing land to the community. Allocation of the land is administered by the twelve Main Land Boards of the Ministry of Land Management, Water and Sanitation Services and their forty-one Subordinate Land Boards.²³ The land usually comes in the form of a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) or community land-use zones such as historical

or cultural sites. WMAs are wildlife areas that normally act as buffers or as migratory corridors alongside protected areas such as national parks and forest reserves. WMAs are further sub-divided into Controlled Hunting Areas (CHAs). CHAs are used for various types of CBNRM activities, including consumptive (trophy hunting) and non-consumptive (photographic) tourism.²⁴ Below is a map of Botswana's CHAs and their uses:



The lease is typically for fifteen years. CBO revenues in Botswana are mostly derived from tourism (wildlife photographic, trophy hunting, monuments and cultural tourism) and to a much less extent from sales of veld (bush) products. The CBO also has the option to sublease the user rights to a joint venture partner (JVP) – such as a photographic tourism company or hunting operator – for a shorter period, typically five years.²⁵

3.3. Trophy Hunting

CBOs are required to align with central government departments. The Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) is the primary point of contact for most CBOs since most derive benefits from the use of wildlife and natural resources. District Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) are responsible for coordinating cooperation between the CBOs and the DWNP. The DWNP is the secretariat of the TACs and the TACs submit monthly reports to the Community Support and Outreach office at DWNP headquarters. The reporting template covers the following areas: achievements on planned activities; employment details and monthly revenue per CBO.²⁶



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Before the hunting moratorium in 2014, wildlife hunting quotas were allocated by DWNP every year to communities. Trophy hunting in Botswana is guided by the Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act No.28 of 1992 and the Hunting and Licensing Regulations of 2001. Before 2014, wildlife quotas were decided every year after purportedly carrying out aerial surveys of wildlife populations in each CHA.

In 2007, the 13 CBOs involved in trophy hunting were allocated 15 elephants each to hunt.²⁷ Trophy hunting was undertaken seasonally, in various controlled hunting areas: Citizen Hunting Areas, Leased Concession Areas, Community Managed Areas and established private game ranches. Currently, trophy hunting is operationalised by hunting escort guidelines that are reviewed at the end of every hunting season, apparently to enhance efficiency of the hunting activity.

In 2018, a Nationwide Presidential Cabinet Sub-Committee on the Social Dialogue on the hunting ban was set up to review the 2014 hunting moratorium. The Sub-Committee recommended the lifting of the hunting suspension.²⁸

In a transcript of parliamentary proceedings on the 20th June 2018, government MPs cited “new developments which require a reconsideration” of the moratorium. The new development and factors that are motivating the proposal for reconsideration of the hunting ban include the following: increased elephant populations and human-wildlife conflicts; reduced local benefits from tourism through CBNRM programme and less benefits from photographic tourism since it is not viable in marginal hunting areas. They provided a detailed rationale and motivation why there is a need to re-introduce hunting in Botswana:

“Ignoring human well-being to achieve conservation goals is morally wrong and often defeats the sustainable development aspirations...Sustainable conservation should not just focus only on an ecological framework which does not consider human welfare as carried out by some scientist in the country.”

And that:

“Hunting is a management/conservation tool when applied appropriately with the knowledge of wildlife populations in range. It can be used to cull the ever-increasing elephant population in Botswana which impacts negatively on the vegetation.”²⁹

In May 2019, an announcement by the government was made to officially lift the hunting moratorium of species that included elephant, buffalo, leopard, large antelopes such as eland, kudu, zebra etc.



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Typically, the hunting season takes place from April to November each year. There are four area categories relating to hunting of elephants as outlined by the Hunting and Escort Guidelines: ³⁰

3.3.1. Citizen Elephant Hunting Area

The conditions for this category are:

- Licenses are available over the counter through Departmental of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) offices
- BWP 8,000 (USD 660) per elephant license fee payable to DWNP
- A raffle will be used to allocate quota
- Strictly non-export
- Hunts must be accompanied by Professional Hunter (preferably citizen with appropriate experience)
- Where feasible carcass delivery to closest beneficiary community/village
- The hide should be salted and retained for added value products. License is non-transferable but may be endorsed if hunting is done on behalf of license holder. The hunter should be in legal possession of .375 calibre minimum hunting rifle.

3.3.2. Community Managed Areas

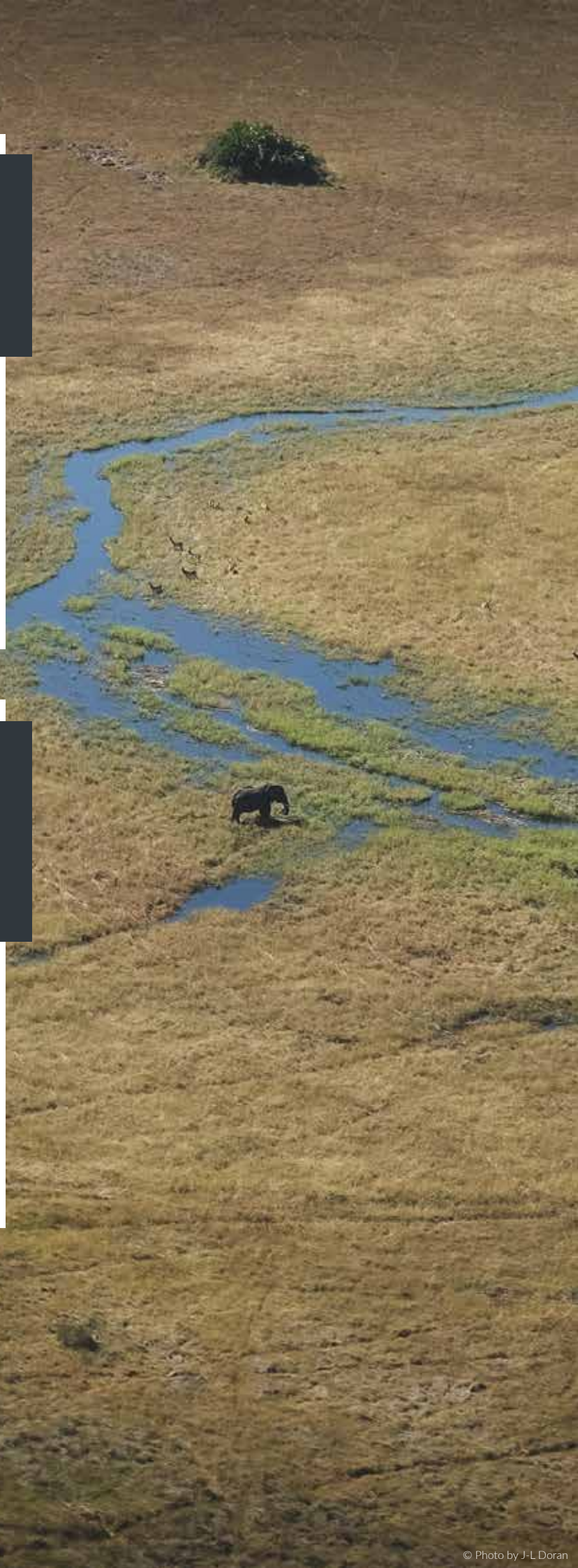
A Community Utilization Area is a Controlled Hunting Area allocated to a community that has formed a Community Based Organization (CBO).

- Quota for each area to be determined by DWNP
- Quota will be available for purchase by Botswana based operators only
- License fees will be payable to DWNP
- The entire quota for each area will be sold under tender
- Hunting trophies are exportable

3.3.3. Private Hunting Concession Areas

A Concession area is an area which has been leased to the private sector.

- The game animals to be hunted will be prescribed in the hunting quota
- DWNP to determine quota
- The entire quota for each area sold
- License fees will be payable to DWNP
- Hunting trophies are exportable
- The licenses will not be transferable to other CHAs



3.3.4. Special Elephant Quota Hunt Areas (High Conflict Areas)

- The elephant license fee of BWP 20,000 (USD 1,666) is payable to DWNP
- Method of quota disposal will be by auction or selective tender
- Revenue from auction will accrue to the Conservation Trust Fund (CTF)
- Twenty five percent (25%) of the quota will be reserved for purchase by Botswana owned operators
- Seventy five percent (75%) of the quota will be reserved for purchase by Botswana based operators
- Hunting trophies are exportable





An example of
non-Wildlife CBO is
Tsodilo Hills (NG6)

3.4. Non-wildlife-based CBOs

Non-wildlife-based CBOs work with other government departments such as the Department of Forestry and Range Resources (DFRR) and the Department of National Museum and Monuments (DNMM). Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO) is also closely involved with several CBOs across the country.

Examples of non-Wildlife CBOs or partially wildlife CBOs are Tsodilo Hills (NG6), a UNESCO World Heritage site managed by BTO for the local CBO, and Gcwihaba Caves, a cave system in NG4 to the extreme west of the country. While the CHA is a wildlife CBO, the caves are under the auspices of DNMM.

3.5. CBNRM support bases

CBOs supposedly receive considerable technical and financial support from the DWNP and other government departments. Government offers support through the Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) and through various grant funds. Botswana Tourism Organisation also provides assistance in the form of tourism marketing, quality control and investment promotion, including products and spatial diversification of the tourism sector. BTO is supposed to encourage and facilitate joint venture partnerships between CBOs and private companies. BTO promotes that CBOs themselves are not directly involved in tourism venture but that individuals or groups in the communities operate the enterprises and that BTO and CBO Trusts would register holding companies with the Trust as shareholder.³¹

Historically, and currently in countries like Namibia, grant donations from international NGOs have been a significant component of CBNRM revenues. However, as the per capita income increased during the 2000s, Botswana became an upper-middle income country and international donor grants have been drastically reduced forcing CBOs to rely on their own revenue sources, joint venture partnerships, and governmental and local NGO assistance.³² In Botswana, NGOs still play an important support role for community mobilisation, capacity building, proposal writing, project development, project implementation, constitutional write-up and Land-Use Management Plan preparation.³³



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4. Historical CBNRM Concerns

In 2014, Joseph Mbaiwa wrote that “in the 20 years of its implementation in Botswana, CBNRM has mixed results. That is, some projects have relatively succeeded in achieving either biodiversity conservation or improved rural livelihoods (e.g. employment creation, generation of income, provision of social services) while other projects have collapsed.”³⁴ He cited several factors for this such as: availability of skilled personnel or lack of capacity building, reinvestment of CBNRM revenue or misappropriation of funds, strong community cohesion or lack of it.”³⁵

A year later, a full review on Botswana’s CBNRMs by the Centre for Applied Research for the Southern African Environmental Program was undertaken following “a concern...that CBNRM is struggling in Botswana.”³⁶

Since the inception of CBNRMs in 1992, a series of seven reviews have carried out to assess the efficacy of the program. These were carried out in 2000, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2016. The final review in 2016 found that most of the CBNRMs were either not functioning at all or were on the verge of collapse. This was due to poor management, corruption and other factors. Since then, no review has been conducted into CBNRMs, particularly after the reintroduction of trophy hunting in 2019.

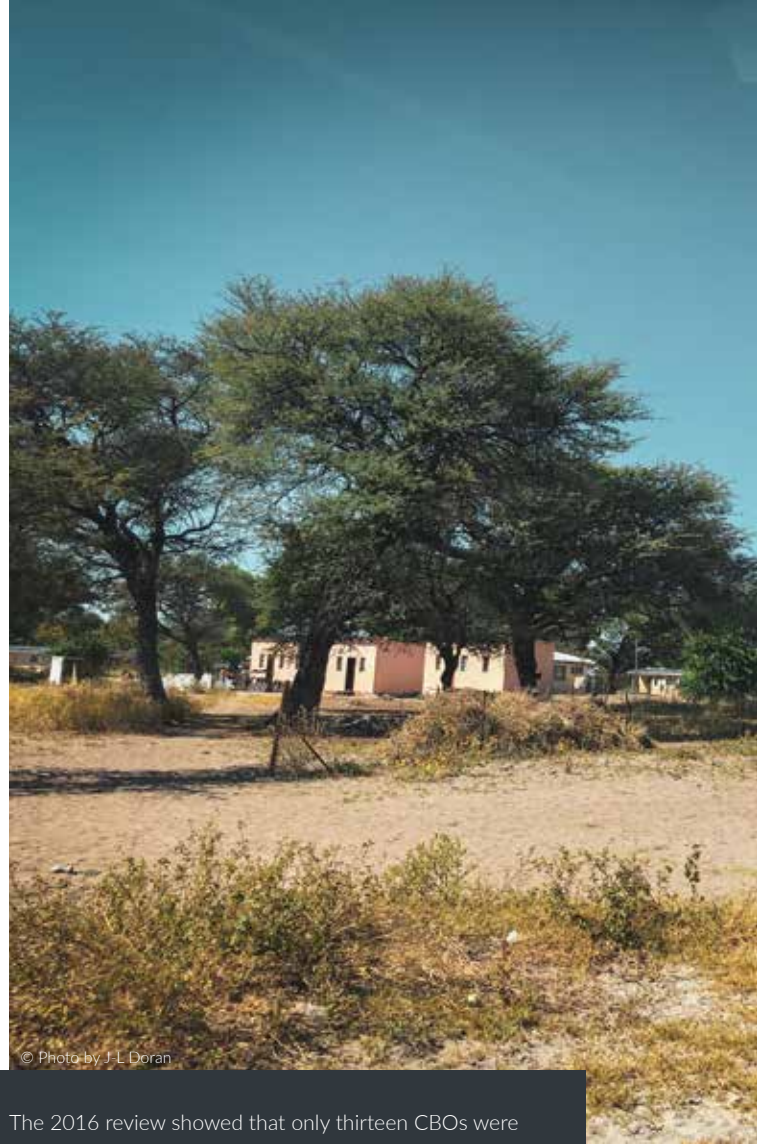
4.1. Negligible community benefits

The 2016 review identified 147 CBOs, of which 94 were registered, 16 were not registered and the registration status of 37 was unknown. The number of villages and population covered by active CBOs was 174 villages with a population of 557,447 in 145,820 households. CBOs covered around 28% of Botswana population and around 61% of the rural population.³⁷

Despite the loss of hunting income, the total gross CBO revenues in 2015 increased from BWP 25,7 million (USD 2,14 million) in 2012 to BWP 26.8 million (USD 2,23 million). This showed that the former hunting CBOs were largely able to diversify their income into other activities. Wages for CBO employees, however, were the largest expenditures at BWP 6.4 million (USD 533,000). Payments to Board members were around BWP 1 million (USD 83,000). Vehicle expenditures were BWP 1.3 million (USD 108,000). The share of wages and sitting allowances left little funds for other operational costs, community and household benefits.³⁸

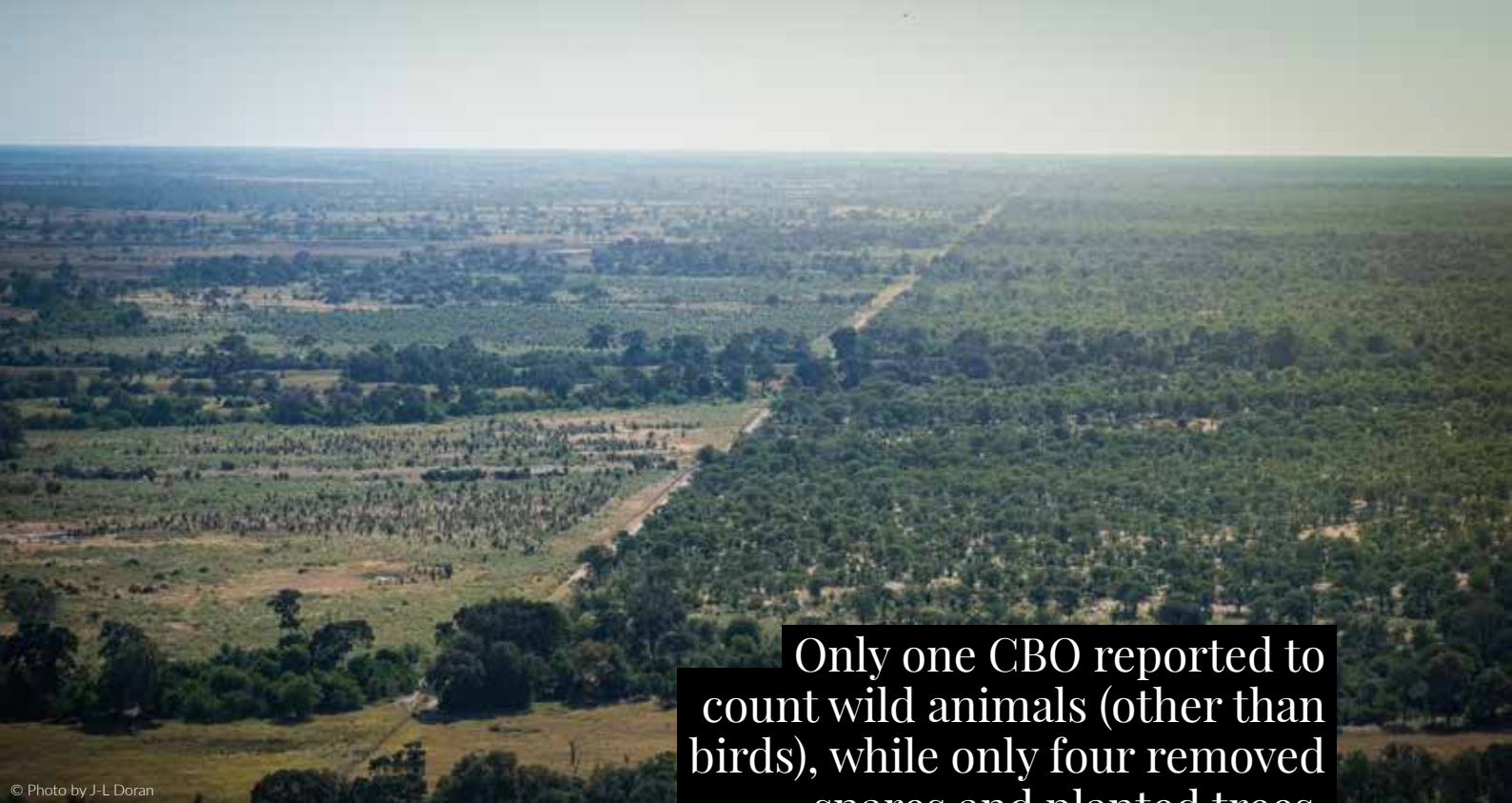
Around 90% of the revenues accrue to just six high-revenue CBOs. Inequality among CBOs, therefore, was significant. In 2015, the gap between the lowest and highest revenue earners was as low as BWP 6,700 (USD 558) annual income to as high as BWP 9.7 million (USD 808,000). Many CBOs were found to be defunct and not operational.

In terms of community and household benefits, the CBNRM concept is supposed to be an important means to improve livelihoods and to stimulate a positive attitude towards wildlife. Direct wages to CBO Board of Trustee members aside, household benefits from CBOs in Botswana usually include household dividends, improvements to household yards (e.g. sanitation facilities) and financial support for funerals, the elderly and sponsorship of students. Other community benefits include transport, support for village events, village facilities (e.g. electrification of houses) and support of soccer teams etc.³⁹



The 2016 review showed that only thirteen CBOs were able to provide community and household benefits. Only four CBOs handed out household dividends in 2015. One CBO stopped village dividends completely. Other CBOs offer support for funerals, education and financial assistance to elderly as well support with transport. A few contribute to community infrastructure. Despite an increase of total revenues and decrease in total expenditures, the total amount involved in community and household benefits decreased from BWP 700,000 (USD 58,000) in 2012 to BWP 500,000 (USD 41,500) in 2015. This made up 2% of CBO total revenues in 2015. This calculates to less than BWP 2.00 (USD 0,17) per inhabitant.⁴⁰

Poverty levels in CBNRM communities are therefore unsurprisingly high. In 2016, the total number of people living below the poverty line was estimated to be 148,999 with an average poverty rate of 27%. This is above the average for all rural villages (24.3%) and much higher than the national average of 19.3%.⁴¹ These figures show that the primary objective of CBNRM in reducing poverty reduction failed.



Only one CBO reported to count wild animals (other than birds), while only four removed snares and planted trees.

4.2. Natural resource management failure

Another central pillar to CBNRM is the incentive to sustainably manage and conserve natural resources outside national parks and protected areas as well as to promote involvement of communities in the management with those protected areas.⁴² In Botswana, most CBOs operate within Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). These are wilderness areas that act both as buffers around protected areas and protect important wildlife migration routes.

The management-oriented monitoring system (MOMS) is allegedly a key aspect of CBNRM development in Botswana. MOMS is a management tool for the collection of valuable resource data for monitoring purposes. It is based on community participation rather than conventional scientific monitoring approaches. The DWNP is supposed to train communities on how to apply MOMS and collect information on game sightings, rare species, problem animals, village mapping and other aspects. This data is also used to enhance the quality of aerial surveys that provide animal counts – apparently a key data source in

animal quota setting. MOMS involves the collection of data through the use of an events book and various types of registration cards for recording observations of wildlife.⁴³

In the 2016 survey, CBOs were asked about their natural resource management activities. Just 24 of the 147 CBOs reported related such activities at an average between two and three activities per CBO. There were just three dominant natural resource management activities: bird counting, firefighting and problem animal control. Only one CBO reported to count wild animals (other than birds), while only four removed snares and planted trees.⁴⁴

The 2016 review thus concluded that “the road towards comprehensive natural resource management is still long.” It found that CBOs carry out few significant natural resource management activities.⁴⁵ The review recommended that CBOs with Land-Use Management Plans need to assess their progress against the objectives and planned activities of the management plans. CBOs without a management plan need to develop one and use it as guidance for their natural resource management activities. Implementation, the review concluded, is likely to be constrained by the limited capacity of CBOs (in terms of human and financial resources). The review recommended that “NGO and government support is needed to boost CBO natural resource management activities and Land-Use Management Plan implementation.”⁴⁶

4.3. Trophy hunting irregularities

Botswana suspended trophy hunting with effect from January 2014. The Botswana government noted that the decision to temporarily ban hunting was necessitated by available information which indicated that several species, including elephants, in the country were showing a decline in numbers. The causes of the decline were assumed to be to a combination of factors such as anthropogenic impacts, including illegal offtake and habitat fragmentation or loss.⁴⁷

An aerial survey study in 2011 concluded that populations of some wildlife species had been decimated by hunting, poaching, human encroachment, habitat fragmentation, drought, and bush fires. A total of 11 species were reported to have declined by an average of 61% since a 1996 survey. Based on these assumptions, the study made recommendations that hunting contributes to wildlife decline and should be suspended or be banned.⁴⁸ Partly a result of this study, trophy hunting was suspended in 2014 in order to assess the cause/s of decline and “where possible, establish remedial measures to reverse the trend.”⁴⁹

As for elephants, another aerial survey in 2015 showed there had been a decline in the Botswana population of 15% in just five years since 2010.⁵⁰ Between 2014 and 2018 when the hunting moratorium was in place, the rate of decline slowed, and elephant populations overall showed no significant decline.⁵¹ The only areas recording significant elephant decline were those bordering neighbouring countries such as Namibia and Zimbabwe. A series of identified poaching hotspots were attributed to these declines, specifically of bull elephants⁵², presumably for their larger tusks.



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There were also reported incidences of illegal trophy hunts. In 2015, Mbaiwa stated that in informal interviews with DWNP officers indicated “that the wildlife quota system has been abused by some hunters. There have been fraudulent practices involving some of the hunters through the wildlife quota system. For example, it has been reported that some hunters hunt more animals than those required to hunt.”⁵³

In interviews with various stakeholders during this investigation, both in government and non-government, it was stated that trophy hunting operators regularly exceeded their quota numbers for a number of targeted species that included elephants. On occasion breeding bull elephants were illegally shot. Only non-breeding bulls that are so-called past their breeding prime were, and are, the only elephants permitted for trophy hunts. Elephants were also shot outside the designated trophy hunting areas and in important migration routes that did not allow hunting.



5. April/May 2022 Investigation

For the hunting season in 2022, a total quota of almost 400 elephants for trophy hunting was granted nationally, although less than 300 of these occurred in CBNRMs as Citizen Elephant Hunts, Community Managed Area and Special Elephant Quotas. For Community Managed Areas there were 126, just over a quarter of the total for the CBOs.⁵⁴ There appears to be no published scientific data to which the Botswana government has based these quotas. When discussing the lifting of the moratorium in July 2018, it was stated in parliament that:

“Annual wildlife quotas should be decided after aerial surveys on wildlife populations are done every year by DWNP based on annual scientific wildlife surveys.”⁵⁵

This does not appear to be the case. The last comprehensive aerial survey of wildlife populations by the DWNP (in conjunction with Elephants Without Borders) was between July and October 2018, a year before the hunting moratorium was lifted.⁵⁶

The only document currently available that provides any rationale for trophy hunting in Botswana is a draft guideline based on the Hunting and Escort Guidelines for 2019 as laid out by the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism. That document does not provide any justification on how the quota numbers are determined and only states that trophy hunting is restricted to areas where:

- Problem Animal Control (PAC) and Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC) is high
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that have lost significant revenue due to the hunting moratorium, provision of employment and protein
- Controlled hunting has taken place before for Special Elephant Quota
- Poaching incidents have been consistently reported
- There will be no adverse effects on photographic tourism
- Any proposed off take will not be detrimental to the population
- There are opportunities to improve citizen empowerment and involvement in the sector.⁵⁷

To assess the validity of these points, this investigation was undertaken in four key CBNRM areas where elephants roam, namely: Ngamiland East and West on either side of the Okavango Delta, the Chobe Enclave, and the Central District between the towns Nata and Pandamatenga. All areas are renowned for their significant populations of migratory elephants.



“Quotas for elephant trophy hunting in Ngamiland are the highest of all regions”

© Photo by J-L Doran

5.1. Ngamiland (NG)

The CBNRMs investigated here were made up predominantly of San and to a lesser degree Hambukushu and Herero communities. The rural population is one of the largest in Botswana and unemployment rates some of the highest. There is also a large number of CBNRMs that are mostly based on the utilisation of wildlife – hunting and photographic tourism – but there are two significant CBNRMs that centre on cultural heritage (NG8 – Tsodilo Hills) and natural heritage (Gcwihaba Caves – NG4).

A recent media report (May 2022) stated that the Ngamiland District Development officer “expressed dissatisfaction at the manner in which CBOs are run.” The District Development Officer cited poor governance and an inability to take advice from the TACs for a breakdown in operations with CBOs in the district.⁵⁸ In one case, a defunct CBO is operated by business owners associated with trophy hunting and with political connections in Gaborone. This goes against the central CBNRM tenet that communities are empowered to manage their own resources.

Elephant densities in Ngamiland are high but vary according to their migratory patterns. To the east of the Delta elephants tend to migrate between the Okavango/Kwando/Linyanti water courses and Namibia, Angola and Zambia depending on the season. To the west of the delta a disconnected sub-population of elephants moves between the Okavango Delta and Namibia’s Khaudum National Park and the Nyae-Nyae community-based conservancy. During the dry season (June-October) elephant herds tend to concentrate around permanent water sources that also tend to have high concentration of human settlements. Human-elephant conflict incidences are correspondingly high during these months. Poaching of elephants is also significant, especially in NG13 which borders Namibia’s Bwabwata National Park. Bull elephants, in particular, have been targeted by poachers.⁵⁹

Quotas for elephant trophy hunting in Ngamiland are the highest of all regions – 26 elephants for Citizen Hunting Areas, 53 in Community Managed Areas, 24 in Private Concession Areas and 40 as Special Elephant Quotas making up a total of 143 elephants permitted to be shot in 2022.⁶⁰

5.1.1. NG13

This Controlled Hunting Area (CHA) drew global media attention for the killing of one of Botswana's largest tuskers in April 2022, one week before the start of this investigation. Almost immediately irregularities of this hunt became known and highlighted all that is wrong with trophy hunting and CBNRMs in Botswana.

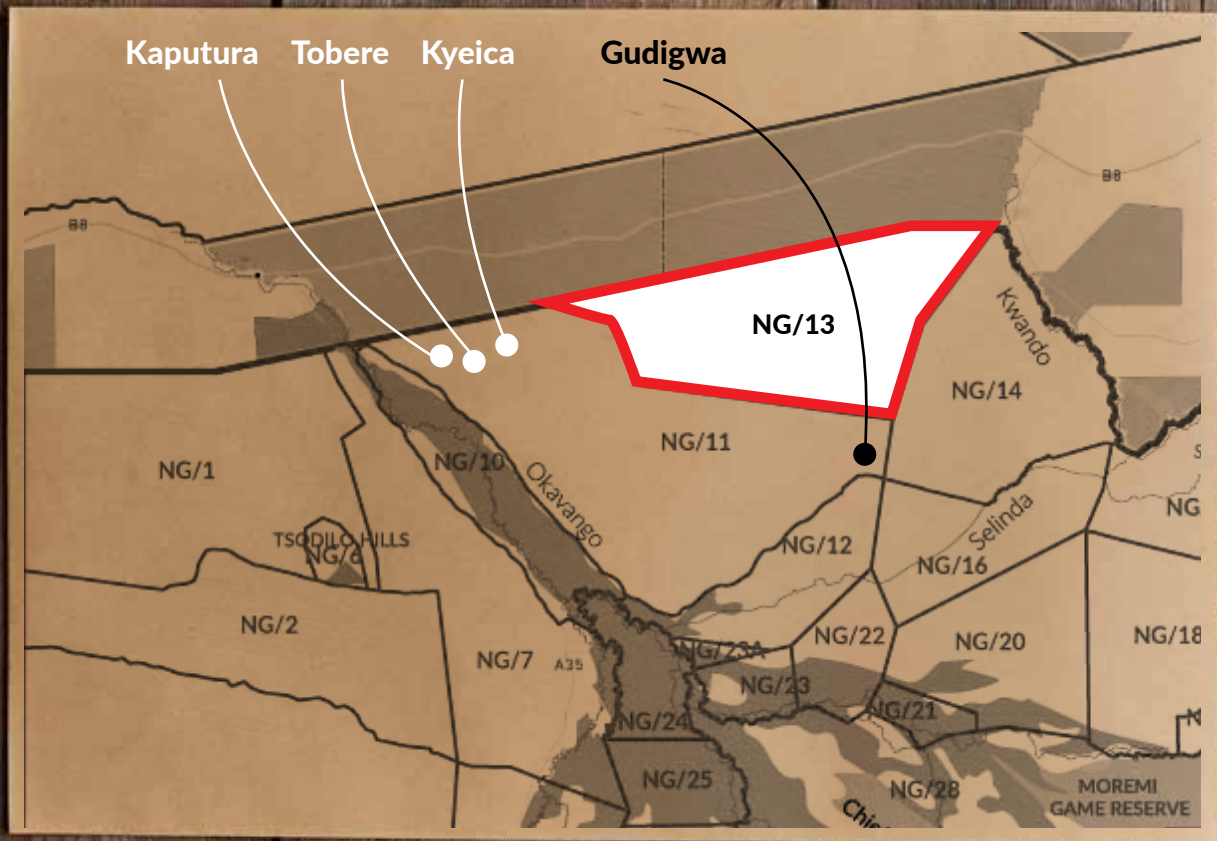
NG13 is one of the most remote CHAs in Botswana and, until this year, one of the least utilised. Since the inception of the CBNRM program in Botswana in 1992, NG13 has never previously been used for trophy hunting or for photographic tourism. Even though the area is bisected by a veterinary cordon fence, which runs north to south, NG13 is an important migratory elephant corridor which serves as the main dispersal route for elephants moving between the Okavango Delta to the south and Namibia, Zambia and Angola in the north.

There are no villages in or near NG13, except for one tiny settlement of around 30 individuals of Khwe San right in the centre. Three villages – Kaputura, Tobere and Kyeica – many kilometres to the west are the so-called beneficiaries of NG13. The nearest village to NG13 is Gudigwa, 50 kilometres from the southern border of the CHA, but Gudigwa does not benefit from NG13 in any way.



© Photo by J-L Doran





In the early 2000s, the three villages of predominantly Khwe San formed a Community Based Organisation (CBO) called Tcheku Trust. A detailed Land-Use Management Plan was undertaken in 2003 which determined that NG13 was both an important elephant migratory corridor and suitable for photographic tourism. However, the district Land Board – Tawana Land Board – never granted a head lease to Tcheku Trust for the utilisation of NG13’s natural resources. Without a formal head lease, NG13 legally remained and still legally remains out-of-bounds regarding consumptive or non-consumptive utilisation. This means that trophy hunting is essentially illegal, according to the CBNRM requirements for Botswana.

It is assumed, however, that a special waiver was given by Tawana Land Board to Tcheku Trust to grant a sub-lease to a trophy hunting Joint Venture Partner, Old Man’s Pan (PTY) Ltd, to trophy hunt in the area starting from 2021. Accordingly, the DWNP provided an annual quota to shoot five elephants for NG13.⁶⁴ Old Man’s Pan paid BWP 200,000 (USD 16,700) per elephant to Tcheku Trust. The company, owned by Botswanan business mogul, Derek Brink and managed by a Professional Hunter, Leon Kachelhoffer, allegedly charged the American trophy hunter over BWP 600,000 (USD 50,000) to shoot the tusk.

Some sources suggest that figure was as high as BWP 1 million (USD 83,000).

The large disparity between funds earned from the client and funds paid to the community trust, shows how hunting quotas are shifting a massive amount of wealth from poor communities to rich investors, some with suspected political connections. There were reports in the local media that the directors of Old Man’s Pan bullied Tcheku Trust into accepting BWP 200,000 (USD 16,700) per elephant rather than BWP 400,000 (USD 33,400) per elephant as offered by the trust.⁶²

Tcheku Trust’s general manager, Peter Bantu, told this investigator that the money from the trophy hunting quota doesn’t go far. The funds, which make up the elephant quotas for 2021 (not utilised) and 2022, amount to BWP 1,6 million (USD 133,000). They have provided for a new fence around one of the boreholes and possibly the construction of a tuckshop in Kaputura. Other than that, the funds have gone to staff wages, office expenses, road and vehicle maintenance.

Several villagers from the three beneficiary villages were interviewed, none reported receiving any financial benefits

from the trophy hunting funds. One villager from Tobere was promised a job as a tracker but is still waiting for the call-up. Another in Kaputura lamented the introduction of trophy hunting stating that photographic tourism activities are far better in providing employment and tangible benefits. He hoped one day photographic tourism would replace trophy hunting. This last statement was backed up by a trust member and a villager who is employed as a chef in one of the lodges along the Okavango Panhandle. The latter stated: "Elephants are like family. They should not be hunted. Trophy hunting money never benefits people, only [photographic] tourism does. Tourism and trophy hunting cannot exist side-by-side."

Professional hunter, Leon Kachelhoffer stated during an interview that NG13 is too marginal for photographic tourism. As mentioned above, by declaring an area 'marginal' it means the monotonous landscape, remoteness and lack of high volumes of wildlife make it 'unsuitable' for photographic tourism. This is based on a misconception of Botswana's long favoured promotion of 'high income, low impact tourism' model whereby these arguments centre only on the market of wealthy tourists who are flown into the tourist 'hotspots' such as the luxury lodges in the Okavango Delta and along the Chobe River waterfront. The assumption ignores a burgeoning sector of independent self-drive tourists from overseas and neighbouring countries, particularly South Africa, who come to Botswana seeking wilderness experiences away from the expensive

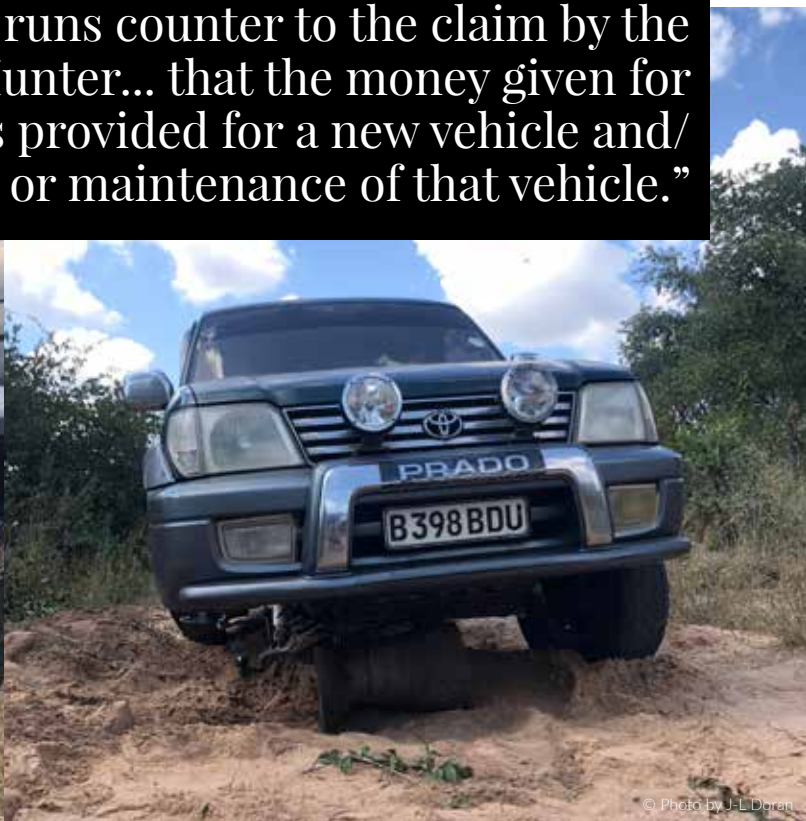
tourist centres. NG13, as indicated in the 2003 Land Use Management Plan, is a perfect landscape and offers the necessary degree of remoteness and wildlife watching this sector of the photographic tourism market craves.

The only tangible benefits from trophy hunting in NG13 has been the distribution of elephant meat to some residents in one of the three beneficiary villages – Tobere, which also happens to accommodate the trust's offices. Most of the meat was handed out to a school in Gudigwa, a village that is not a beneficiary of the Tcheku Trust. This was likely done since the beneficiary villages are a full day's drive from where the elephant was shot and the meat, transported on the back of an unrefrigerated truck, would have fouled.

A recent Hunting Concession Management Plan Scoping Report (April 2022) revealed that the Tcheku Trust villages are experiencing high unemployment, poverty and illiteracy levels. Approximately 40% of the sampled adult population have never been to school. Of all households reviewed only three included persons formally employed. Most residents must exist on government social support programs.⁶³

A Tcheku Trust branded vehicle was found broken down and abandoned on a sand track between two of the beneficiary villages. This runs counter to the claim by the Professional Hunter, Kachelhoffer, that the money given for the quotas has provided for a new vehicle and/or maintenance of that vehicle.

“This runs counter to the claim by the Professional Hunter... that the money given for the quotas has provided for a new vehicle and/or maintenance of that vehicle.”



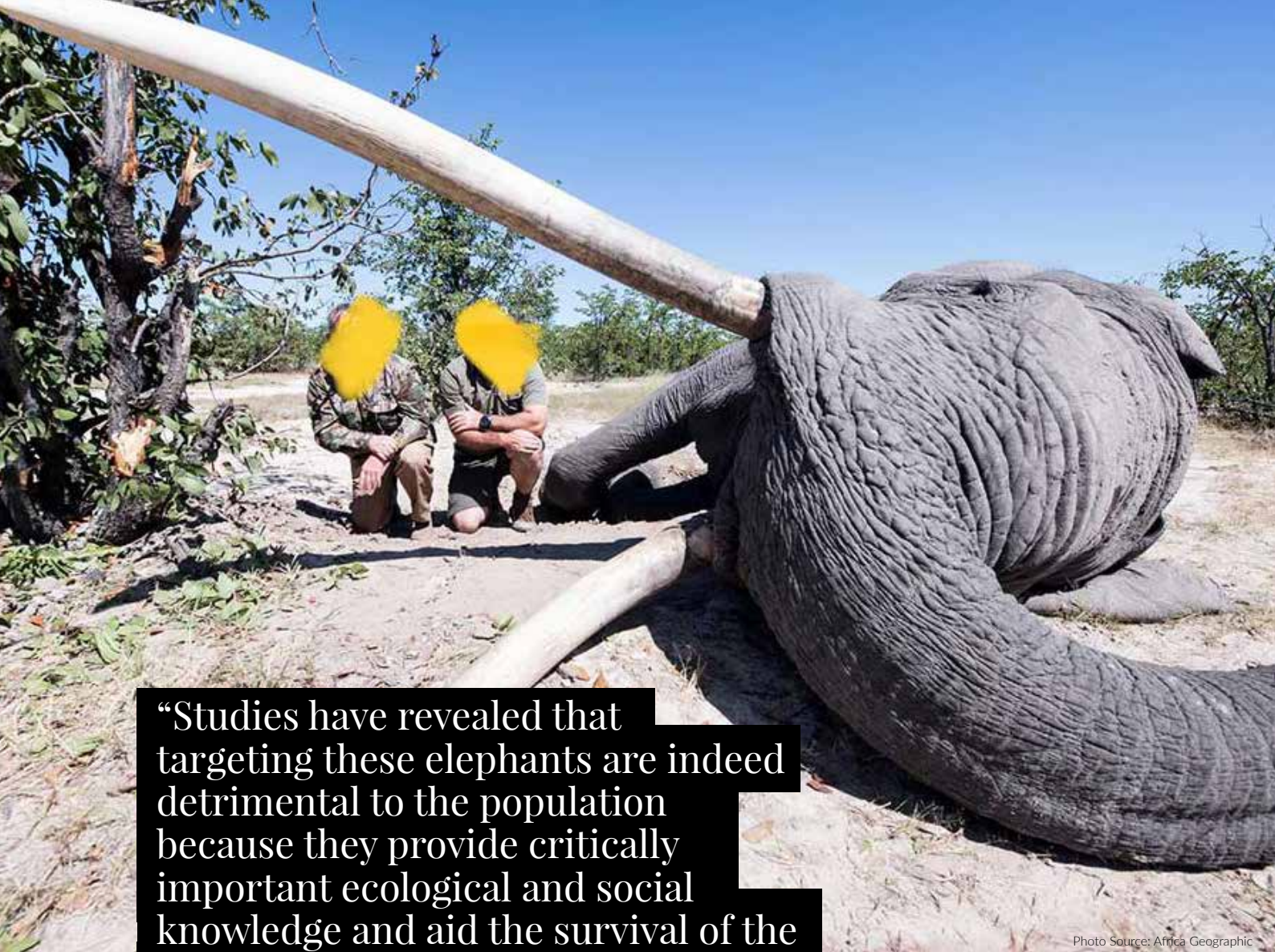


Photo Source: Africa Geographic

“Studies have revealed that targeting these elephants are indeed detrimental to the population because they provide critically important ecological and social knowledge and aid the survival of the entire group.”

One of the central arguments supporting trophy hunting as a benefit for rural communities is the mitigation of human-elephant conflict. In the case of NG13 where the nearest village is 50 kilometres beyond the nearest boundary and almost 100 kilometres from where the elephant was reportedly shot, this argument is extraneous.

The other central argument is that trophy hunting is essential for the conservation of the targeted species. In this instance, the argument is to the contrary of what it purports.

As was the case with this particular hunt, trophy hunters tend to hunt the biggest, oldest elephants with the most impressive tusks, even though the directive in parliament for lifting the moratorium in 2018 stated: “Trophy hunters like to shoot big males with big horns or tusks, which can negatively impact genetics.”⁶⁴ The deduction being that

for the moratorium to be lifted, trophy hunters must avoid trophy animals as this has a detrimental effect on wildlife populations. Studies have revealed that targeting these elephants are indeed detrimental to the population because they provide critically important ecological and social knowledge and aid the survival of the entire group. Older bulls control musth in younger, inexperienced bulls who otherwise manifest delinquent behaviour.⁶⁵

A 2014 study in the Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area between South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, found that at the current rates of hunting, under average ecological conditions, trophy bulls would disappear from the population in less than 10 years, with ripple effects that will far outreach the target zone and population, for many generations.⁶⁶ By many accounts the tusker shot in NG13 was one of the last elephants in Botswana to have tusks weighing more than 100lbs each.

Furthermore, NG13 is a known hotspot for elephant poaching, especially of bull elephants. One of the guiding principles as per the Hunting and Escort Guidelines for Botswana is that trophy hunting should only be allowed in an area if: "poaching incidences have been consistently reported."⁶⁷ The thinking is that the presence of trophy hunters will deter poachers. NG13 covers a vast area of densely wooded terrain. This investigator visited NG13 in a vehicle and set up camp for two days without anyone detecting his presence. It means that poachers can move about NG13 with impunity, kill and remove tusks from an elephant and get across multiple international borders without detection. The only thing trophy hunting serves is to exacerbate the slaughter in an area already reeling from the number of bull elephants killed.



© Photo by J-L Doran

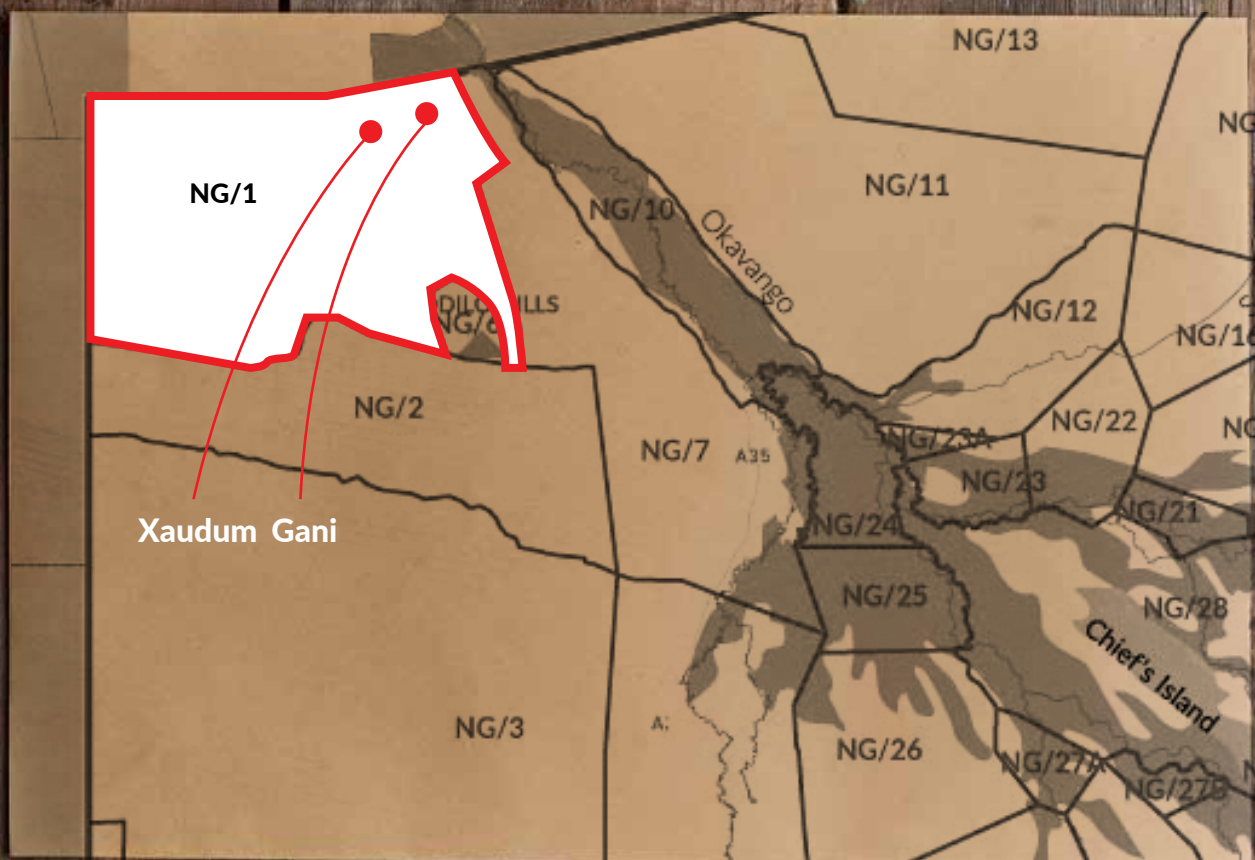
“NG13 covers a vast area of densely wooded terrain.”



5.1.2. NG1

Controlled Hunting Area NG1 is the block in Botswana's far north-west corner on the western side of the Okavango River and bordering Namibia's Khaudum National Park to the west. The area is undulating Kalahari woodland divided by the Xaudum omuramba (dry water-course). There are several villages and settlements made up of mostly San with some Herero and Hambukushu communities closer to the Okavango River in the east.

This is an interesting case-study as NG1 is a Citizen Elephant Hunting Area, not a Community Managed Area. This means individual citizens, rather than a CBO trust, purchases a license to shoot an elephant. A license of BWP 8,000 (USD 660) per elephant is payable 'over the counter' at the DWNP offices. Due to demand, quotas are allocated through a raffle/auction that is usually held in Gaborone or Maun before the commencement of the hunting season in April. However, the elephant trophy is strictly non-exportable.⁶⁸ For NG1, there is a total of 10 elephants on the quota for 2022.⁶⁹



However, it appears from various interviews with community members and other stakeholders, that citizen hunting has opened up the space for some concerning irregularities.

To begin with, many of the bidders from poor rural villages were not informed that the ivory could not be exported.⁷⁰ The costs far outweigh any benefits the system provides for. Often, the successful bidders are too poor to shoot an elephant – they must carry an appropriate high-calibre rifle, have a decent vehicle and be accompanied by a Professional Hunter. This means that the citizens are forced to sell their licenses to wealthy Botswana residents (non-residents are not permitted to buy a license) for a small profit of up to BWP 20,000 (USD 1,600). This amount is lower than what trophy hunting operators charge overseas clients. Some of these wealthy residents apparently have purchased multiple licenses to shoot elephants. These residents also happen to be owners of several lodges that include hunting lodges and operations in Ngamiland and the Chobe and are said to be politically influential.

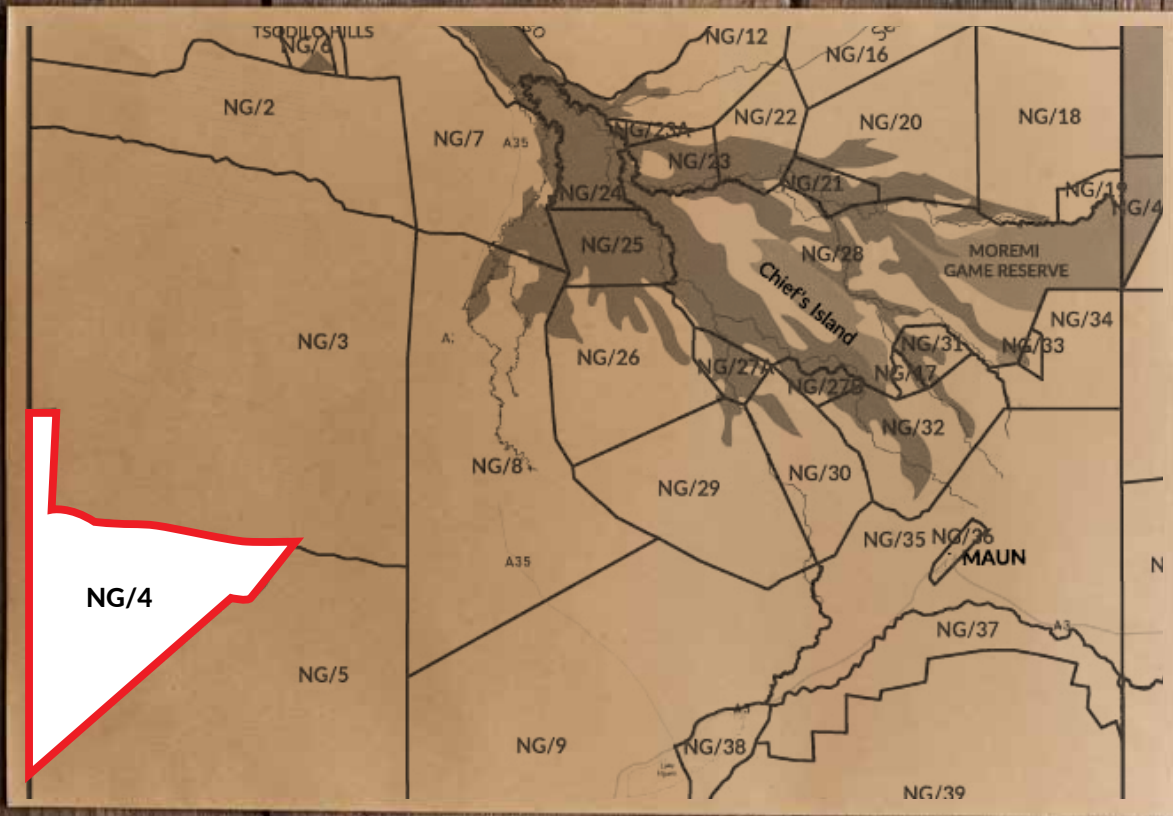
On the 12th April 2021, the above issues were raised during a meeting between the DWNP and the Botswana Wildlife Producers Association (BWPA), Botswana's professional hunting association. BWPA was concerned that

the way the system is set up serves as a fronting exercise for misuse and an unsustainable hunting of elephants, which BWPA "should not condone at all costs". BWPA stated that any member found abusing the system would be suspended or expelled from the association.⁷¹

Interviews were conducted with a range of residents in the villages of Gani and Xaudum in NG1. All were extremely dissatisfied with the citizen hunting system, with one man stating that citizen hunting only benefits outsiders and central government. One man stated that distant owners of licenses in other CHAs nearby had over-used their quotas in 2021. In some cases, quotes were exceeded by 100%. He said most of the hunters are politically connected and there is no enforcement of the quota system.

None of the respondents have received any direct financial benefits including meat that is supposed to be given to communities as per the requirements set out the hunting guidelines for Citizen Elephant Hunting. Neither did any respondents identify indirect benefits for the villages. Many cited that there were no employment opportunities provided by elephant hunting either. There is a common mistrust of trophy hunters and trophy hunting enterprises owned by wealthy business owners with all respondents interviewed.

“There is a common mistrust of trophy hunters and trophy hunting enterprises owned by wealthy business owners with all respondents interviewed.”



5.1.3. NG4

This controlled hunting area is renowned for the Gcwihaba (formerly Drotsky's) caves, an impressive underground cave-system run and managed by the Department of National Museums and Monuments (DNMM). The area borders Namibia's Nyae-Nyae conservancy, the country's largest CBNRM. It has one beneficiary village called /Xai/Xai.

Elephants in this region are isolated from the migratory herds to the east of the Okavango Delta and migrate from Namibia where there is always permanent water. The elephant quota for NG4 is eight elephants for 2022, and neighbouring NG1, NG2, NG3 and NG5, ten, ten, six and eight elephants respectively. This makes a total of 42 elephants in the area.⁷² This can be compared with the four elephants on the trophy hunting quota in the Nyae-Nyae conservancy on the Namibian side.⁷³ Most of the elephants prefer the Namibia side due to its permanent water sources. Yet, the quota on the Botswana side is larger, which begs the question of how scientifically-based was the quota in Botswana considered. These figures are deemed too large to be sustainable for an isolated sub-population of elephants that tends to spend most of their time near the permanent water on the Namibian side.



Proponents maintain that trophy hunting is a useful conservation tool and community income generator, especially in areas where there is no photographic tourism. However, the situation in NG4 stands out in that, contrary to the principles of Botswana's hunting guidelines, trophy hunting has displaced the only form of photographic tourism activity in the CHA, namely the Gcwihaba Caves. Botswana's official Hunting and Escort Guidelines clearly state the trophy hunting is only permitted in areas where "there will be no adverse effects on photographic tourism."⁷⁴



© Photo by J-L Doran

On visiting the caves, 'No Entry - Private Hunting Concession' signs were placed on the two entry tracks to the caves. The campsite at the caves has been commandeered by a trophy hunting operator from Kasane. Tourists wishing to visit the caves are no longer permitted access to them. A Google search of the Gcwihaba Caves came up with 'temporarily closed'. Two DNMM-registered guides to take tourists into the caves were still in residence in their compound. Understandably, they had received no tourists for some time and said the hunting had severely disrupted visitations to the caves. The guides were trying to negotiate with the CBO at /Xai/Xai and the hunting operator to come to some form of agreement that would permit tourists to visit and camp at the caves.



A visit to /Xai/Xai village revealed that some of the proceeds from trophy hunting were going into the upgrading of an airstrip, presumably for foreign trophy hunters to easily access this remote area. The San villagers in /Xai/Xai complained of favouritism toward the few Herero members of the community, who tended to benefit the most from trophy hunting. They said the system was "very corrupt".



© Photo by J-L Doran

5.2. Central District (CT)

The Central District has a number of CHAs, like CT5, have been opened up for trophy hunting where previously there was none. One notable exception is CT3 on the border with Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park, which, according to the 2018 aerial survey, found large increases in elephant populations. Currently, this remains free from trophy hunts but rumours suggest this will change in upcoming years. Apart from CT3, the Central District overall revealed the largest decreases (along with Ngamiland East) of elephant numbers between 2015 and 2018. This decline was put down to a reshuffling of elephant migrations and, to some extent, poaching.⁷⁵ In 2019, several elephant carcasses and 537 vultures had been poisoned, likely by poachers, who use a similar method of poaching elephants in neighbouring Zimbabwe.⁷⁶

Citizen Elephant Hunting is conducted in four CHAs (CT8, CT10, CT16 and CT18) totalling a quota of 30 elephants. In Community-Managed Areas (CT5 and CT27), 25 elephants may be hunted and two Concession Areas (CT1 and CT2) another 20 elephants are on the hunting quota. A further 30 elephants may be shot as Special Elephant Quotas in CT4, CT7 and CT29. This brings the total of elephants permitted to be shot in the Central District to 105 elephants in 2022.

About 50 kilometres north of the town of Nata along the A33 toward Pandamatenga and Kasane is a photographic tourism lodge and campsite called Elephant Sands. Elephants Sands forms part of a 17,000ha private concession wedged between CT2, CT4 and CT5 and is famed for its large herds of elephants that move in to the permanent water source on the property. This popular tourist site is completely surrounded by trophy hunting. The three concessions make up a quota of 30 elephants for 2022 (10 elephants per CHA).





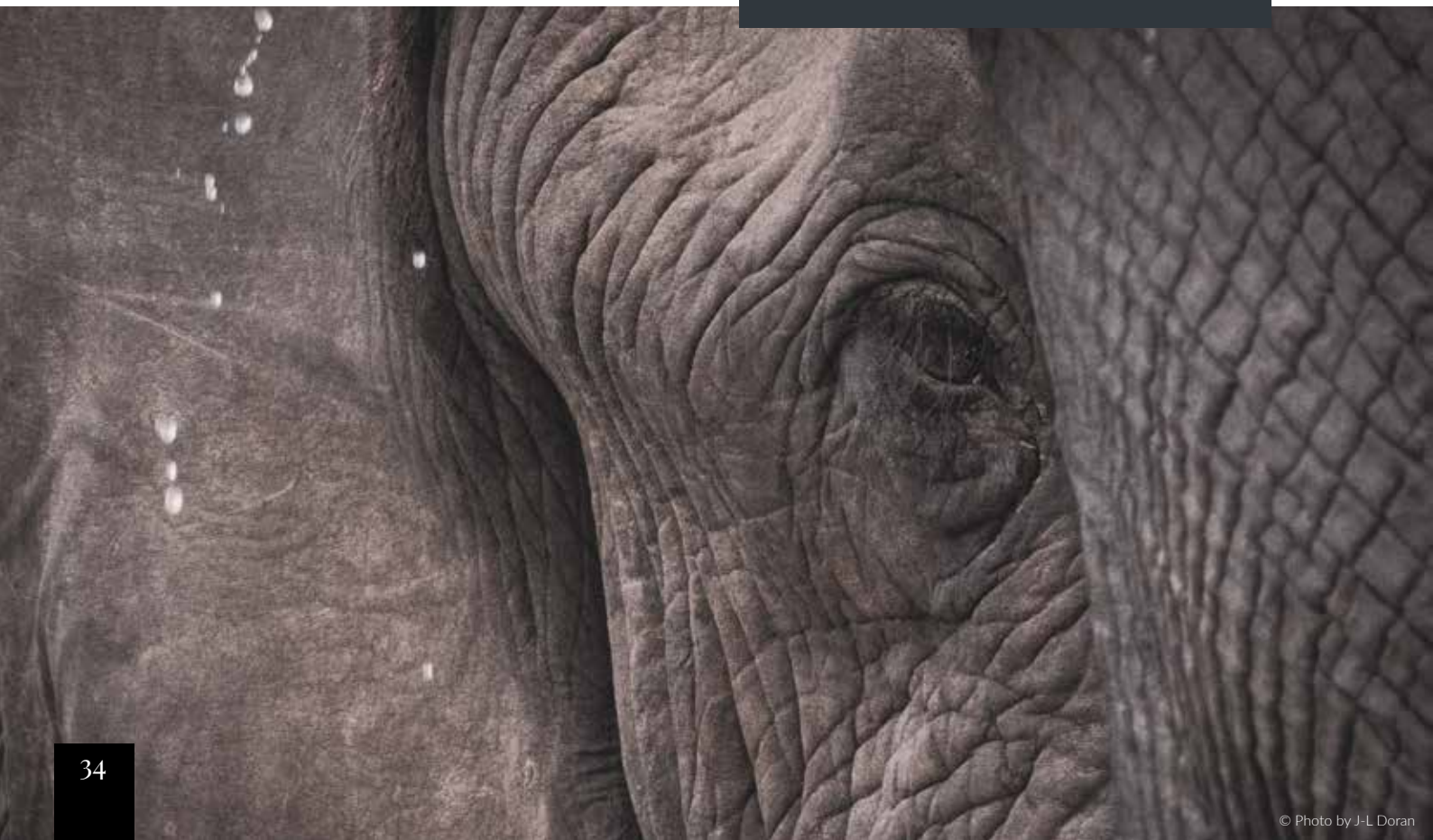
Again, this appears to be in transgression of the national hunting guidelines that state trophy hunting can only be permitted in an area when there are no adverse effects on photographic tourism.⁷⁷ The elephants visiting Elephant Sands, especially in the dry-season (which also happens to coincide with the hunting season), must therefore run the daily gauntlet through the hunting concessions to access the water source.

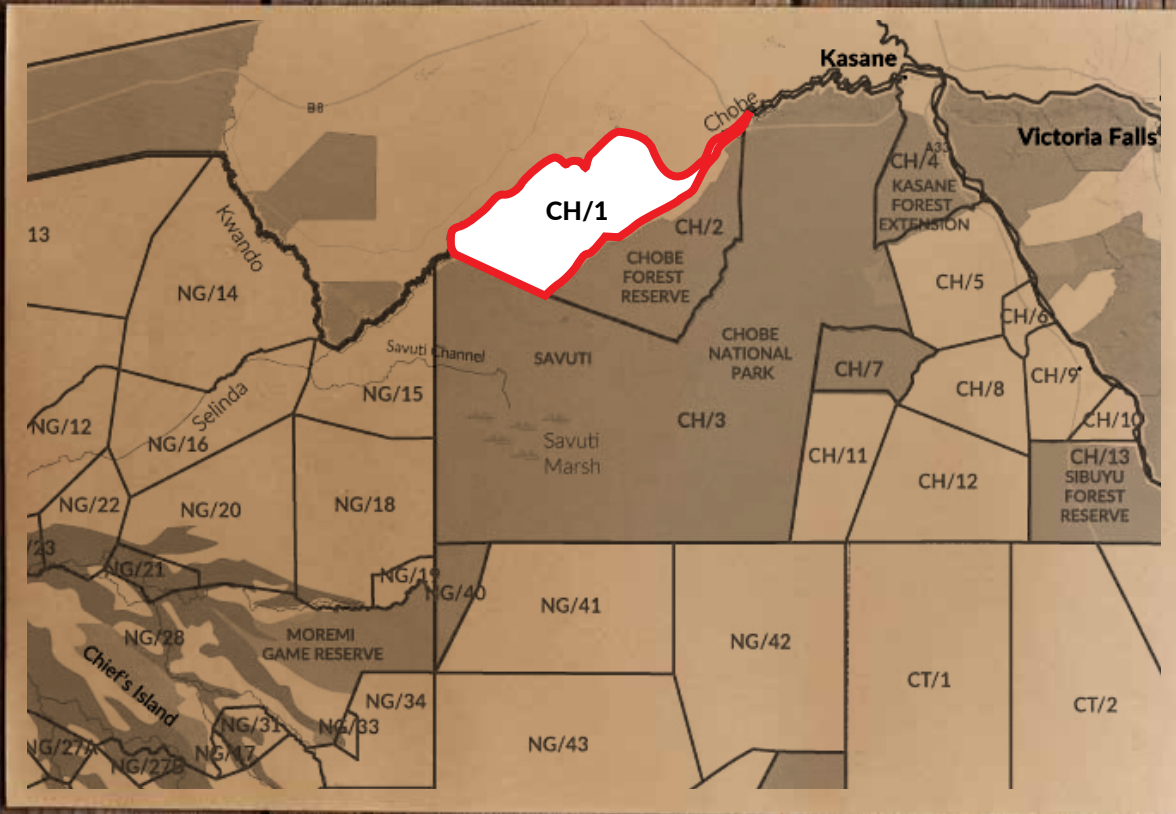
Another factor for consideration is that should trophy hunting replace photographic tourism at Elephant Sands, as it has done with the Gcwihaba Caves in NG4, the potential for job losses in an area with almost zero employment opportunities will be palpable, especially when it comes to the employment of women (as receptionists, managers,

cleaners and, on occasion, as guides). According to the UN Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015: "Poverty eradication is about enabling women to have income security, sustainable livelihoods, access to decent work, and full and productive employment".⁷⁸

In photographic tourism, women are well-represented in the work-force, while with trophy hunting, which in any case only employs a fraction of local community members compared to photographic tourism, provides very little employment opportunities for women.

It was further revealed that pressure has been placed on the owners of Elephant Sands to permit trophy hunting on their property.





5.3. Chobe (CH)

Elephant numbers are significant, especially in the dry season where herds constantly move between the permanent water-course of the Chobe River and the woodlands of the Chobe Forest Reserve and National Park. Human-elephant conflict incidences are common.

In Chobe National Park, while overall populations have not decreased significantly, elephant bull populations have. An estimated number of fresh/recent carcasses increased significantly from 16 in 2014 to 104 in 2018. Again, poaching of elephants for their tusks was seen as the driving cause of this.⁷⁹

There are a number of private and community-run lodges and campsites, primarily along the Chobe watercourse in the east and one private lodge and campsite in the centre-west situated at a permanent waterhole. There is a hunting lodge situated close to the latter as the area to the west of the enclave has been declared suitable for trophy hunting. The hunting lodge owned and operated by Shameer Variawa of SV Safaris.

Variawa has been fingered as part of the same pattern that is occurring elsewhere showing how hunting quotas are shifting a massive amount of wealth from poor communities to rich business owners, many with suspected political connections. Variawa, together with Mr. Kader who owns Thlou Safari Lodge in Kasane and an avid hunter, are both estimated to shift in excess of BWP 50 million (USD 4.2 million) from poor Chobe enclave communities through the trophy hunting of elephants. Investigations have revealed that while Thlou Safari Lodge and SV Safaris stand to make a return of more than 500%, the two community trusts representing Chobe enclave residents will share a little over BWP 8 million (USD 650,000), which according to a report, is barely enough to break even.⁸⁰



Kader reportedly also has the rights to shoot elephants in a dozen or so other locations including CT5 that borders Elephant Sands in the Central District.

As with NG4 in Ngamiland and the CHAs in the Central District surrounding Elephant Sands, trophy hunting takes place alongside photographic tourism. SV Safaris' lodge is a stone's throw away from Thobolo's Bush Lodge and Campsite. This is once again in defiance of the hunting guidelines principle that forbids hunting in an area where there is photographic tourism. Like Elephant Sands, large herds of elephants must move through the hunting area just a couple of kilometres away to access the lodge's permanent water-hole. DWNP have erected signs on a five kilometre radius around the lodge forbidding hunting but visitors to the lodge recorded sounds of gunfire during the time of this investigation. This makes a mockery of the argument by proponents of trophy hunting that it provides a necessary income in 'marginal' areas where photographic tourism is absent.

“As with NG4 in Ngamiland and the CHAs in the Central District surrounding Elephant Sands, trophy hunting takes place alongside photographic tourism.”

Apart from Thobolo's, staff, managers and owners of several photographic tourism establishments in the enclave, which included private lodges and campsites, communal campsites, craft stalls and shops and cultural centres, mostly believed that trophy hunting had a detrimental effect on business while some responded that while it had no adverse effects, trophy hunting did not serve to boost tourism either. Most of the respondents in the six villages were ambivalent towards trophy hunting. None, however, stated they had received any direct benefits and most were dissatisfied with the manner in which the CBO Chobe Enclave Conservation Trust (CECT) distributes funding for indirect benefits such as schools, funerals etc.

The other central argument in support of trophy hunting is that it mitigates human-elephant conflict situations. In the case of CH1, the hunting operation, which is in the west of the enclave, occurs some distance (30-60 kilometres) from the six villages that are all situated in the east. It means that the elephants hunted are not the ones that usually move through the villages from south to north and back. On asking several residents, none of the respondents believed that trophy hunting made a difference to elephant conflict situations and that the hunting was too far away to have any affect.



Among the villages, there were several other alternatives in place to mitigate human-elephant conflict. With the assistance of an NGO, elephant corridors have been demarcated to allow safe travel for elephants moving through crops and villages between the Chobe River and the wilderness spaces to the south. The same NGO assisted many farmers in either surrounding crops with solar-powered electric barriers, sound horns, flashing lights, capsicum canisters and beehives that are effective in keeping elephants away. The construction of permanent waterholes away from human-settlements is another effective method that has been tried and tested. As is the case in the Namibia side of NG1 and NG4, elephants prefer stay near permanent water, and will not raid crops if they do not have to travel to quench their thirsts. The Chobe National Park has constructed waterholes before, and this has proved effective. However, many are in disrepair and the only few still operating are maintained through private and NGO funding.

One farmer, who owned a number of agricultural blocks of maize, watermelon and other products maintained that since the erection of electric wires around his blocks in 2019, he has not had a single elephant eat his crops. These farmers are earning an income in supplying food to nearby photographic lodges and supermarkets as far as Kasane. The same farmer scoffed at the claim that trophy hunting provides benefits for villages, stating instead that: "We are all farmers here, we make our living from growing food and raising cows. We do not sit around and wait for handouts that never come."



© Photo by J-L Doran

"We are all farmers here, we make our living from growing food and raising cows. We do not sit around and wait for handouts that never come."

6. Conclusion

This investigation of trophy hunting of elephants as it relates to Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) areas has found that:

- It often goes against the regulations for the utilisation of natural resources by communities as set out by the CBNRM program in Botswana. In some cases, leases where elephant trophy hunting took place were never granted by a Land Board (as in the case of NG13). Many irregularities persist, such as hunters exceeding quota numbers without fear of retribution from government agencies. In any case, elephant quotas, which are much higher than in neighbouring Namibia where elephants freely migrate, don't seem to be based on any formal aerial or ground survey. Quotas appear to be, as one analyst said, a cut-and-paste affair that favours the politically connected.
- Has not provided any meaningful income for any of the rural communities, and fails to provide opportunities to improve citizen empowerment and investment in the sector. Funds from trophy hunting elephants tend to remain with the wealthy hunting operators, CBO Board of Trustees, business moguls and those politically connected. CBNRM residents in Botswana remain the most impoverished citizens in Botswana, and in the case of minority groups such as the San, continue to be marginalised.
- Historically, has done little to alleviate poverty in Botswana's CBNRMs. In a 2016 review poverty levels in CBNRMs were the highest in the country – 27% compared to 19,3 % nationally. The income generated amounted to just BWP 2 (USD 0,17) per person for the year 2015. This remains the case in 2022.
- Does not mitigate human-elephant conflict in the areas visited since there are no settlements of any size near where trophy hunting takes place. Other alternatives, such as demarcated elephant corridors, electric, sound, light, capsicum and beehive barriers have proven far more effective.

- In some cases (such as NG13), the national Hunting and Escort Guidelines, which forbids trophy hunting in areas previously not utilised for trophy hunting prior to the moratorium in 2014, have been ignored. In other areas, trophy hunting also goes against the Hunting and Escort Guidelines in that it takes place near, or displaces, photographic tourism, which potentially is a far larger and sustainable income earner than trophy hunting.
- Areas deemed too 'marginal' for photographic tourism due to remoteness, monotonous landscapes and lack of abundant wildlife ignore a large and growing sector of the market, namely the independent self-drive traveller. This market has huge potential for future revenue benefits for Botswana's CBNRMs.
- Is detrimental to elephant populations, herd dynamics and migration routes, again as per the principles laid out by the Hunting and Escort Guidelines. Bull elephants, in particular, are facing declines in many of these areas since they are the targeted species for both trophy hunters and poachers. The large tuskers are dwindling, and the elephant shot in NG13 may be one of the last of its kind in Botswana.

It has been stated ad nauseum that trophy hunting brings in necessary revenue for remote rural communities, and that the practice also provides assistance in increasing wildlife populations and mitigates human wildlife conflict, especially with elephants. However, as this investigation and countless previous analyses and studies have shown, trophy hunting not only fails to provide any meaningful revenue for most individuals residing in and alongside CBNRMs but contributes to a potential collapse of elephant populations and fails to mitigate the incidences of elephant conflict scenarios. In short, trophy hunting in Botswana achieves the opposite of what its proponents proclaim.

7. About the Author

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Disclaimer: This is an independent report, whose production was funded by Fondation Franz Weber.



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