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DISENTANGLING BENEFITS

Livelihoods, Natural Resource Management and Managing Revenue from
Tourism: The Experience of the Torra Conservancy,
Namibia

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBNRM	community-based natural resource management
IRDNC	Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRM	natural resource management

1. INTRODUCTION

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in Namibia is supported by enabling legislation passed by the Namibian Government in 1996. This innovative legislation amends former discriminatory conservation laws and gives communal-area dwellers the same legal rights to manage and benefit from wildlife and tourism that freehold landowners have enjoyed for two decades (Seslar Svendsen, Collinson & Long 2000).

Thus, the legislation allows rural communities to form conservancies as a vehicle for establishing viable natural resource management (NRM) structures and systems for earning and distributing benefits. Conservancies are multiple-use zones where residents continue farming as normal, but collectively manage wildlife in order to benefit both from better NRM practice, and from capturing tourism revenues. The committees that run the conservancies aim to be multifunctional, serving as management structures for natural resource utilisation and benefit distribution. The establishment of conservancies is seen as a fundamental step in improving management capacity for communities in communal areas. Linking management to benefits is central to the conservancy concept and to CBNRM in Namibia as a whole.

This paper draws on interviews with Torra residents and other material to explore what is actually meant by the term *benefit*. The paper provides an account of some of the achievements and challenges facing conservancies and the Namibian CBNRM programme, through a discussion of the experiences of one conservancy, Torra, in the Kunene Region of north-west Namibia. The material presented here brings attention to the variety of ways in which benefits from improved NRM and capturing tourism revenue may be realised. In view of the fact that, to date, there have been very few tangible cash benefits available to community members through their conservancy programmes, the discussion centres on exploring the social development values of benefits. These include the following:

- The social value of living and working in one's home area
- Being able to work and continue to keep livestock both as security for one's livelihood and for social reasons
- The importance of cooperation in realising benefits from improved wildlife management (e.g. through community hunts), and
- The ability to maintain and strengthen social networks and "safety nets".

The paper is organised in the following manner. First it provides an account of CBNRM in Namibia and the conservancy initiative. This is followed by an introduction to the Kunene Region and the Torra Conservancy. The remainder of the paper presents qualitative material based on interviews to explore the issue of benefits at first hand. Finally, the discussion concludes with a review of some of the challenges and opportunities facing the conservancy programme.

The argument presented here acknowledges the importance of tourism revenue as a potential opportunity to diversify sources of income for communal-area residents involved in CBNRM, but stresses that cash income is by no means the only form of benefit. The case of Torra clearly illustrates that benefits other than cash have an important role to play in social and economic development and for promoting conservation-oriented behaviour. From a social

development perspective, benefits other than cash – i.e. “intangible” benefits - can exceed financial benefits (Ashley 1998).¹

The Torra Conservancy is among the wealthiest in terms of bank balances. They have earned income from both trophy hunting and joint venture agreements. Despite Torra’s incomes, cash benefits for the broader community have been few. From research materials presented in this paper, however, it is clear that benefits other than cash can play a significant part in changing the attitudes and commitment of community and Conservancy committee members towards managing natural resources, particularly wildlife. To this extent the lessons we can learn from the Torra experience have implications for CBNRM as a whole.

2. COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN NAMIBIA

CBNRM in Namibia is a movement rather than a project or programme, and one that is seen by some as a leading model in the country for a more integrated and holistic approach to rural development (Jones, Wahome & Araseb 2001). Some see it as a means to achieve conservation, providing benefits and incentives for local community participation. Others see it as a development strategy in its own right: a means of achieving the aim of diversifying the rural economy through sustainable natural resource utilisation. At the local level, CBNRM relates to improving NRM through the development of the required institutions, and to utilising natural resources (wildlife and other resources) as part of management practice. CBNRM is also associated with managing and distributing tourism revenues generated as a result of improvements in resource management (i.e. increased wildlife populations draw more tourists). Furthermore, CBNRM aims to integrate new land-use options with existing livelihood strategies in order to conserve wildlife and improve the welfare of rural people. The key elements of these approaches and focal points can be summarised as being associated with institutional development, NRM, and tourism enterprise development.

Arguably, CBNRM as a conservation and rural development strategy had its beginnings in Namibia approximately 20 years ago with the community game guard (CGG) programme introduced by Garth Owen-Smith, Chris Eyre and several traditional leaders in the Kunene Region (formerly *Kaokoveld*). Later, Owen-Smith formed an NGO entitled *Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation* (IRDNC).² The CGG initiative aimed to directly involve local leaders and their own appointed game guards in conservation practice, and to establish a working relationship of trust and respect between Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) staff and communities who were previously alienated from wildlife conservation endeavours and hostile towards such enterprises. Over the last ten years, many individuals in the Kunene Region and, through them, many communities have had considerable exposure to these endeavours and experiences. The present manifestation of CBNRM through the conservancy initiative builds on these previous efforts (establishing CGG systems, community field officers, and better informed management structures) at least for Kunene (Seslar Svendsen, Collinson & Long 2000).

In addition to the existence of an enabling policy and legislative environment, the momentum that CBNRM and the conservancies initiative has gained in Namibia in recent years is, in no small measure, enhanced by the existence of a strong and well coordinated group of CBNRM

¹ These intangible benefits are difficult to measure and are best captured through qualitative research and analysis.

² P Tarr, pers. comm.

stakeholders. This group – involving implementing NGOs, community representatives, donor agencies, the University of Namibia, and the MET – formed the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO).

The Association's key roles are to (Johnson 2000) –

- coordinate and support the work of the conservancies and implementing agencies
- advocate for policy and legislative change, and
- monitor the effectiveness and impacts of conservancy development.

The Association is not a nominal attempt to synergise CBNRM efforts; rather, it is a body with a secretariat and executive who meet regularly and host national level workshops and conferences, debate strategy, and lobby donors. Like all collaborative efforts to support CBNRM, however, the Association is not without its own internal rivalries and political problems. Nonetheless, in comparison with other programmes in the southern African region it remains a strong collaboration.

The current vision for CBNRM in Namibia aims to support better management and utilisation of a broad spectrum of natural resources, from wildlife, through water, fisheries, rangelands and forestry. The national CBNRM programme has evolved considerably since its inception in the early 1980s and the 1996 legislation. In areas where tourism is not viable (e.g. in the south) or is restricted due to security problems (as was the case in the Caprivi Region between 1999 and 2002), efforts are being made to extend CBNRM to include the activities and inputs of other government ministries and Namibian NGOs not traditionally associated with wildlife conservation.

Establishing a conservancy is not an easy process: it normally requires considerable support and assistance. To date, generous support has been provided for the conservancies through NGOs (with donor funding) and the MET, with the result that 14 registered communal area conservancies currently exist in Namibia, and more than 30 are in the process of registration. The latter procedure involves implementing a number of steps to meet certain legal requirements aimed at ensuring democratic process (Jacobsohn 2000:123). The Minister of Environment and Tourism will declare a conservancy in the *Government gazette* if (Jones 1999b:30) –

- the community applying has elected a representative committee, and supplied the names of the committee members
- the community agree upon a legal constitution which provides for the sustainable management and utilisation of game in the conservancy
- the conservancy committee has the ability to manage funds
- the conservancy committee has an approved method for the equitable distribution to members of the community of benefits derived from the consumptive and non-consumptive utilisation of game
- the community has defined the boundaries of the geographic area of the conservancy, and
- the area concerned is not subject to any lease or is not a proclaimed game reserve or nature reserve.

Meeting these requirements actively involves applicants in a process of dialogue and negotiation with their own communities, with other communities, and with external agents.

Defining boundaries, establishing membership, electing a committee, developing a constitution are all activities that assist with capacity-building and social empowerment for those actively involved at the local level.

Many in Namibia consider the registration of conservancies as simply the first step in a long and dynamic process, which ultimately aims to provide the foundation upon which communities can –

- negotiate contracts with tour operators, lodge owners and safari hunters
- take an active role in land-use planning and NRM within their conservancies, and
- develop their own community- or individually-run enterprises.

Although the ultimate objective of CBNRM may be to diversify rural economies through the sustainable utilisation of wildlife and other resources, a range of other benefits can be derived from establishing conservancies, which contribute substantially to social and economic development in rural areas. Registration may be a first step, but even the processes involved in doing so contribute significantly to building management capacity at the local level.

3. THE ISSUE OF BENEFITS

Linking benefits to the improved management of natural resources is at the heart of Namibia's CBNRM programme. It has long been assumed within CBNRM programmes (see e.g. Child & Peterson 1991) that providing cash benefits to people will lead to the required behaviour change towards conservation and sustainable management. However, as this paper illustrates, there is more to the issue of benefits when seen from a local perspective. Undoubtedly, tourism and the potential revenues that it provides are an important resource in rural areas,³ but how this resource is used or perceived as a benefit by communities themselves is not something that can be assumed by outside agents. Previous work has explored the issue of intangible benefits (Ashley 1998). Intangible benefits relate to the value of improved local-level institutional capacity-building, the empowerment of local communities, and the issue of restoration of rights. These kinds of benefits are widely perceived by CBNRM practitioners in Namibia as an important aspect of the CBNRM programme and its achievements⁴. This research paper will, however, not deal in detail with intangible benefits. For the purposes of this paper, *benefits* are broadly conceptualised in terms of –

- direct cash benefits (e.g. cash dividends from tourism revenues, and earnings from employment)
- direct benefits from improved NRM for existing livelihoods (e.g. better protection from wildlife, better access to grazing and water)
- benefits relating to social development and livelihoods (e.g. improved social relationships and community cohesion, and other localised social values).

The following sections will provide a brief discussion of the NRM benefits for existing livelihoods, and the cash benefits that come from capturing tourism revenue. This is followed

³ The Ministry of Environment and Tourism's *Policy on the promotion of community-based tourism*, which was approved in 1995, offered a framework for ensuring that local communities have access to opportunities in tourism development and are able to share in the benefits of tourism activities that take place on their land.

⁴ M Jacobsohn and G Owen-Smith, pers. comm.

by the presentation of material relating to interviews with Torra residents and a discussion of the implications of their statements.

3.1 Improved natural resource management

The range of benefits derived directly from improved natural resource management may include the following:

- The establishment of additional water points for elephants and protecting existing points is becoming an increasingly common feature of wildlife management in Kunene. Since water is a scarce resource in the semi-arid north-west, protecting water points from elephant damage and ensuring their continued function for livestock and human use are essential. This feature of wildlife management has direct consequences for the health and well-being of both livestock and people. This is one practice that tangibly shows the important link between improved management and livelihood benefits.
- Using electric fencing to protect gardens from elephants is another management improvement bringing tangible benefits in the way of livelihood security. Although the maize and vegetable crops grown are not usually sold on the markets due to the remoteness of farms and difficult access to them, the protection of such crops for home consumption in semi-arid areas may add substantially to people's diets. For local communities, protecting gardens and water points illustrates that it is possible to coexist with large mammals that would otherwise be seen primarily as pests.
- Local hunting obviously provides meat (a locally valued item of food), but it also gives the community autonomy and control over wildlife management: hunting or harvesting has long been considered an important element of wildlife management (Long, Steenkamp & Marks 2001). In addition, the organisation of community hunts and the distribution of meat consolidates and improves cooperative relations at the local level. This latter point is significant since establishing and running conservancies requires community collaboration, both legally and practically.
- A further aspect of improved management relates to initiating the process of land-use planning, with zoning for core wildlife, tourist, multi-use and livestock areas. This process allows simultaneous-use zones to be demarcated while minimising potential conflicts between the needs of tourism and local livelihoods. Again, land-use planning and its implementation need to be seen as central to linking the improved management of natural resources to the benefits natural resources hold for local communities.

CBNRM in north-western Namibia focuses on activities associated with wildlife management and tourism enterprise development. Ultimately, such efforts aim to improve both existing livestock-based livelihoods and to diversify economic opportunities for conservancy communities. While the conservancy initiative is recognised to be a long-term strategy for CBNRM and local communities, it is also widely recognised that to provide short-term and tangible benefits to local communities is essential. Developing tourism enterprises – whether owned by the community themselves or in partnership with the private sector – requires considerable investment in terms of time and money for capacity-building and for establishing contracts. Therefore, such development should be considered part of a long-term

strategy for improving incomes and providing benefits to local communities. In contrast, benefits that may come directly from improved NRM and that are directly linked to existing livelihood practices may be realised in a much shorter time frame. Providing meat from community hunts, protecting livestock and water points, developing and implementing land-use plans not only for wildlife and tourism, but also for agriculture, grazing and water are all important aspects of existing livestock-based livelihoods. If the improved collective management of grazing and water and the protection of livestock – facilitated by the conservancies' institutions – leads to healthier livestock populations on which people can depend, then these improvements may bring realisable benefits to individual households in the short term.

Improvements in NRM practice of this kind are, however, only part of the equation. CBNRM also aims to promote diversification of the rural socio-economy. Farming is a very high-risk activity in arid areas such as Kunene, and some parts of Kunene are marginal for stock-keeping. Although the existing livelihoods of many people in Kunene are based on livestock, marketing constraints often make it difficult for them to access the cash they need to pay school and health expenses and to buy foodstuffs: the markets for livestock are inaccessible due to their distance from the farms and to the existence of the veterinary cordon fence.⁵

3.2 Capturing tourism revenues

The current emphasis amongst CBNRM support organisations, particularly NGOs and donors, is on improving ways to capture tourism revenues. The range of opportunities for developing tourism revenue capture includes the following:

- Tourism lodges (including joint ventures)
- Tented camps
- Community campsites
- Capturing revenues from existing concessions for tourism and game viewing
- Trophy and sport hunting
- Sale of live game to game farms
- Tourism guide services, including tracking rhino
- Cultural/traditional villages
- Sales of crafts
- Catering enterprises associated with lodges or camps
- Services such as vehicle repairs and the sale of drinks and snacks

Incomes derived from tourism are subject to the distribution plans of the conservancy concerned. Money earned is held in conservancy accounts. Ideally, a proportion of income is allocated for support to management functions and salaries, the remainder earmarked for equitable (not necessarily equal) distribution. Also, an outline of a revenue or benefit distribution plan must be submitted to the MET as part of the process of conservancy registration. The further development of these plans is an evolving process for conservancies and they may alter them as circumstances change in the conservancy. All aspects of registering conservancies have proved time-consuming and difficult, but boundary negotiations, electing committee membership and developing constitutions have all been

⁵ This is largely a legacy dating back to 1919, when the South African authorities proclaimed certain areas within a so-called Police Zone. Mendelsohn et al. [forthcoming], in the *Atlas of Namibia*, point out the following: "The Zone also served to contain the mobility of both people and animals, as well as the spread of cattle diseases from northern Namibia to the central and southern parts of the country."

achieved, so it is simply a matter of time before operational distributions plans will be developed. What is significant, perhaps, is that revenue derived from conservancy activities is considered a collective or community benefit. These kinds of benefits are quite different from benefits that may affect individuals and households directly, e.g. employment at a tourist lodge or an improvement to a livestock water point. This is an important issue, as conservancy residents must balance the needs of individuals with the potential for communities to earn income from some collective project or development activity. There will always be winners and losers in this regard.

The issue of benefits from tourism has in some cases led to direct conflict between people in communal areas, e.g. in Sesfontein. What is perhaps significant about such conflicts, however, is that they are normally in areas with a dynamic ethnic mix of peoples who pledge allegiance to different traditional authorities. This has the effect of politicising NRM and exacerbating existing struggles over power and resources, including financial gains.

In Kunene, although the benefit distribution plans of many conservancies have yet to be implemented, they include both community development options (support for the educational, health and social sectors) and assistance in times of drought (e.g. the Torra Conservancy's draft benefit distribution plan has an emergency drought fund for the families of people killed by wildlife, etc.). Tourism also provides cash benefits through employment. Employment derived from tourism for school leavers is seen as a major benefit because this keeps the youth in the community and families together. The rationale for capturing tourism revenues is clear.

A key issue in considering the sustainability of linking improvements in NRM to benefits from tourism, however, relates to the present emphasis on tourism as a single source of revenue or benefit. Tourism may not be viable in every year, and there are risks associated with it. Currently, there is an increasing emphasis on the development of community enterprises in order to capture tourist revenues. Although this is an important feature of the CBNRM programme, in the long term the viability and sustainability of a community's livelihood will rest on the ability of the conservancies to provide benefits that are essentially meaningful in the context of peoples' existing means of earning a living – whether through new opportunities or old.

The relationship between improvements in NRM and deriving benefits from tourism is multifaceted. On the one hand, –

- improved wildlife numbers attract tourists
- planning for core wildlife, tourist and multiple-use areas may add substantially to the tourist experience where expectations of “unadulterated wilderness” are high, and
- planning may also assist in times of crisis for managing grazing and water for both wildlife and livestock.⁶

Tourism provides cash incomes and jobs, as well as a rationale for local people to stay in rural areas to develop long-term, sustainable livelihoods. If revenues from tourism can be fed back into NRM, whilst simultaneously providing visible individual and community benefits,

⁶ The organising and planning skills that CBNRM facilitates within rural farming communities is a key social benefit. For the first time, people are able to mobilise themselves to raise their voices, plan and implement collective action, and let central government know what they want (M Jacobsohn, pers. comm.). Ashley (1998) examines such intangible, capacity-building benefits further.

then the long-term viability of integrating tourism into the sustainable livelihoods of rural communities in Kunene makes absolute sense.

On the other hand, integrating tourism with existing land use practices remains a considerable challenge, and there are trade-offs for people in managing wildlife for tourism. Stock losses due to the presence of predators, damage to gardens, and threats to human life from the presence of elephants are by no means perhaps the most insignificant of these trade offs. The material presented in this paper illustrates the difficulties of integrating tourism and the preservation of wildlife with existing livelihoods, despite obvious tangible benefits. It also illustrates that local residents are aware (albeit differentially) of the dilemma they face in diversifying their livelihood incomes through tourism, and the tension that exists between the value of wildlife for tourists and the potential threats it poses to existing livelihoods. To this extent, then, it is clear that diversifying opportunities for improving livelihoods through CBNRM should not focus on capturing tourism revenues at the expense of existing livestock- and agriculture-based ways of living. It is also clear that support for CBNRM needs to pay attention to the core issue of improving NRM for the benefit of existing livelihoods, and not simply as a means to encourage tourism.

The generation of revenue for conservancies in Namibia is in its early stages in many cases, and many conservancies have yet to enjoy substantial returns. It is important that they do, but other benefits must not be overlooked. The remainder of this paper will explore some of the issues associated with CBNRM benefits and livelihood diversification options from the perspective of Torra Conservancy residents, and consider the future challenges facing the continued expansion and implementation of CBNRM in Namibia.

4. THE KUNENE REGION

About 70,000 people live in the remote north-west of Namibia. It covers an area of about 70,000 km². The area receives minimal annual rainfall, from approximately 50 mm in the far west to 300 mm in the north-eastern part of the Region. Consequently, the economy is largely limited to semi-nomadic pastoralism or marginal sedentary livestock farming at low stocking rates. Culturally, the area is home to a number of different ethnic groups, including Damara stock-keepers (about 7%), sedentary Herero pastoralists⁷ and semi-nomadic Himba cattle herders (who together make up about 90% of the population). There are also a handful of Nama people and the Roman Catholic “Riemvasmaak” farming community (about 3%) and other settlers. The Riemvasmaak, who form part of the Torra Conservancy community, were forcibly relocated from the Richtersveld area in the Northern Cape of South Africa during the 1970s (Jacobsohn 2000). In 1994 the Riemvasmaak community were invited back to the Richtersveld, and approximately 300 people returned.

From a visitor’s perspective, Kunene is endowed with great scenic beauty. It is also home to a wide range of wildlife species, including oryx (also known as *gemsbok*), kudu, springbok, giraffe, cheetah, leopard and lion, and desert-adapted elephant and black rhino. From both conservation and economic perspectives, wildlife and its habitats are the most valuable natural resources in the area. Heavy poaching of wildlife, including black rhino and the desert-adapted elephant, led to the establishment of the CGG system in the Kunene Region

⁷ Here, the distinction between *stock-keepers* and *pastoralists* simply denotes that the Damara people have become livestock-keepers and have permanent farms. The Herero, in contrast, have traditionally been livestock-keepers and share origins with the Himba nomadic pastoralists.

(formerly northern *Damaraland* and *Kaokoland*) in the early 1980s. The system proved effective in halting illegal hunting and led to the expansion of support for community conservation and development efforts.

Since 1990, support for CBNRM has expanded and consolidated to include community capacity-building and the facilitation of local income generation, principally through consumptive (trophy hunting) and non-consumptive tourism (photography and wildlife viewing). There are a number of lodges, campsites, cultural villages and craft outlets spread across the Region that tourists patronise while visiting the area.

5. THE TORRA CONSERVANCY

The Torra Conservancy is in the southern part of the Kunene Region. There are 400 (approximately 80%) registered adult members of the population, and their committee consists of seven members, three of whom are women. The community are predominantly Damara and Riemvasmaak stock-keepers. The administrative centre for the conservancy is at Bergsig, where there is a clinic and a school. What is interesting about the Torra Conservancy is that ethnically they are a relatively homogeneous group, being Damara, and a few remaining Riemvasmaak families. The latter were accepted as part of the community with minimal serious conflict about their presence. The Conservancy staff includes one field officer, one community activator, and five conservancy game guards (otherwise known as *community game guards* or *community rangers*). The Conservancy has a smart, three-room office, furnished with basic administrative essentials. They run a vehicle and have high frequency (HF) radio facilities. Torra was one of the first four gazetted conservancies in Namibia, the first to be “weaned” off financial assistance from donors, and by August 2000, the first to assume its financial independence. Torra now pays for all its own management costs (office expenses, vehicle running costs, and salaries for seven employees).

The income saved so far from tourism (primarily trophy hunting and a joint venture lodge) is slightly over 1 million Namibian Dollars. This is earmarked for community projects once the broader community ratifies the distribution plan the Conservancy has devised. There is bountiful plains game, and it is common to see springbok, oryx and domestic stock grazing together. The Conservancy has become a national role model for others since being gazetted in June 1998.

5.1 Natural resource management

Torra consists of 352,200 ha of desert and semi-arid savannah. The area has mountainous landscapes with a major ephemeral river, the Huab, in the south. It is home to a variety of wildlife, including black rhino, elephant, giraffe, kudu, mountain zebra, oryx, ostrich and springbok, as well as large carnivores such as cheetah, leopard, lion and spotted hyena. There are two core wildlife areas within the Conservancy. Plans have already been developed to utilise these two areas for exclusive, low-impact tourism. There are also numerous natural springs in the area.

In terms of improved wildlife management, commercial poaching has ceased in the Conservancy. During 2001 there were only two incidents of small-scale illegal hunting. In both cases, non-community members were apparently the culprits and charges were laid. Other improvements include the development, with NGO support, of a wildlife database.

Conservancy game guards conduct a number of different patrols on a monthly basis, and keep event logs to monitor wildlife and record incidents of mortalities, problem animals, etc.

Another first in CBNRM took the form of a full game census in 2000. It was repeated in 2001, and provides information to assist with wildlife management. Other developments include the drafting of the first management plan, which was subsequently accepted by all members of the Conservancy.

Human wildlife conflict incidents in Torra involve cheetah, elephant, hyena, lion, jackal and, occasionally, leopard. In 1999, 61.1% of respondents surveyed (N=38 households) had suffered loss of livestock to predators during the 12 months prior to the survey. In the same period, 25% had suffered damage to water points, fences and gardens, which had been caused by elephants, and one person had been killed (Jones 1999a:8). To address these problems, the Conservancy is involved with the MET monitoring programme on large carnivores, which aims to develop strategies for living with predators. To deal with elephant problems, two elephant water points have been constructed with assistance from NGOs, and there are plans to build more with support from the Game Products Trust Fund.⁸ An electric fence was erected around a garden in one area as an experiment to see what effect it might have on discouraging raids by elephants. Although the fence has largely been successful, for many members of the community balancing the effective control of problem animals with the cost paid by farmers in terms of stock losses remains the biggest challenge.

The Torra Conservancy has been awarded quotas by the MET for consumptive utilisation of wildlife. In 2000, Conservancy members carried out the harvest themselves, utilising a total of 130 springbok, 20 oryx and 2 zebra. The meat, together with what was acquired from trophy hunting, was distributed according to the strategy of the community's *vleis* ("meat") committee. The Conservancy has also been successful in negotiating contracts for trophy hunting, and by late 2000, they had filled their five-year quota of two elephant. In addition, they have previously donated springbok for consumption at the joint conservancies' quarterly planning meetings held at the IRDNC base, and in 1998 donated five springbok from their quota to the Kunene Regional Council as an Independence Day gift.

5.2 Institutional and community capacity for managing the Conservancy

A variety of training activities supported by NGOs have been undertaken with the committee and Conservancy members over the previous year. The training included how to –

- manage finances
- set quotas
- develop crafts
- use global positioning systems (GPSs)
- read maps
- use wildlife road-count census techniques
- devise criteria and strategies for benefit distribution
- negotiate joint ventures
- drive a vehicle

⁸ The Trust Fund was established by the MET from the proceeds of ivory sales and income from consumptive tourism. The Fund provides grants to assist local communities in managing wildlife for the communities' benefit.

- develop management plans
- plan annual general meetings
- monitor trophy hunting
- monitor rhinos, and
- enter data into the wildlife database.

Additionally, an exchange trip to the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) projects in Zimbabwe was conducted for the committee in 1998 so that they could learn about Zimbabwean experiences in CBNRM. Activities during the past year include school excursions, teacher in-service training, and exchange trips for the youth. Unemployed school leavers from the area also helped to construct two elephant water points, renovated a picnic site at Dop Steek (a local landmark) and assisted with the wildlife census (Seslar Svendsen, Collinson & Long 2000).

5.3 Enterprise development

Nearly all (92.1%) of respondents surveyed in 1999 in Torra own livestock (Jones 1999a:5). The key source of tourism revenue to complement these livestock-based livelihoods is a joint venture with a private tour operator, Wilderness Safaris. Wilderness Safaris are a commercial tour company who entered into a legal contract with the community to establish the exclusive Damaraland Camp. There are currently about 20 community employees working at the Camp. Their occupations range from chambermaids to tour guides, with one senior position filled as camp manager. Neighbouring farms also benefit from contracts for laundry services, vegetable production and firewood collection. In addition to employment, the Conservancy receives 10% of the gross income from the Camp. This venture and trophy hunting provide the bulk of Torra's income.

There is also a craft industry: local entrepreneurs have established a number of road stalls in the area. In a recent survey of Torra, over half the respondents (52.6%, where N=38 households) stated that they received an income from activities related to wildlife and tourism. The main sources were from work in the Damaraland Camp (34.8%), CGG wages (26.1%), and making and selling crafts (13%). Some respondents reported more than one source of income (Jones 1999a:5).

6. BENEFITS ISSUES: PERSPECTIVES FROM TORRA RESIDENTS

The Torra Conservancy is by any reckoning one of the flagship conservancies in Namibia. They have already earned a substantial amount of money from the tourism industry, they have a well-developed management plan, have almost eliminated poaching, and have strong wildlife numbers. However, the rationale for selecting the Torra Conservancy as a case study for this paper was not to illustrate the success of the Namibian CBNRM programme, but to take a closer look at the issue of benefits and trade-offs from a qualitative perspective. Obviously, income earned from tourism is what Torra is noted for in Namibia, and yet their benefit distribution plan has yet to be ratified by the broader community and two annual general Conservancy meetings have failed to achieve consensus. At the time of writing, plans were underway to address this pressing issue.

The benefit plan aims to develop community-based projects that create jobs for the youth, and to establish further longer-term revenue enterprises. To meet the challenges of integrating

tourism into local development planning and to provide for coexisting with dangerous wildlife, Torra's benefit distribution plan includes the following:

- Conservancy management running costs
- Finances to initiate development projects and local jobs (e.g. a community-run campsite, walking trails)
- An education fund for academically gifted children
- An environmental "crisis" fund, e.g. for times of drought
- Funds to cover funeral costs in the event of loss of life to wildlife, and assistance for bereaved families until they can recover.

Because of a lack of consensus, the plan remains unratified and members have not yet accessed any of the Conservancy earnings. In broad terms the community have decided what they would like to do with the income. They have opted against individual cash dividends and instead want to concentrate on making the income work for them over the long term by funding some sort of development initiative. Exactly how they will achieve this is what has created a stumbling block for them. This is largely to do with the fact that many of the committee members are otherwise engaged in employment or the pursuance of their own livelihood activities, since being a member of a Conservancy committee is, after all, a voluntary position.

Torra members have, however, enjoyed a number of benefits that are not directly financial in nature. The remainder of this paper will present material from discussions held with some Torra residents to examine the ways in which they feel they have received benefits, and how residents are obliged to devise and accept trade-offs with regard to CBNRM/conservancy initiative benefits.

Open-ended interviews were held with the staff at the Damaraland Camp, at the neighbouring and other farms, and at the Conservancy. The following interview material is presented in full and interspersed with comments and clarifications from the author.⁹ This selected style of presentation aims to capture the interviewees' perspectives and priorities. The material is focused on two key areas of benefit and trade-off for Torra residents, namely those that come from the joint venture safari enterprise, and those that come directly from improvements in NRM, namely employment at the Camp, wildlife/livestock interactions, and wildlife harvesting.

6.1 On gaining employment at the joint-venture Damaraland Camp vs. working in the home community

The comments presented below focus on the individual benefits derived from working either in the service of or directly at the Camp, and the importance of working in one's home community, which brings qualitatively significant benefits for the families of those employed. The existence of the Camp and the desires of tourists are, however, in direct conflict with the livestock-based livelihoods of Torra residents and this is reflected in the views of the Camp's staff and neighbours. In fact, a number of the issues and insights raised echo the long-term challenges facing CBNRM in Namibia, as one Damaraland Camp staff member pointed out:¹⁰

⁹ The names of some informants have been withheld at their request.

¹⁰ Interview, 18 January 2001

“My life has really changed you know, because nowadays I have my own salary and so on and I can also look after my house where I [stay]. Working here, for me, in this environment is one of the best things because I was born not far from here, in this Conservancy area. And even my grandparents are not far from here, staying at Fonteine. Our livestock are also there. My relatives are also there, not far from here, so [if there’s] any problem, I can help them and so on. [As] for me, I am very pleased to be working with my relatives [here at the Camp]. This one here is my cousin, this one is kind of my aunt

“Since my grandmother now does laundry for the Camp, she has [a] little money and I can then leave my kid with her while I am working in this place. They also look after the water pump and receive [a little] money. We can even start farming [...] pigs using the waste that comes from the Camp. ...

“I am not very far from my family, you see, if for example I work in Keetmans [Keetmanshoop, around 500 km from the Conservancy]. So when I am on leave and I arrive here at Fonteine I must just turn around and go [back to Keetmanshoop]. You know why I say it is very comfortable working here, [is because] even if I am off duty I can quickly go to the farm and come back just to hear what the problems are. Maybe there is a water problem; [then] I can come back here and report it [at the Camp]. That is one of the best things here. We are accommodated by the company [... so] housing is not really a problem. ...

“You know, even if I get the same salary in somewhere like Swakopmund, then I have to spend it on housing, water, all that kind of stuff. Here, I just buy my own food; electricity and water comes from the company – everything is free. Ja ... Life is better here. All the people there [in Swakopmund, are] just trying to run uphill; while they run up the hill we run down.”

A neighbouring farmer whose grazing areas have become part of the Camp’s territory also made a number of comments that support the staff’s views:¹¹

“If it wasn’t for the Conservancy [and the existence of the Damaraland Camp], the children would not be here [anymore] by now; they would have had to look for work elsewhere. The farm supports the Camp and they receive some small income for adjusting the solar panel for the water pump [each day]. We can now employ someone to look after livestock; my wife works and does the laundry. We are now able to buy food items and don’t have to sell off stock. ...

“People must realise that you don’t get anything for nothing. If you want something you must also put something in. We are closest to the Camp and, consequently, we had to give up some of our grazing areas, and we must give up water if there is no water at the Camp; so nothing is [...] free. Although a survey was conducted before the Camp was built, sometimes we feel under pressure from being in close proximity to the Camp. Others don’t realise that there is this pressure since they don’t live so close to the Camp. People should respect that [we are] working in support of the Camp. There are some costs to pay, sometimes water problems. In the past we have also had problems with cheetahs.”

Despite expressing how important it was to live and work in their home area, Camp staff – particularly the young men – wanted to discuss other issues of concern to them. These essentially related to the need to protect wildlife for tourism, but also the potential problems associated with both living and keeping stock with wildlife. The neighbouring farmer raised the same issues. Much of the discussions that took place reflect the extent to which the following areas of concern touched the local residents, and ones that are partly precipitated by the existence of a joint venture like the Damaraland Camp. The discussion explores the issue of trade-offs in coexisting with wildlife and wildlife-livestock interactions in the context of the Conservancy.

¹¹ Interview, J Rhyn, 18 January 2001

6.2 On wildlife–livestock interactions

One Damaraland Camp staff member had this to say on interactions between wildlife and the community's livestock:¹²

“You know, I have one problem, that I don't want to blame Torra, if it is possible can I add it to this programme? Right now we really have a problem at the farm with these cheetahs and so on. For me to stand up and do something [...] is very difficult, [be]cause I will be the guilty one. These cheetahs are really into the farm. [...] Last year, we were having a meeting with those guys from Okonjima – that farm where the cheetahs are staying – [and] we tried to sort it out. We came to a conclusion, but it starts again. Like me, I just [started] to farm from 1996, and [right now] I don't have enough goats; so every now and then when the cheetahs get into the goats I [have] lost one [or] two.”

When asked whether the job at the Camp did not compensate him for stock loss since the respondent was earning money, he laughed, saying –

“Working here has made everything very complicated – so I can't react.”

Asked whether it was because he did not have the time because of his work at the camp, he replied –

“No, not like that; but you know, losing a goat is very difficult. You know, I get nothing back. It is very difficult. The cheetahs here are not in a cage or a camp, they are just around [here].”

The Camp guide picked up the issue:¹³

“The point is that in communal areas you don't just go and shoot [the cheetah]. You give your complaint and the guys [from the MET] are supposed to come and sort it out, but then they take [their] time. The longer they take to come here the bigger the problem is. The biggest problem is that Ben [a colleague] is working here and he has a few goats over there.”

Thus, while the speaker's colleague works for the tourist lodge, he also has livestock and values them. He does not want them to be eaten by cheetah, but he is loyal to the lodge since they employ him and the presence of cheetahs will ensure the tourists have a fulfilling stay. There is an obvious dilemma for him since, culturally and economically, livestock remain important. The community development activator for the Conservancy added the following:¹⁴

“That is why we have to understand that, on the other hand, we want tourism – which includes all those things. So in a way we have to understand that although those things [the cheetahs] are there, they are there as a benefit. This is really hard to explain to the residents, like the farmers who experience losses.”

The Camp guide added the following:

“The real guys who own goats, who are not employed by Wilderness Safaris or whoever, [...] are surviving just on the goats [...]. That means that guy can [at] a certain stage say, OK, no one wants to react, let me see what I can do. My uncle can tell you how he lost 100 sheep and goats altogether. The best thing is the sooner the Conservancy – or nature conservation or

¹² Interview, 18 January 2001

¹³ Interview, 18 January 2001

¹⁴ Paula Adams, 18 January 2001

whoever – the sooner they react the better for the cheetah, [and] the better for the local farmer. If they [could] just react a bit quicker [it would be] better.”

His colleague continues to explain the situation:¹⁵

“[I]f I lose this job then I have to go back to that – cattle or goat [farming]. Yesterday at our farm, some other guy came and told me to radio Vitalus [Torra’s Field Officer] so that he can come and [...] see the situation at the farm. And this man [pointing out the Camp tour guide] heard the story and suddenly he says, ‘Where are the cheetahs? I want to show my guests the cheetahs.’ It’s very difficult. This man is after the cheetahs, and you know the farmers want them away, you see. If a guest saw a cheetah around here it is very unfamiliar to them, [be]cause if they go to Okonjima the things are fenced, but in this wilderness they really need to see it.”

It is clear that the concern reflected by the staff at the Camp relates to their long-term livelihood security. They have work at the Camp, which brings them direct benefits in terms of salaries and the qualitative bonus of living and working in their home area, but the issue for them is that they are also just like those who are not fortunate enough to work at the Camp, because their long-term livelihood security depends on successfully raising livestock. The cultural and economic value of livestock in the context of people’s livelihood security outweighs the value of wildlife for most residents.

However, it is essential to bring cash into the livelihood equation and to consider that, if wildlife can bring money into the community, this may assist with the development of livestock since stock sales may not be needed so frequently to meet cash needs. Not selling stock whenever cash is needed means the animals can instead act as a buffer in times of crisis.

For the Camp to retain clients and to attract tourists, residents need to cohabit with predators and suffer some losses, but they can only tolerate this up to a point. That is why one of the respondents repeats that it is “difficult” for him. Despite this, the discussion continues with some constructive comments about how to solve the problem. The community activator presses the young men to ask how they would find a solution to their problem, and one responded as follows:¹⁶

“The people who are involved in the joint venture, they have to [find] a solution. It is also [Torra’s responsibility] since they don’t want the animals to be killed or taken away. So, the people involved in the joint venture, they must try to [find] a solution. Like for instance the elephants: they were always coming into [people’s] gardens, breaking down [fencing] getting in, taking out all the trees – so you had to start again. So they tried to [electric] fence the gardens [...] so when the elephants reach [it], they get a shock and just pass by, but I don’t know what is going to happen to the cheetah.”¹⁷

Some time ago there was a similar problem and Jan Rhyn, the neighbouring farmer, eventually shot the cheetah. The interviewees were asked whether that solved the problem:¹⁸

“No, it caused one. The man was always complaining and complaining, but he got no response. So he tried to respond himself and suddenly everyone was there, you see. So if the

¹⁵ Damaraland Camp staff member, 18 January 2001

¹⁶ Damaraland Camp staff member, 18 January 2001

¹⁷ Paula Adams, the Community Development Coordinator, laughs at the comment.

¹⁸ Damaraland Camp staff member, 18 January 2001

people do that [...] again, then they will be in [trouble]; but nowadays they are losing more than 18 goats [altogether].”¹⁹

Paula Adams explains in more detail:

“That is why we have to understand that on the other hand we want tourism which includes all those things, so in a way we have to understand that although those things are there, they are there as a benefit. This is really hard to explain to the residents, like the farmers who experience losses.”

The Camp tour guide continues:

“If you go to my farm, then the sheep are usually OK because there is a shepherd. The goats, we put some dogs with them, we have trained some dogs. The dogs are not there like a shepherd, a collie or whatever, they are just there to protect the goats from a jackal or whatever. But then, what normally happens, for my uncle to put five dogs with the goats is a big problem: every morning and evening you have to feed them. This comes directly out of your own pocket. It means you can only put three dogs there. Sometimes, the problem is you can't trust that dog; maybe he can be sleeping, you know, a cheetah can be fast. The other two dogs just yap [and] yap. And then they are in shock and they are terrified. One cheetah is not a problem but when there are two, three dogs can't help out. Especially if the cheetahs are serious, they will get something.”

Paula Adams adds:

“We did have a meeting with the D[amaraland] Camp managers and Flip Stander [MET, Predator Research Programme] was there. He suggested that we allow dogs with the goats during the daytime. As far as they are concerned when a cheetah knows there are dogs they won't come close. That was the advice that Flip gave. He also suggested we put a fence around the kraal. We did not think that would work, since we would have to put a fence for all the kraals in Torra.”

The neighbouring farmer, Jan Rhyn, offered some insight into an increase in the presence of predators since the Conservancy was established five years ago:²⁰

“Before the Conservancy you didn't notice so many tracks around the farm. Now they are definitely there. The guides from Dam[araland] Camp have also seen cheetahs with young close to the farms. Two weeks [ago] a neighbour lost five sheep to cheetahs. We have lost 20 goats since December 2000. Part of the problem is that springbok are too fast, and cheetahs have got lazy and will always go for easier prey – goats and sheep. They mostly go for older small stock.”

In recent months a programme of training offered by the MET's Predator Research Programme has been established. This aims to provide training on monitoring the presence and extent of problem animals and will lead to joint planning on developing strategies to deal with the increasing presence of predators. While predators are a serious concern for many, increases in the numbers of plains game also present a potential problem for rural community residents. The issue here relates to grazing pressures between game and livestock. Once again it is a trade-off, since large numbers of free-roaming game attract both photographic and hunting tourists, which in turn benefits the community financially. Individual families also benefit from healthy game populations through annual game harvests.

¹⁹ The number of stock losses reported during these interviews should be read with caution since it is common for people to exaggerate loss and the author did not pursue the issue to corroborate the figures.

²⁰ Interview, 18 January 2001

What is interesting about the above discussion is not only that it gives an insight into the concerns of integrating wildlife into existing livelihoods, but also that the respondents are perfectly willing and able to begin strategising about possible solutions to the problem. They recognise that they will only manage the problem through collaboration, and understand the perspective of the tourists and their requirements at the Damaraland Camp.

Farmer Rhyn comments further on the issue of social and economic differentiation within the community and the potential problem of wildlife–livestock interactions:

“Attention should be focused on those who really rely on livestock. Keeping the balance is important. The difficulty, however, is that people have different priorities and [rely] differently on livestock or other sources for their incomes. In future there might be some problems through livestock and wildlife: they are both dependent on grass. To the south there is less wildlife since there is still illegal hunting there. Here, there is no illegal hunting. Wildlife should not put too much pressure on livestock.”

The Torra Conservancy has some problems with those who graze their livestock illegally, i.e. in transgression of grazing regulations drawn up by a community in areas demarcated for use by them. This exacerbates the pressures caused by wildlife. Since the land is communal, whenever someone from outside the conservancy brings stock into the area to graze ‘illegally’, it impacts on the whole community because within the conservancy there is defacto open-access grazing and community members may move between any of the grazing areas within the Conservancy (although farmers will usually remain in grazing areas relatively close to their farms).

“People from Sesfontein come cross-country, through the fence. [Their animals] graze in the north of the Conservancy. From the Ugab and Umachete, they come as far as the Huab to graze. We don’t have the power to stop this. But in other conservancies, e.g. #Khoadi //hoas, they can stop this, because they use the powers of the local authority to push people out. In #Khoadi //hoas they also have a strong legal farmers’ union, a conservancy and the Traditional Authority [TA]. Together, these three can go straight to the person who is infringing on the grazing regulations. They consider whether the area in question can carry the amount of livestock that grazes [there]. We can learn from #Khoadi //hoas. In Torra there is not such a strong TA, since the old man is in hospital and he only has one councillor. There is [a] farmers’ union but this is newly established.”

In response to the question of whether there would be a problem between livestock and wildlife if there were to be a drought, Farmer Rhyn replied as follows:²¹

“People will always choose livestock over wildlife. For the present, people will leave wildlife to multiply and to grow. Torra people want wildlife, but will always choose livestock first. In the event of a drought and increased grazing pressure, they are not sure what to do. Likewise, although people experience stock losses, these are still tolerable; and since people want the wildlife for other kinds of benefit they will wait and see what will happen with the Conservancy and with the wildlife problems.”

Another Torra farmer explained the matter further:²²

“Cattle and goats die when there is drought, and [...] people sell off stock. The butcher comes to buy. They will buy and then collect all the livestock and take them away. The Conservancy can help because the committee have the information they need to manage the problems.”

²¹ Interview, 18 January 2001

²² F Coetzee, 20 January 2001

People also dealing with agricultural activities they may assist with livestock sales. The Conservancy committee are always the first people who are contacted by outsiders who may come."

Notably, some of the above comments acknowledge that the problem of illegal grazing can be managed if there is a strong institutional power base at the local level. The Conservancy alone is not enough to provide this and there is a clear need to link Conservancy management with other local institutional structures such as the farmers' union and the traditional authority. The interviewees also acknowledged that the pressure on grazing is both a wildlife and livestock issue.

What is reflected in the comments of Torra residents is that, with respect to the grazing issue alone, there is an obvious need to link management as well as enforcement strategies and practices to an integrated group of institutions at local level. There is an increasing realisation, both locally (see above) and nationally (see Johnson 2000:134) that, to make the conservancy approach and the rights associated with it fully functional, attention needs to be focused on coordinating and integrating different resource management institutions and practices.

6.3 On hunting and meat

A variety of comments were made by the respondents on the issue of hunting and the distribution and consumption of meat. These reflect issues associated with benefits that are not readily obvious. These benefits relate to active involvement in managing the resources of the Conservancy, and to improved cooperation at community level. On the issue of hunting, whether it be trophy or community hunting, there were no concerns expressed about potential conflicts between wildlife and livelihoods. This may seem obvious since hunting evidently fits in well with existing livelihoods. This is primarily because hunting has the dual function of being both a wildlife management practice, and of immediate benefit for livelihoods. To this extent there is a closer fit between this form of wildlife utilisation on the one hand, and a community's existing way of life and their wildlife management practices on the other (Long, Steenkamp & Marks 2001). The latter practices relate specifically to reducing the numbers of wildlife, reducing grazing pressures, and providing meat. Interestingly, the two-pronged benefit for wildlife management and a community's lifestyle are only part of the way in which community harvesting of wildlife is advantageous (see below).

A good starting point from which to examine the hunting issue are the views expressed by the young staff at the Damaraland Camp. Their views very much echo the perspective of other interviewees and the broader community:²³

"One thing [is] this Conservancy really supports its people when the hunting season starts, trophy hunting and so on. After all, they also give chance [some good fortune] to the community: they serve the community with meat to satisfy them not to [have to] go and hunt themselves. So they [the Conservancy] do it for the community. Last year, [around] October/September, the community committee [shot] some springbok for us. Each house [...] got one springbok. The committee is trying to supply the community with meat and so on, so that they can look after the animals. We really enjoy meat, you see. Every day, I [drive] around springbok, gemsbok, and I smell them and really like to eat them. And I am waiting for my chance so they [the Conservancy] can serve me meat."

²³ Damaraland Camp staff, 18 January 2001

Other interviewees discussed the issue in more detail:

“Everyone comes to benefit from hunting, with some piecework (carrying, butchering) and with meat distribution. Everyone [wants] to get involved. When it is not a day-to-day activity everyone wants to come and join in for four days. The firearms were provided by local farmers, but the Conservancy buys the ammunition. All the activities are carried out by local people except the quota setting, which is the job of the Ministry [the MET]. The salting and processing of the skins also brings some income. We sold the skins and were paid a fixed fee for their preparation. Unfortunately, the skins were not prepared properly, but in future we will take more care.”

In 2000, the community harvest was carried out and organised by the community and Conservancy members themselves. Some 130 springbok, 20 oryx and 2 zebra were utilised by the Conservancy for its members. In addition to these animals, a tourist hunter shot an elephant and other species of huntable game. The meat from these hunts was also made available to the community. Prior to 2000, professional hunters and Ministry rangers were responsible for these hunting activities. Ministry rangers were involved in monitoring the off-takes and would take active part in the shooting of wildlife, and in some cases kill animals that were wounded during the culling.

Another respondent described the hunt in more detail:²⁴

“A specific location hunting camp was selected; from here, the hunters would go out to hunt game. Some other guys would assist with loading and carrying meat. The Conservancy vehicles were used to carry meat; it [the meat] went directly to people’s houses. The Conservancy members are registered so we know the household size and so we can distribute accordingly. With springbok, everyone got one. With zebra and gemsbok it was a case of portions being given to households on a needs basis. Everyone was happy with the distribution, since they all knew what they would get. The whole process took two weeks, and it was a big job. The hunting was a bit easy though; [...] the community game guards [CGGs] patrol frequently so the springbok are tame and know the sound of vehicles. It was possible to take off four or five and then they would run off and we would move on to another area. The CGGs were really good. It would be possible to shoot many more, but over a period of time. This way the Conservancy could enjoy meat often. ...

“People really enjoy the hunt. It is good when those who don’t work [...] in the Conservancy are involved in certain activities like hunting. It means they know exactly what it is and they get [...] good experience and learn from it. When you are involved in such activities like this and in the wildlife monitoring exercises, it gives a good insight into the job that the guards do and you know the places they talk of. It is good to know where our money is going and where the wildlife in the area is found.”

Paula Adams commented as follows:²⁵

“It is also good for people to be actively involved in the monitoring so they are playing a part in the Conservancy and know what the Conservancy is about.”

The value of being actively involved in managing wildlife through hunting and monitoring should not be overlooked. The committees carry out the majority of the activities of the Conservancy, albeit with the support of those they represent. It is essentially through members of the community being practically involved that the Conservancy begins to have meaning for the broader community and gives them a sense of ownership over the management of their resources. The community hunts are an active way in which people can

²⁴ F Coetzee, 20 January 2001

²⁵ Interview, 20 January 2001

get involved either by directly receiving the benefits in terms of meat or through being involved in the hunt itself.²⁶

“There is a meat committee which organises the meat distribution from [trophy and community harvest] hunting. Being involved in the distribution is good because it means you have to meet with a lot of people. [...] There is a big difference between community hunting and trophy hunting. Trophy hunting means less meat, so it is distributed by pieces. With elephant, everyone who likes elephant meat shares in the butchering. Some people don't eat elephant meat. Riemvasmaak people don't usually touch elephant, but one elephant can feed every household.”

The distribution of meat is a very significant activity. As mentioned previously, distribution is organised through a *vleiskomitee* (“meat committee”) and decisions regarding the amounts to be given are made according to household size and needs. Other aspects of community hunts are also a collective activity: a number of people are involved in the physical distribution of meat, the salting and processing of skins, and supporting the hunt – keeping the camps tended and supplying firewood and water, etc. This kind of collective activity provides an opportunity for the community as a whole and within a defined period to share directly in managing and benefiting from wildlife. This creates a sense of *communitas*, of belonging, and serves to consolidate identifying not only with the Conservancy, but also with ownership of wildlife.

In the case of the Torra Conservancy, it is the community hunting which illustrates, par excellence, how the collective management of resources can bring benefits to community members. It is also important to recognise that believing in the function and rationale of the conservancy approach can only really be brought about through the visible realisation of rights to ownership and management through receiving a variety of benefits – financial and otherwise.

7. CONCLUSIONS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Clearly, from the commentary provided by community members, many benefits as well as real and potential problems come from the conservancy approach. However, what is significant is the way in which local perspectives highlight the importance of the pros and cons. On the one hand, it is easy to suggest that incomes from employment and earnings from joint ventures and trophy hunting provide the most tangible benefits and offer a major incentive for support to the conservancy approach. On the other hand, the comments presented here illustrate the importance of less tangible but no less significant benefits, namely –

- living and working in one's home area
- being able to work and continue to keep livestock for both livelihood security and social reasons, and
- the importance of cooperation in realising benefits from improved wildlife management (in this case hunting).

What was not directly expressed through the above commentary is the extent to which other capacity-building and empowerment benefits have led to the confidence with which Torra community members were able and willing to articulate their concerns and perspectives

²⁶ F Coetzee, 20 January 2001

during interviews. Through the development of the Conservancy as both an institution and as a philosophical and practical approach for managing natural resources and diversifying rural livelihoods, people in Torra have gained improved planning skills, insights and capacity for collaborative action; improved knowledge of their rights; and a broader vision for their community, e.g. being able to see possible solutions to the problems identified. All of these are important non-financial benefits.

What the material presented above also illustrates is the difficulty of and concerns people have with integrating new land-use options in the context of their existing livestock-based livelihoods. While balancing a toleration of predators with the desires of tourist operators to protect these animals will remain a challenge, what must be considered an opportunity is the fact that the interviewees themselves actively want to solve the problem and have begun to think about their options. In support of this the facilitating NGOs and the Ministry have initiated a programme of training and strategising to deal with the predator problem.

Other issues that present a challenge to the conservancies, according to the interviewees, relate to the difficulty of protecting their own grazing resources from intrusion by outsiders. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that, at present, there is no legislation to support the land rights of conservancies (Jones 2000:66). Despite this, the comments and perspectives offered by community and Conservancy members²⁷ clearly illustrate the extent to which they are aware of the problem and the means to find possible solutions, through integration and collaboration of resource management institutions. Likewise, the potential problems of wildlife grazing pressures in times of drought are recognised as a major problem, but interviewees commented that the Conservancy committee was there to help develop management strategies to deal with this since they had the necessary information about wildlife numbers.

While the conservancy approach in Namibia is in many ways one of the most progressive on the continent, there are still a considerable number of challenges that hamper the establishment of functioning and largely self-sufficient conservancies. Nonetheless, although the conservancy approach may be in its infancy, it has already made considerable progress. Besides being process-oriented, the approach has also been built around the principles of empowerment and participation. Furthermore, the approach is underpinned by the belief that those who pay the highest costs for living with wildlife and tourism should not only be the direct beneficiaries of any income, but that these same people should manage their resources in ways that complement and are consistent with their existing livelihoods.

Even the scant material presented here from one series of discussions with a single Conservancy illustrates the extent to which communal area residents have the capacity to meet the challenges they face in taking back control over their resources and benefiting from new options. Further evidence of this comes from their own recognition of how important cooperation is, both at the community level and with external agents. It is clear that in the case of the Torra Conservancy and particularly for those directly involved in conservancy and tourism activities that people can, and do, benefit in meaningful ways from the conservancy approach.

²⁷ To pre-empt any criticism that conservancies do not broadly represent the communities concerned, Jones's survey (1999:6) provides evidence that, for the Torra Conservancy at least, 91% of the residents are members of the Conservancy. For other conservancies in Kunene, the average number of members for five conservancies was 67% of residents (Jones 1999).

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