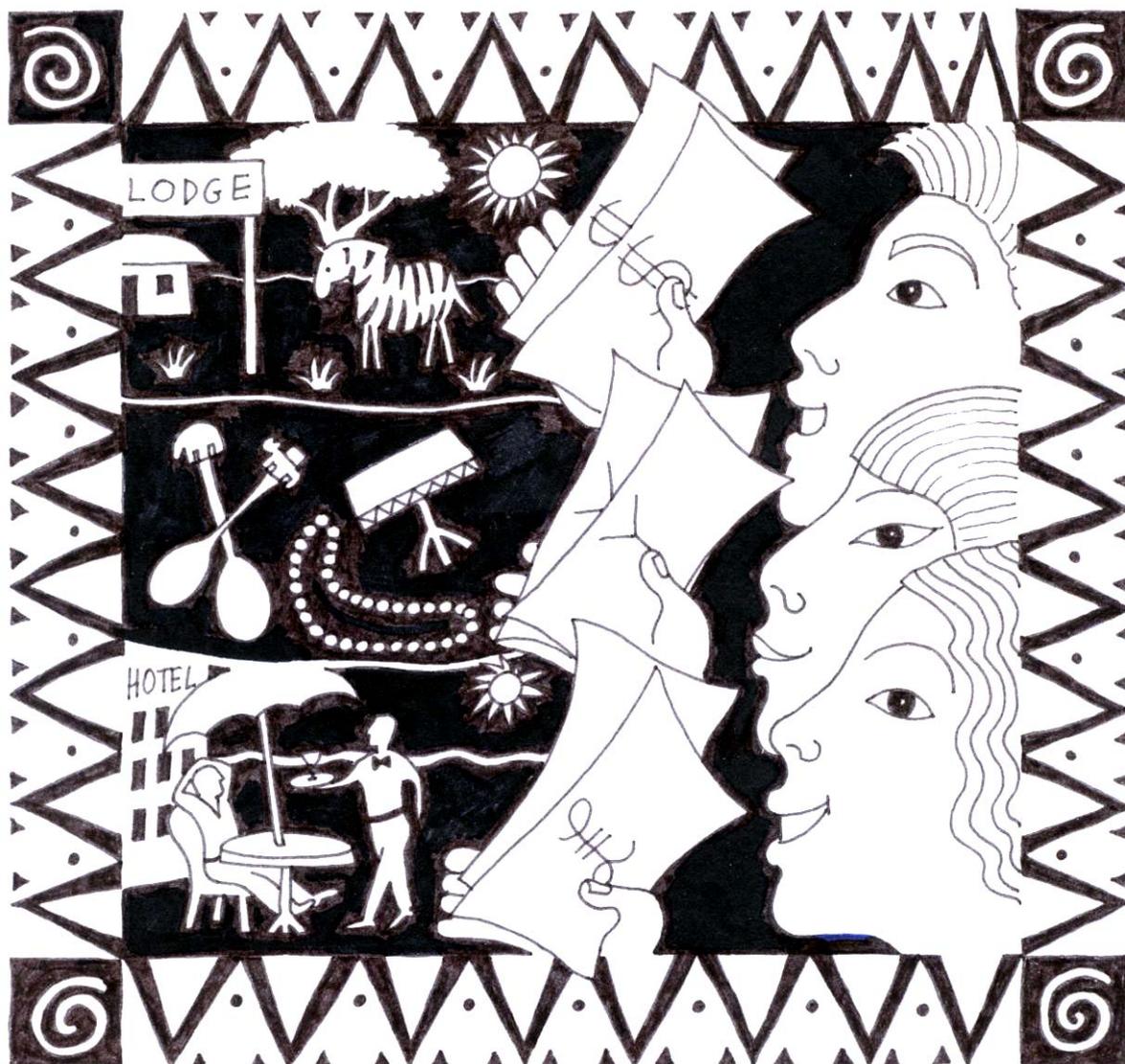

Spending the money: The experience of conservancy benefit distribution in Namibia up to mid-2003

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This series of Research Discussion Papers is intended to present preliminary, new or topical information and ideas for discussion and debate. The contents are not necessarily the final views or firm positions of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Comments and feedback will be welcomed.

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Acronyms

ADMADE	Administrative Design for Game Management Areas Project (Zambia)
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Programme for Indigenous Resources (Zimbabwe)
CBNRM	Community-based Natural Resource Management
EEU	Environmental Economics Unit (Ministry of Environment and Tourism)
IRDNC	Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
≠/C	≠Khoadi //Hôas Conservancy
LIRDPA	Luangwa Integrated Rural Development Project (Zambia)
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
RDC	Regional District Council (Zimbabwe)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper is part of a series of publications of the Wildlife Integration for Livelihood Diversification (WILD) Project. The WILD Project is a three-year research partnership between the governments of Namibia and the United Kingdom through the Department for International Development (DFID). The role of the WILD Project is to provide research findings on the impact on rural livelihoods of the Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme. Information from two WILD Working Papers (Murphy and Mulonga 2003; and Vaughan et al. 2003), which surveyed benefit distribution in Salambala and Torra Conservancies respectively, was used for this report, as well as information from other WILD research activities and additional secondary information.

The paper focuses on the processes used by Namibian conservancies to return collective revenue, generated from wildlife use¹, to conservancy members. Compared to Zimbabwe or Botswana, benefit distribution processes are not well established in Namibian conservancies, due to the early stage of conservancy development. The experience to date of the conservancies in distributing collective revenue is used in this report. Factors influencing benefit generation and distribution are discussed, as are the livelihood implications of benefit distribution.

Prior to conservancies being gazetted, the MET Conservancy Legislation requires information on the procedure which the Conservancy Committee will use to produce an equitable benefit distribution (BD) plan. The benefit distribution plan itself is not required. Nevertheless, distribution plans are important as they provide an opportunity for consultation with members regarding the use of conservancy income. A fundamental principle of empowerment in the Namibian conservancy programme is that conservancy structures need to decide on the distribution of revenues generated. When doing this, issues of membership, collective and individual benefit and equity come into play.

Four modes of distribution have evolved according to the characteristics of the conservancies and amount of collective revenue distributed. These are:

- Individual, equal cash payouts to registered members (Nyae Nyae Conservancy in 1998, 2000 and 2002; and Torra Conservancy in early 2003) where the number of members is relatively small and the revenue considerable*
- Payouts on a village basis (Salambala Conservancy and West Caprivi in 2001/2 and 2003 respectively) where the number of members is large and revenues modest*
- A conservancy 'social fund' where members can request finances on a needs basis (Marienfluss Conservancy and money generated from the Himba Traditional Village in Purros Conservancy), again where the number of conservancy members as potential beneficiaries is small*
- Expenditure on social services such as support to schools and old age pensioners, combined with individual cash payouts (Torra Conservancy)*

The paper concludes with some key lessons learnt from experience so far, which serve to inform future benefit distribution.

¹ Through consumptive (i.e. trophy hunting) and non-consumptive tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) in Namibia has a strong economic rationale. Like most other community-oriented approaches to resource management, it is based on the premise that if local people participate in resource management and benefit economically from this participation, then a win-win situation will arise whereby wildlife is conserved and community welfare improves at the same time (Hulme and Murphree 2001). Providing communities with returns, from benefits earned directly or indirectly from natural resources in their areas, is thus an integral part of CBNRM.

In Namibia, some conservancies have amassed significant amounts of collectively generated revenues and have started distributing financial benefits to members, such as cash payouts to villages and individuals or support to schools and other facilities in conservancy areas. Through training, the Rössing Foundation provides support to conservancies in their benefit distribution processes², including facilitating workshops³.

At the time of writing this report, conservancies which had conducted cash payouts included Nyae Nyae in Otjozondjupa (to individual members in 1998, 2000 and 2002); Salambala in Caprivi (to constituent villages in 2001 and 2002); Torra in Kunene (to individual members in January 2003); Marienflüss and Purros in Kunene (to individual conservancy members on a needs basis); and West Caprivi (to constituent villages in 2003)⁴.

The WILD Project and other research initiatives have already documented a range of non-financial benefits. This paper focuses on the nature of the distribution process from collective revenue distribution. Dedicated research was as follows:

Caprivi

A total of 34 members were interviewed from the 18 villages represented by the Salambala Conservancy Management Committee in October 2002.⁵ This was roughly one per cent of the 3,000 to 4,000 registered conservancy members. Information on the second payout was obtained from village representatives at the fourth Salambala Conservancy Annual General Meeting on 8 August 2003.

² RF provide training case studies and use the following principles governing benefit distribution:

1. Those who suffer the greatest cost should receive the greatest benefit.
2. Benefits generated should/must be greater than the costs.
3. Collective interest of community should be stronger than interests of individual stakeholders.
4. Appropriate, preferably quick and low cost, community-based ways of resolving conflicts should be used.
5. Mechanisms should be in place to allow for participation and consultation with different types of community members.
6. Different sources of income can be divided in different ways.
7. Finances accounted for in a transparent and responsible way (Orange Facilitators' Tool Kit, Tool #22.5).

³ For example, the workshop held with Doro !Nawas Conservancy in 2002 (Frederik and Uusiku, 2002).

⁴ West Caprivi residents cannot form a conservancy as they reside in a state protected area. They are forming the Kyaramacan Trust as an alternative legal arrangement.

⁵ Refer to Murphy and Mulonga 2003.

Kunene

Sixty-seven members of Torra Conservancy (around 15 per cent of the total members) were interviewed in February 2003.⁶ Information from Purros and Marienflüss Conservancies was gathered when conducting participatory research workshops on the Himba Traditional Village and Okarohombo Campsite respectively.⁷

2. BENEFITS - THE BIG PICTURE

Although this paper focuses on the distribution of collective revenues, a broader discussion of benefits of CBNRM is warranted. Benefits are needed to foster conservation. The economics of community conservation recognise that plant and animal resources yield economic goods and services. Without these goods and services it would be difficult to convince communities and even Government to protect these resources. Emerton (2002:120) states:

“Unless it can be demonstrated that wildlife resources contribute to development and economic goals, at a whole country level, governments are unlikely to be willing to allocate scarce resources to their wildlife sectors or to engage in community-based forms of conservation.”

Within the Namibian CBNRM programme, Barnes *et al.* (2002:2) conclude that “CBNRM initiatives must be financially attractive for the community, economically efficient for the nation, and reasonably financially viable for donors and the government. Without these incentives, they will not be sustainable and will not result in development or conservation”.

In national community conservation programmes such as Namibia’s CBNRM programme, economic benefits are distributed to the communities as a direct use-value of wildlife. Figure 1 below gives an overview of all economic benefits from wildlife.

Figure 1: Total economic benefits from wildlife

Use value	Non-use value		
Direct values	Indirect values	Option Values	Existence values
Direct benefits such as live sales, meat, hides, skins, trophy hunting and sales, employment, education, tourism and research activities.	The ecological and environmental services associated with wildlife and its habitat such as carbon sequestration, storm protection.	The premium placed on maintaining wildlife populations for possible future uses, such as touristic, pharmaceutical, industrial and agricultural applications.	The intrinsic value of wildlife, regardless of use, such as its cultural, aesthetic and bequest significance.

Source: Emerton, in Hulme and Murphree (2001:210)

All the benefits listed in Figure 1 are important, however, the direct values are perceived to be more important because of their immediate effect and the role they can play in poverty alleviation and improving rural livelihoods. Trophy hunting sales yield hundreds of thousands of dollars to

⁶ Refer to Vaughan *et al.* 2003.

⁷ Refer to WILD Working Paper No. 26.

conservancies, while tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and creates significant revenues and numerous job opportunities.⁸

Greater consideration of indirect and option values is required for the comprehensive evaluation of natural resources when making decisions about wildlife use or management. The need for fair, or equitable, benefit distribution⁹ is also important as, although wildlife contributes substantially to national economies (in Namibia around US\$ 68 million¹⁰), only a small portion goes to communities who live in close proximity to these animals. With regard to the value of wildlife for tourism, (Roe *et al.* 2003) estimated that in 2001, the total income generated from tourism in Kunene, Erongo and Caprivi Regions was approximately N\$ 113 million. Of this total income, an estimated 36% (N\$ 41 million) is value added¹¹, with only a quarter (N\$ 10 million) of this value added being income captured at the local level in the form of wages, communal income (concession fees, bed night levies etc.) and profits from community-owned enterprises.

The optimal benefit distribution for community conservation is to allocate as greater benefits as possible to the local level, where people are living with wildlife, in order for the benefits of living with wildlife to outweigh the costs and thus act as an incentive to invest in and conserve natural resources. This is particularly important since most of the wildlife in east and southern Africa lives outside protected areas (Hulme and Murphree 2002). Examples of appropriate equitable distribution may include compensation to people suffering from wildlife damage or more benefits to poor and vulnerable households than richer households.

Within the MET's legislated condition of 'equitable distribution' (see section below), Conservancy Committees need to develop their own allocation of benefit distribution in consultation with members, to suit local conditions.

3. MET REQUIREMENTS FOR BENEFIT DISTRIBUTION

From a legal perspective, the Nature Conservation Amendment Act No. 5 of 1996, Section 3, 24a (2) (c) states that the Minister must be satisfied with an application for conservancy gazettelement and in respect of the Conservancy Committee, as follows:

“[That] such committee has the ability to manage funds and has an appropriate method for equitable distribution, to members of the community, of benefits derived from consumptive and non-consumptive use of game in such an area.”

What is notable here is that the requirement is the procedure or appropriate method, which the conservancy committee will use to produce an equitable benefit distribution plan, rather than the plan itself. During the conservancy application process, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) approves or rejects the benefit distribution procedure laid out by the applying conservancy.

⁸ Total benefits accruing from the CBNRM programme were valued at over N\$ 11 million in September 2002, with the majority (65%) coming from consumptive and non-consumptive tourism (LIFE Semi-Annual Report 2003).

⁹ Equitable means 'fair' or 'just' where as equal means the 'same'.

¹⁰ Net value added to the national economy from Ashley and Barnes (1996) in Hulme and Murphree (2002).

¹¹ That is, comprising wages earned by Namibian residents, revenues accruing to the government in the form of taxes and licence fees, net profits accruing to the private sector and communal income earned at the local level.

Some conservancies have drawn up benefit distribution plans. #Khoadi //Hôas Conservancy (#//C) has done this in a systematic manner through a community-needs assessment. Their plan has prioritised community needs (#//C, Summary of benefit distribution plan and process¹²). This is a recommended way of drawing up benefit distribution plans, as it incorporates community needs and priorities. #//C benefit distribution plan prioritised the following: diesel for livestock, elephant damage compensation, diesel for elephant water points, small stock loans, school renovations, soup kitchen for pensioners and a trust fund.

Another notable aspect of the legislated requirements for benefit distribution is that there is no clarity is provided as to exactly who gets the benefits. The benefits are to go to “members of the community” (see above). It is up to the conservancies, through their constitutional processes, to define this aspect. This is desirable from a local empowerment perspective, however, it is also challenging, since the existing constitutional framework used by conservancies encompasses the issue of membership criteria and the requirement for conservancies to register individual members (by signing a registration form). The challenges of membership recorded by WILD Project staff in Caprivi include: the logistical task of registering thousands of people as members, no physical proof of membership for member (e.g. a membership card) leading to confusion over whether people are members or not, and the lack of awareness that membership requires the signing a form (there is a perception that living within the conservancy boundary automatically means membership). Corporate village membership may also be a more appropriate option for Caprivian conservancies in the context of benefit distribution.

4. EXPERIENCE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Southern African community conservation programmes have followed similar paths, with revenue generated from local use of wildlife (mainly trophy hunting and tourism) being channelled back to local people, either through cash dividends or development projects. Revenues generated from Zimbabwe’s Communal Area Management for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) programme’s activities are collected and disbursed by Rural District Councils (RDCs), which retain a percentage as an administration fee.

CAMPFIRE and the Namibian conservancy programmes are not directly comparable because the rights over wildlife are devolved to the RDCs in the former. The 1993 CAMPFIRE guidelines for revenue distribution recommended that 80 per cent of the wildlife revenue earned by CAMPFIRE should be returned to local communities in areas that generated the income, with the remaining 20 per cent retained by RDCs to cover administrative expenses (CAMPFIRE Fact Sheet: CAMPFIRE’s income and expenditure: The bottom line). Although some councils kept to these guidelines, many have not and the recent economic crisis in Zimbabwe has placed additional pressure on RDCs to retain more of the income. As a result of concerns within the CAMPFIRE programme that local communities are not receiving a sufficient share of income, new guidelines have been agreed. The 2002 CAMPFIRE Revenue Guidelines state the following (Brian Jones, *pers. comm.*):

“Producer communities should receive not less than 55 per cent of gross revenue; RDCs may receive a maximum of 26 per cent of gross revenue to carry out CAMPFIRE/natural resource

¹² As presented to MET CBNRM Subdivision on 2 July 2003 in Windhoek.

management-related management activities; RDCs may receive a maximum of 15 per cent of gross revenue as a general administration levy; the CAMPFIRE Association may receive four per cent of gross revenue as a levy from councils.”

It is clear from these guidelines that communities in CAMPFIRE receive nowhere near the full amount that they could be earning from their wildlife resources, with local government siphoning off a considerable amount of the income.

Some districts in Zimbabwe have developed an innovative and sophisticated approach to revenue distribution. Local-level (Ward) Wildlife Committees will hold meetings with community members to decide how the income allocated by the council should be used. It might be decided that a certain amount will be distributed as a cash dividend to each household and a certain amount will be spent on a community project. However, at a public ceremony each household first receives its total share of the income in cash. It then pays over the proportion that has been agreed to be used for a community project. In this way the head of household has publicly received and handled the total amount and has himself/herself handed over the money to be used for the community project. The head of household is in these circumstances likely to want to make sure that the household money that contributes to the project is properly used. Further, when the cash arrives in the village it is bundled according to the amount for each trophy animal shot and this is demonstrated publicly. In this way villagers see what an elephant is worth or what a buffalo is worth. The villagers also hold their committee members accountable for money that the committee is spending on its own activities. The committee has to have its annual budget approved by the villagers as every cent spent by the committee means a reduction in the amount available to households. (Brian Jones, *pers. comm.*)

In Game Management Areas in Zambia, the government Administrative Design for Game Management Areas Project (ADMAGE) project keeps concession fees and half of animal licence fees from hunting, 35 per cent of which are allocated to local community development activities (Emerton, in Hulme and Murphree 2001). By contrast, the Luangwa Integrated Rural Development Project (LIRDPA) in Zambia devolves 100 per cent of income from wildlife use to local villages. Child *et al.* (2001) suggest that devolution of decision-making and income to village levels in the LIRDPA has increased accountability and meant that income has been used more according to the wishes of villagers.

In Botswana, community trusts, like Namibia’s conservancies, receive income directly from hunting and tour operators and decide how this income should be spent.

5. BENEFIT DISTRIBUTION FROM COLLECTIVE REVENUE GENERATION IN NAMIBIA’S CONSERVANCIES

Although some communities benefited from their resources through tourism partnerships prior to conservancy formation¹³, the legal and representative nature of the conservancy structure creates a useful platform for communities to engage in negotiations with trophy hunters and tourism

¹³ For example, the Bergsig/De Riet Joint Venture (JV) with Wilderness Safaris Namibia (WSN) (present-day Torra/WSN JV) dates back from the early 90s before the area became Torra Conservancy, and the Lianshulu Bed night Levy in Caprivi.

operators; to develop tourism enterprises themselves and to manage collective revenues. The financial benefits generated by a conservancy depend on the ability of that conservancy to generate cash. This is determined by factors that set tourism and trophy hunting potential such as natural scenic beauty and abundance of wildlife. Political and social stability, infrastructure and accessibility of the area and marketing also play a significant role in benefit generation.

Non-financial and intangible benefits that have come with the conservancy programme include meat distribution from own-hunt quotas, improved local-level institutional capacity building, empowerment of local communities, and most importantly, the restoration of rights (Ashley 1998; Long 2002).

Despite having considerable sums of money invested in bank accounts, some conservancy committees in Namibia have exhibited a reluctance to spend the money for the first time¹⁴. This risk-averse behaviour probably stems from not knowing what to do with the funds and a fear of wasting the money and being held accountable. A good example is Torra Conservancy, which amassed more than N\$ 1 million before taking the plunge and conducting their first formal payout. Members' confronting conservancy staff (John Katjiua, *pers. comm.*), and the initiative of an NGO worker in writing a parable story 'The dam that left the village thirsty' (see Appendix 2), contributed to the implementation of the first payout. The message in the story is that not using something can also be a waste – through the analogy of a village being too scared to use the water stored in the dam that they had built in case they wasted it. As benefit distribution mechanisms become better developed, conservancies are likely to gain confidence in making benefit distribution decisions.

A summary of the benefit distribution methods used by Namibia conservancies to date is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Benefit distribution from collectively generated income in some conservancies in Namibia

Conservancy	Benefit distribution	Dates
Nyae Nyae Conservancy	N\$ 75 to each registered member (total of N\$ 41,250 to 550 members). N\$ 75 to 775 members. Bought cattle for members and paid out N\$ 620 to 770 members.	1998, 2000 and 2002/3 respectively
Salambala Conservancy	N\$ 2,000 - 2,500 to each of the 18 villages ¹⁵ (plus the Bukalo Khuta)	2001 and 2002 respectively
Torra Conservancy	N\$ 630 per individual registered member (gifts to old age pensioners and development projects)	January 2003
West Caprivi	Village level cash pay-outs ¹⁶ (used for village-level celebrations)	2003
Marienflüss Conservancy And Purros Conservancy	'Social fund' distributed on a needs basis	Ongoing, based on need

Details on each conservancy are provided below. Refer to Appendix 2 for further details on some of these conservancies.

¹⁴ This reluctance by committees to conduct their first benefit distribution payout was also observed in Botswana with the community trusts (Brian Jones, *pers. comm.*).

¹⁵ Villages varied considerably in size but payout was equal per village.

¹⁶ Amount per village was determined by size of village.

5.1 Nyae Nyae Conservancy

Income generation

This conservancy derives its collective income from trophy hunting and tourism. Individual income for members is earned through craft and employment. The conservancy annual income earnings increased steadily between 1999 to 2002. The 2002 earnings almost tripled the amount earned in 2001 (see Table 2). Overall N\$ 3,635,435 has been earned by this conservancy since 1997, making Nyae Nyae Conservancy one of the top earning conservancies in Namibia.

Table 2: Income earned by Nyae Nyae Conservancy and members from 1997–2002

Date	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total
Income to conservancy		146,000	122,000	129,000	341,011	956,500	1,694,511
Conservancy plus individuals	182,000	227,835	518,687	983,200	487,306	1,236,407	3,635,435

Source: Berger 2003

Benefit distribution

Nyae Nyae Conservancy has had three cash payouts to members (N\$ 75 per member in 1998 and 2000 and N\$ 620 in 2002). In 1998, “members spent about two-thirds of the cash distributed (N\$ 28,800) on food, clothing, beads and tools sold in the villages¹⁷ at the time of payments” (Berger 2003:28). The two payouts distributed nearly N\$ 100,000, which is 58 per cent of the total of about N\$ 170,000¹⁸ trophy hunting fees over that time¹⁹ (from Berger 2003). The conservancy bought cattle in 2002, which was subsequently found to be against the wishes of the members, and there are now plans to sell the cattle to use the cash as dividend (C. Weaver, *pers. comm.*). The third payout was considerably larger than the first two and was made possible through lucrative hunting contracts. In addition to the cash, with successful game introductions between 1999 and 2002 and a rapid population growth, “game meat harvesting has the potential to be an important benefit... Meat harvesting would provide a more direct benefit to families than trophy hunting, which brings in big bucks to the conservancy, but does not easily contribute directly to meeting basic needs of families” (Berger 2003:54).

Implications of distributed cash in terms of individual livelihoods

An average annual income within Nyae Nyae Conservancy was estimated at about N\$ 1,000. This means that the 2002 payout amounted to 60 per cent of this estimated average annual income per individual (C. Weaver, *pers. comm.*), which is very significant in terms of individual livelihoods. In addition, there are very few income generating opportunities available to residents of Nyae Nyae Conservancy, with the conservancy itself being “a major providers of jobs” (Berger 2003:29). This increases the relative value of the distributed income.

¹⁷ A prior arrangement was made to find out what people wanted to buy and to supply the goods using a mobile shop (Berger 2003).

¹⁸ This figure could have been as high as N\$ 230,000 and therefore 58% too high a percentage (C. Weaver, *pers. comm.*).

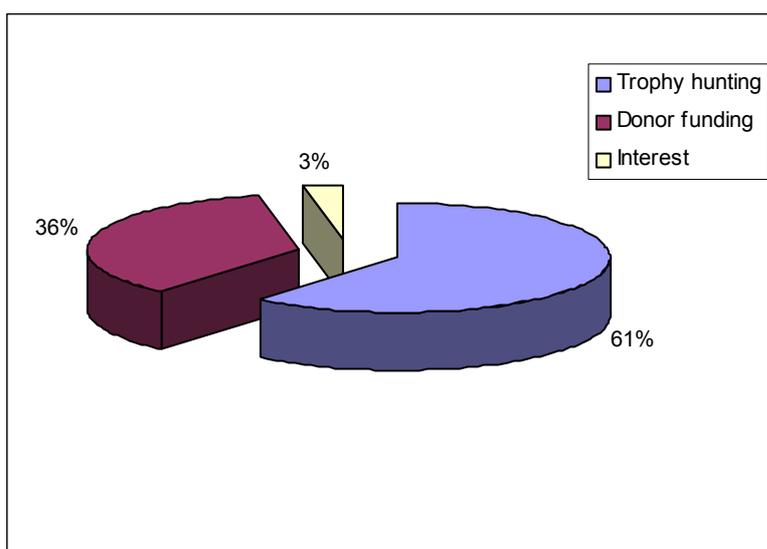
¹⁹ It is interesting to note that different conservancies have paid out to members vastly different percentages of their annual revenue – Salambala Conservancy only about 13 per cent (about N\$ 40,000 of N\$ 300,000) and Torra Conservancy less than a third (Conservancy pays members dividends (article in *The Namibian* by Linda Baker, 9 January 2003). This is no doubt related to other core financial needs like operating costs.

5.2 Salambala Conservancy

Income generation

The only income earner of Salambala Conservancy is a trophy hunting quota sale agreement with Pro-guiding, a trophy hunting and photographic safari company. In 2002, the conservancy earned around N\$300,000 from this venture. The conservancy operates a community campsite in the conservancy's core wildlife area. The campsite fee is N\$ 25 per person (2002) per night. Salambala campsite ran at a loss in the 2002/2003 financial year, meaning that the conservancy has had to subsidise this enterprise with income generated from trophy hunting. The result of this has been less money available for distribution.²⁰

Figure 2: Salambala Conservancy cash income for 2002



Source: Humphrey and Humphrey 2003

Benefit distribution²¹

Salambala Conservancy has had two cash payouts to member villages in two consecutive years; the first one in 2001 and the second in 2002. The conservancy paid each of the 18 villages that make up the conservancy N\$ 2,000 in 2001 and N\$ 2,500 in 2002. The Bukalo Khuta (Basubia Traditional Authority) was given the same amount in both of these payouts. A small survey of only one per cent of Salambala Conservancy's large membership (between 3,000 and 4,000 people) revealed that in most villages (14 out of 18 villages) the decision over how to use the N\$ 2,000 was a village-level democratic process, through which community members in the village made the decision. The committee withheld funds from some of the four villages during the second payout, until the villages in question had properly accounted for the first payout (Raymond Kwenani, acting Chairperson, *pers. comm.*). A regional government official was also held accountable for use of funds paid out to the Traditional Authority (question at fourth Salambala Conservancy AGM on 8 August 2003). Most villages saved their funds for development-related infrastructure projects or used it on such projects, although one village held a celebration with the money and two villages gave individual cash payouts of N\$ 100 to each family in the village (refer to Table 3 for more details).

²⁰ In the 2002/3 financial year, the campsite was subsidised by the conservancy to a tune of over N\$ 4,000.

²¹ Refer to Murphy and Mulonga 2003.

Implications of distributed cash in terms of individual livelihoods

An annual average income (per income-earning individual 16 and over) reported by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) was just over N\$ 3,500²². The amount paid out to each village was N\$ 2,000 and N\$ 2,500 over the two years, which is not even as much as the average annual income per person. The total amount paid out in 2001 was N\$ 36,000. The estimated total population for Salambala Conservancy is 8,000 people, meaning that if a individual payout was made to each resident, they would only get N\$ 4 each (or N\$ 8 if the payout was made to the estimated 4,000 conservancy members). However, although the cash payout at village level can be said to have had very little significance at an individual livelihood level, the symbolic value of this cash was significant. It was the first time that Salambala residents were recipients of cash from the conservancy and the funds were largely used for development purposes as shown in the section below.

Use of cash payout by villages

The first cash payout was used in different ways by the different villages in Salambala (Table 3).

Table 3: Use of first cash payout by the different villages in Salambala Conservancy

Name of village	Use of the cash payout	Plans to use the money if not yet used
Bukalo	Used N\$ 1,200 to construct a small Khuta building. Remaining money given to councillor of Katima Rural constituency	NA
Bwara	Money divided between four villages, each receiving N\$ 500	NA
Ibbu	Full amount deposited in bank account	Decision not yet made on what to use the money on
Ikumwe	Full amount deposited in bank account	Plans to build an open air market
Ioma	Deposited in a bank account	To be used for maize mill
Iseke	Money divided between 20 smaller villages, with each receiving N\$ 100	NA
Isuswa	Deposited the money into an account belonging to the school	Decision not yet made on what to use the money on
Izimwe	The money is being kept by the <i>indunas</i>	Decision not yet made on what to use the money on
Limai	Not clear where the money is	NA
Mahundu	Deposited in a bank account	Decision not yet made on what to use the money on
Marasburg	Used to build teachers' houses	NA
Masikili	Deposited in bank account	Decision not yet made on what to use the money on
Mutikitila	Deposited in bank account	To be used for maize mill
Muyako	Used money to build a grain storage house	NA
Ngala	Used the money for a village celebration	NA
Ngoma	Used the money to build teachers' houses	NA

²² As derived by the International Institute for Environment and Development from the WILD/EEU survey data from three conservancies in the Caprivi Region (Mayuni, Kwandu and Salambala) (refer to Suich 2003 for full results of this survey).

Sikanjabuka	Money is being kept in post office savings account	To be used to construct an earth dam
Silumbi	Split money with Tololi. N\$ 1,000 is being kept by the <i>indunas</i>	Not clear where the money is
Tololi	<i>Induna</i> said the money was with individuals who had received the money	Not clear where the money is

NA: Not Applicable

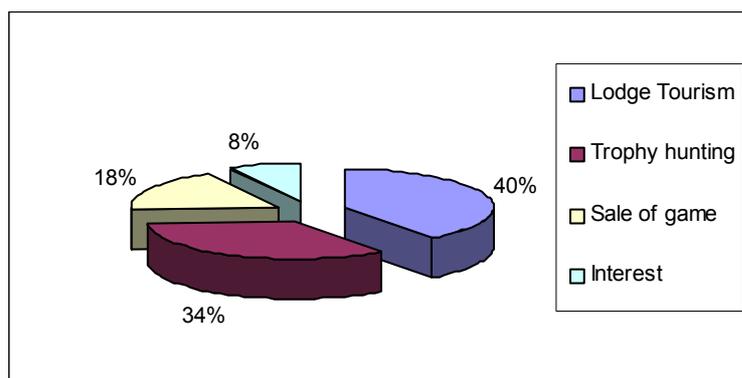
Source: Murphy and Mulonga 2002

5.3 Torra Conservancy

Revenue generation

The conservancy derives most of its income from a lucrative joint venture (JV) with the luxurious Damaraland Camp run by Wilderness Safaris Namibia (WSN). This JV dates back to 1996 when the two parties embarked on the partnership. A contractual agreement with a professional trophy hunter has seen the conservancy earning a substantial amount of money from their annual trophy-hunting quota since 1999 when the agreement was signed. Live sales of game are the third income earner. Bank interests also are considered a cash income for the conservancy, however, this does not keep up with inflation.

Figure 3: Torra Conservancy cash income for 2002



Source: Humphrey and Humphrey 2003

Benefit distribution²³

In January 2003, Torra Conservancy paid N\$ 630 to individual registered conservancy members. Torra Conservancy have also distributed N\$ 20,000 for a school fence, N\$ 10,000 for a community kindergarten and N\$ 5,000 for the purchase and repairs of a photocopy machine. In addition, members over 60 years were given a blanket and other items (men – socks, wallets and hats and women handbags and scarves) as a Christmas gift²⁴. The Conservancy Committee also allocated N\$ 10,000 to the Torra Farmers' Union to purchase veterinary drugs to resell at a subsidised rate to farmers (Jantjie Rhyn, Torra Conservancy Chairperson, *pers. comm.*).

²³ Refer to Vaughan *et al.* 2003

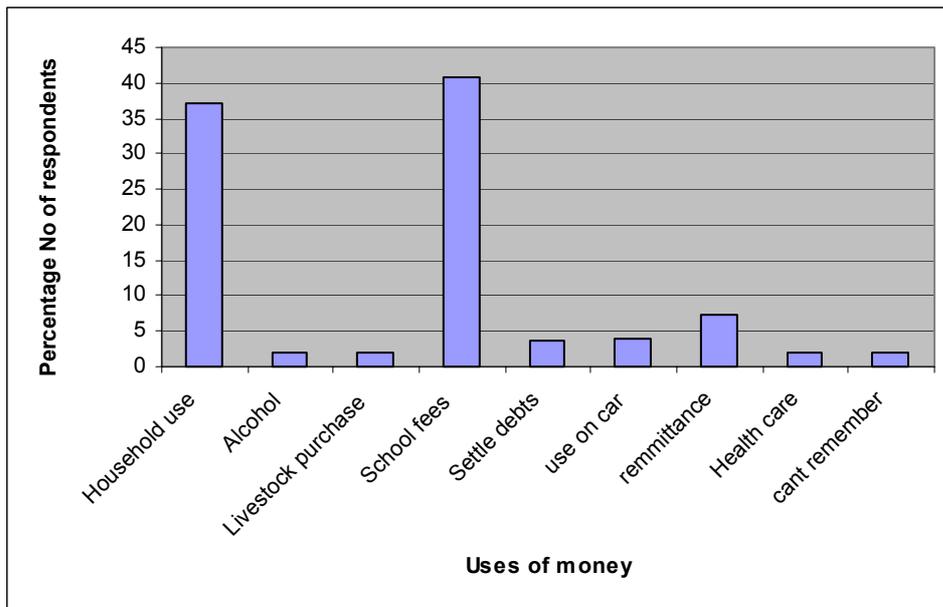
²⁴ Torra Conservancy Committee members are considering running soup kitchens for old age pensioners on pension days.

Implications of distributed cash in terms of individual livelihoods

An annual average income (per income-earning individual 16 and over) reported by the International Institute for Environment and Development was just over N\$ 4,500²⁵. The amount paid out to registered members (i.e. N\$ 630) was 14 per cent of this average annual individual income. If the estimated poverty line income is used (i.e. US\$1 per day), N\$ 630²⁶ is 20 per cent of the annual estimated poverty line income. N\$ 630 will also cover basic grocery costs for a Bergsig household for three months.²⁷

The survey information indicated that, although they had not been consulted and would have liked to have been, most of Torra Conservancy members were in agreement with the individual cash payout to all registered members (approximately 300)²⁸ of N\$ 630 each in 2003. The most common expenditure item for this cash (41 per cent of respondents) was on school expenses. The timing of this cash payout was excellent as most parents found this a good opportunity to pay their children's school costs²⁹. In Namibia, the school calendar year starts in January of each year and this time is always difficult for parents as they have spent most of their money on Christmas and New Year celebrations (J. Katjiua, *pers. comm.*). Thus to some parents this was a blessing. Household use was the second most frequent response (37 per cent). Other uses of money included livestock purchase, settling debts, use on car, remittance, health care and drinking alcohol. All respondents receiving the cash reported that it had made them feel more positive towards wildlife and tourism (Mulonga 2003).

Figure 4: Use of money (percentage of respondents) in Torra Conservancy



²⁵ As derived by the International Institute for Environment and Development from the WILD/EEU survey data from four conservancies in the Kunene/Erongo Regions (Torra, ≠Khoadi //Hôas, Ehirovipuka and Sorris Sorris). Refer to Suich 2003 for further information on this survey.

²⁶ Exchange rate of N\$8.6 to 1US\$ used for 2002 (rate from Bank of Namibia).

²⁷ A monthly grocery cost of N\$ 220 was derived from the total costs of the following groceries: maize meal, flour, sugar, coffee/tea, cooking oil, matches, salt, soup/spices, onions, soap (fuel costs were not included).

²⁸ Figure supplied in *The Namibian* article, 'Conservancy pays members dividends', 9 January 2003, by Linda Baker at Bergsig.

²⁹ For example, N\$ 630 can cover the basic annual school costs of two local secondary school students who are bordering (i.e. N\$ 120 each for school uniforms, N\$ 83 for school fees and N\$ 102 for other contributions). School-related expenditure provided by the secretary of Jacob Basson School in Bergsig in August 2003.

5.4 West Caprivi

Revenue generation

West Caprivi ‘conservancy’ generated funds from their campsite at Bagani. Although there were funds available since 1999, the first benefit distribution payout was only done in 2003.³⁰

Benefit distribution

In West Caprivi in 2003, N\$ 14,000 was equitably allocated to the seven member villages (the amount was allocated according to the size of the village with five villages getting N\$ 2,500 each and the other two receiving N\$ 1,000 and N\$ 500).

Use of cash payout by villages

All seven villages elected to use their funds for a celebration. Use of collective funds to stage village level celebrations in this way has also taken place in the context of the CAMPFIRE programme in Zimbabwe and has been noted for its social and commemorative value (R. Diggle, *pers. comm.*).

5.5 Experience of other types of benefit distribution in conservancies in Kunene

Conservancy members in Marienfluss Conservancy use the funds generated from the Okarohombo Campsite on a needs basis. The same ‘social fund’ appears to be operating in Purros Conservancy with funds generated from the Himba Traditional Village. Likewise, there is evidence to show that this practice operated historically with the income generated from the Khowarib Restcamp³¹. (Refer to the Section 5.6 below for more information on this mode of distribution.) If measures to ensure accountability are in place, this mode of distribution based on need has a very targeted development impact, benefiting the most needy households. This is highly desirable from a poverty alleviation perspective.

5.6 Modes of distribution used

A review of different conservancy revenue distribution mechanisms reveals that four modes of distribution have evolved according to the characteristics of the conservancies and amount of collective revenue distributed. These are:

- Individual cash payouts to registered members (Nyae Nyae Conservancy in 1998, 2000 and 2002 and Torra Conservancy in early 2003) where the number of members is relatively small and the revenue considerable.
- Payouts on a village basis (Salambala Conservancy³³ and West Caprivi in 2001/2 and 2003 respectively) where the number of members is large and revenues modest
- A conservancy ‘social fund’ where members can request finances on a needs basis (Marienfluss Conservancy and money generated from the Himba Traditional Village in Purros), again where the number of conservancy members as potential beneficiaries is small³⁴

³⁰ One of the reasons for the delay was the devastating effect the spill over of the Angolan war had on West Caprivi between 1999 and 2002.

³¹ This information was gleaned during a participatory review of community-owned tourism enterprises in Kunene (Trench *et al.* 2003).

³³ Refer to Murphy and Mulonga 2003 for further details.

³⁴ All 121 permanent adult residents of the Marienfluss Conservancy are registered members and the large majority of adult residents of Purros Conservancy are registered members.

- Expenditure on social services, such as support to schools and old age pensioners, combined with equal cash payout to all registered members (Torra Conservancy)

The option of individual cash payouts seems to work best where there is a considerable amount of collective revenue and a relatively small number of beneficiaries. Where there is a high number of beneficiaries and revenues are modest, the only real option is for a payout at a collective level (or to use the money for a collective development project), since individual cash payouts would be relatively insignificant.

Cash payments based on need only function where the number of beneficiaries is limited and there is an accountable mechanism for verifying needy cases, as is provided by the Marienflüss Conservancy Committee for funds generated by the Okarohombo Campsite. When asked whether the campsite was a success or a failure, one elderly woman at a WILD Project research workshop at the campsite reported that “it is a success as last year when I was sick, I got N\$ 300 to pay for the trip to go to the hospital in Opuwo”. Other workshop participants reported that the campsite was a success “because all the people from the community can get money and this helps the community in many different cases” and “this is the first time that the community have generated funds on their own – before we got money from the IRDNC” (responses cited in Trench 2003).

The revenues distributed in the latter case were modest. For example, in January 2002 about N\$ 23,000 had been generated by the Okarohombo Campsite in the Marienflüss Conservancy³⁷. This was their only income – equating to less than N\$ 200 per registered member. If funds are considerable, the preferred mode of distribution with small beneficiary numbers is likely to be individual cash payouts.

6. CONCLUSION AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

As can be seen above, different conservancies have adopted different modes of benefit distribution according to the needs of the conservancy and the amount of revenue available for distribution. In order to balance the cost of living with wildlife and act as an incentive to conserve wildlife, communities need to experience benefits. Distribution of financial benefits from collective revenue earned from wildlife use helps people to link benefits with improved natural resource management and wildlife use, supports livelihoods, and improves the legitimacy of the conservancy structure with conservancy residents. These factors, in turn, can act as an incentive to encourage people to continue managing their natural resources and in the long run may be able to offset the costs of living with wildlife. However, before distribution takes place, the costs of the conservancies should be covered.

The immediate, direct financial impact on household livelihoods of the distributed revenue is modest, especially in the context of village-level payouts. However, village-level payouts used for development purposes can have a positive impact at the household level, as in the case of some of the projects identified by the villages in Salambala Conservancy. Depending on use of the funds, individual cash payouts to registered members have a greater potential to produce an immediate,

³⁶ The extent to which individual cash benefits promote collective resource management is not known. However, some of the ‘visual payout methods’ mentioned in Section 4 might help engender a sense of collective resource management.

³⁷ As reported in the Marienflüss Conservancy Management Profile Summary (unpublished IRDNC report).

direct financial benefit to household livelihoods. Providing basic goods for sale at the village level on the day of the payment (as in the case of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy) helps people to purchase the basic commodities they need.

A direct link made between revenues generated from conservation/tourism and support to existing livelihood priorities is more likely to motivate conservation behaviour than when the link is indirect. A good example of a direct link is the use of conservancy revenue in Torra Conservancy to purchase veterinary drugs for the Torra Farmers' Union to be resold to farmers at a subsidised price.

Issues surrounding benefit distribution that have emerged from the WILD Project in both Kunene and Caprivi are outlined below:

- A fundamental principle of empowerment is for Conservancy Committees and members to decide on the use of conservancy revenue. However, it is appropriate for MET and service providers to work through issues with conservancy committees and members so that informed decisions can be made³⁸.
- The timing of benefit distribution is important – optimal distribution should be as quick as possible³⁹ to establish the link between the income and conservation and avoid members becoming disillusioned.
- The development impact of distribution can be enhanced by the timing of cash payouts, as in the case of Torra Conservancy where the cash payout was made in January and the main expenditure item was school costs.
- A strong participatory process in the generation of benefit distribution plans can provide an opportunity for conservancy members to participate in the decision-making over revenue distribution⁴⁰.
- Benefit distribution plans are important as they can provide an opportunity for conservancy members to participate in decision-making.
- Community consultation can produce priority-oriented and effective benefit distribution plans, e.g. #Khoadi //Hôas benefit distribution plan was drawn up from priorities indicated by the community.
- Benefit distribution in the form of individual cash payouts to registered members in Torra Conservancy raised the issue of the appropriateness of existing membership criteria as defined by the conservancy constitution.
- The conservancy membership register needs to be updated prior to payouts of cash dividends to members.
- If village level payouts are made, it may be appropriate for the size of the village to be considered for equity reasons.
- The legislated requirement for equity in benefit distribution means that targeted benefits to pre-identified groups needs to be considered⁴¹.
- The accountability of people who receive cash on behalf of villages should be checked by the Conservancy Committee and villages by following up on the use of the money.

³⁸ For example, distributing a reasonable percentage of annual profit to ensure financial benefits accrue to membership.

³⁹ It is important to complete the necessary budgetary arrangements before payouts.

⁴⁰ For example, #//C Committee held a number of meetings within the conservancy to get input from membership on the design of their Benefit Distribution Plan. (They showed photographs of these meetings to the MET's CBNRM Subdivision in July 2003, when they gave a presentation of their plan together with Torra Conservancy.)

⁴¹ A good example here is #//C Committee's plan to allocate funds to compensate households for elephant damage to water points. Mayuni Conservancy has already used conservancy funds to compensation for wildlife damage to livelihoods.

- Monitoring the process of benefit distribution is important for MET in order to ensure that the process is fair and transparent.
- All benefits coming from conservancies are important, not just the distribution of collectively generated revenues. There are many intangible benefits that are sometimes not counted and efforts should be made to assist communities to document such benefits to their membership.
- Evidence from other countries (e.g. CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe and LIRDPA in Zambia) suggests that the actual physical method of benefit distribution can also play an important role in increasing local accountability and providing clear links between wildlife use and the receipt of cash or community project benefits.

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APPENDIX 1: SOME DETAILS ON SOME OF THE CONSERVANCIES WHO HAVE CONDUCTED 'FORMAL' BENEFIT DISTRIBUTION PROCESSES

Nyae Nyae Conservancy

Physical and social context

Nyae Nyae Conservancy lies south of the Khaudum National park, along the western side of the Botswana boundary. It is managed by the Ju/'hoansi people, who belong to the larger San community of southern Africa. This conservancy has a registered membership of 770 from a population of about 1,800 - 2,000 people (Berger *et al.* 2003).

Table 4: Nyae Nyae Conservancy profile

Status	Attributes
Size	900,000 ha
Estimated population	1,800 - 2,000 people
Members	770
Conservancy management board	20
Staff	35 (not all posts are filled)
Operational budget for 2002	N\$ 817,136
Annual income for 2002	N\$ 1,236,407
Administrative centre	Tsumkwe

Source: Berger 2003

Fauna and flora

Nyae Nyae has extensive natural resources and during heavy rains transforms into an extensive wetland of national and international importance. "During flooding the pans are known to be used by up to 10,000 water birds" (Berger *et al.* 2003:7). During heavy rains when the area becomes a wetland, it hosts up to 80 wetland bird species, including flamingo. The conservancy has big-tusked elephants and supports herds of springbok, oryx and buffalo. Predators such leopard, wild dog and hyena are common.

Threatened species occurring in the area includes African wild dog, Wattled Crane and Slaty Egret (Berger 2003).

Salambala Conservancy

Physical and social context

Salambala Conservancy is situated in the Katima Mulilo Rural Constituency in Caprivi Region. It borders Botswana in the South and the emerging Lusese conservancy in the north. Salambala Conservancy comprises mainly the Masubia people under the leadership of Liswani III of the Bukalo Royal House. The conservancy has an estimated 3,000 - 4,000 members. The conservancy office is situated at Bukalo, which is also the main centre in the conservancy. The main livelihood activities in Salambala are livestock farming (mostly cattle) and crop farming.

Table 5: Salambala Conservancy profile

Status	Attributes
Size	93,000 ha
Estimated population	8,020 people, with 1,597 households
Members	Between 3,000 - 4,000
Committee members	41
Executive committee	9
Staff	24
Conservancy infrastructure	office with telephone, one 4x4 vehicle, campsite
Operational budget for 2002	N\$ 290,000
Annual revenue for 2002	About N\$ 300,000 from hunting concession
Donor contribution to operational budget	N\$ 220,000 (provided by WWF-LIFE in 2002)
Administrative centre	Bukalo

Source: Humphrey and Humphrey 2003

Fauna and flora

Large grazers and browsers include African elephant, hippopotamus, buffalo, zebra, eland, impala, wildebeest, and kudu. The main predators are lion, hyena, and leopard. Salambala Conservancy shares a border (the Chobe River) with Chobe National Park in Botswana. Thus wildlife moves between the two areas seasonally (Humphrey and Humphrey 2003). Salambala contains the richest diversity of bird life in Namibia, with more than 400 species having been documented.

Salambala has a rich diversity of vegetation. The conservancy is largely dominated by mopane woodland savanna, which is the main habitat type in the conservancy's core wildlife area. Part of the conservancy is Zambezi woodland savanna. The floodplain characterises the border between the conservancy and Botswana.

Torra Conservancy

Physical and social context

Torra Conservancy is situated in the Khorixas constituency of Kunene Region. It covers 352, 200 hectares of land. Bergsig is regarded as the main centre within Torra. The conservancy has an estimated 450 members. Ethnic groups in the conservancy include the Damara, Riemvasmakers, and several families of Hereros and Wambos. Most people derive their livelihoods from small stock (goats and sheep), cattle at a limited scale and small vegetable gardens. The area is sparsely populated with small numbers of people, widely dispersed in small settlements. Torra Conservancy is one of the top communal area conservancies in Namibia in terms of income generation. It covers most of its running costs – salaries, fuel for the vehicles and other daily expenses.

Table 6: Torra Conservancy profile

Status	Attributes
Size	352,200 ha
Estimated population	884 people, including 123 households
Members	450
Committee members	6
Staff	8
Conservancy infrastructure	office, two 4x4 vehicles, one HF radio, one UHF hand-held radio set, garage, cooler room under construction, computer and printer
Operational budget for 2002	N\$ 260,000
Annual income for 2002	N\$ 750,000
Donor contribution to operational budget	Self-funded since July 2000 (except one vehicle, fuel and maintenance costs, supported by IRDNC since June 2002)
Administrative centre	Bergsig

Source: Humphrey and Humphrey 2003

Fauna and flora

Torra has good natural water supplies and fertile soils, which produce good grazing even with minimal rainfall (Humphrey and Humphrey 2003). The conservancy is home to species such as springbok, giraffe, oryx, kudu, baboon, Hartman's zebra and steenbok. Predators include cheetah, jackal, lion, leopard and hyena. In addition, the conservancy is home to rarer species such as the desert-dwelling elephants of Kunene and free-ranging population of black rhino.

Torra Conservancy is situated in semi-desert environment and with far fewer trees compared to conservancies of the north-east. However, there is an abundance of plant species in Torra including the endemic *Welwitschia mirabilis* which attracts tourists.

APPENDIX 2: THE DAM THAT LEFT THE VILLAGE THIRSTY (BY LINDA BAKER, IRDNC)

Once upon a time, not so long ago, there was a village nestled between the hills in a far away land. The people living there were mainly farmer folk, who depended on the land for their existence.

People were poor, but managed to put enough food on the table and have a little extra money for clothes, school fees and a few other items. Children played in the streets and laughter could be heard drifting into the hills.

The greatest excitement of the year was the village festival. It was held annually when the first rains fell, as a thank you to the rain clouds for remembering them. It was a time when all the villagers gathered, along with the local farmers, and feasted and danced until the early hours of the morning.

One year, however, there was no festival. There was no laughter in the streets and there was little food on the table. The rain clouds had forgotten to arrive.

“What are we going to do?” asked Ou Dawid the baker. “Without water, I can’t make my bread.”

“Maybe we should pack up our things and move,” said Piet the farmer. “There is almost no grazing for my livestock and they will die of thirst if it doesn’t rain soon.”

“For years I have tried to grow vegetables to sell to the villagers so they can eat a balanced diet, not just goat, bread and pap,” said Augusta the gardener. “Now my plants are wilting.”

“We are trying to build new classrooms for the school, but without water we cannot make bricks or mix cement,” said Ester the schoolteacher.

“My shop is dirty and I cannot clean it properly,” frowned Doreen the shopkeeper. “My children do not have enough water to wash with and our drinking water is becoming scarce.”

“Let’s ask the wise old man who lives in the mountains for some advice,” suggested Piet.

After some discussion, they decided to walk into the hills in search of the wise old man. No one knew where he came from and no one knew how he survived. He seldom came to the village. But he was their friend and usually gave them good advice.

When they eventually reached his simple hut, they explained why they had come to see him. “My children, this is indeed a problem,” he said slowly, stroking his beard with one hand and puffing a pipe with the other. He gazed into the fire for a long time. The visitors were a little uncomfortable, as they didn’t know what to do. Augusta wanted to giggle but Doreen elbowed her in the ribs to keep her quiet.

Eventually the old man spoke. “My children remember that the rain clouds are very busy and have many places to visit. But I will talk to them and see if I can remind them to visit you.”

The villagers were happy – they were sure the old man could persuade the clouds to return to their valley. As they were preparing to leave, the old man spoke again.

“My children, you need to look beyond the current problem and think about what you will need for the future. Why don’t you start by building a dam? It will collect the rainwater that you desire. So if the clouds are too busy to come again, you will have some water stored for the lean times.”

“What a wonderful idea!” cried Ou Dawid.

“Oh, thank you, wise man. That is indeed a good plan,” said Doreen.

“How can we repay you?” asked Ester.

“You cannot repay me with material goods,” said the wise old man as he gazed into the fire. “Remember, however, that you will need to work together, and, more importantly, you need to learn to share. Look beyond your petty problems, otherwise all the riches in the world will mean nothing and you will be poorer than you are now.”

The group thought this was a strange comment and wondered what he meant. They soon forgot his message, as they were excited about building a dam.

When they returned, they told the other villagers about the plan. Nearly everyone was excited, except for Fabian the butcher and Oom Koos the undertaker.

“It will never work. Never, never, never. We will be wasting our time and will use up the little water we have left in building such a silly thing,” they moaned.

The villagers considered their words, but felt they had little to lose. They began to gather their tools and started to dig.

“Wait! Surely a dam is like a garden? We need to decide on where to put it and how it will be built,” said Augusta. “After all, if it is built in the wrong place, the water from the mountains will simply flow into the faraway rivers and be of little use to us.”

So they asked everyone for their ideas, and also called upon people from afar had experience in dam building. Naturally, everyone wanted his or her own plan to be chosen. They argued and fought and began to concentrate on old rifts and family quarrels.

“This is no good,” said Piet. “Why don’t we look at all of the plans and combine everyone’s ideas?” Although people were not convinced, they decided once again that they had nothing to lose. They wanted to design something that would suit the needs of all of the villagers.

After a few weeks, the plan was ready and the site was chosen. The villagers asked Ou Dawid the baker, Piet the farmer, Augusta the gardener, Ester the teacher and Doreen the shopkeeper to supervise the building. They set to work and soon the foundations of the dam could be seen by all.

Meanwhile, strangers arrived in their village to marvel at the progress being made. They looked upon the unique design of the dam and praised the people for their wisdom and foresight. They took notes and decided to encourage their own communities to build similar dams.

The village folk, however, ignored the praise from the strangers. They thought that progress was too slow. At first, it was Fabian and Oom Koos who criticised the builders. Soon, other villagers started to grumble too, and before long the village folk decided to call a meeting to elect new builders.

Ester tried to explain that they were working strictly according to the plans that everyone had agreed upon, thus progress was slow. She asked them to be patient as the dam was almost complete.

But her voice was drowned by shouts from the villagers. “You have had enough time to build. Give someone who knows what they are doing a chance!” they shouted.

Just then, a loud thunderclap sounded overhead, making everyone jump. The meeting was abandoned as everyone rushed to their safe, warm houses. It soon began to rain. That night, it rained and rained and rained.

The next day, as the sun yawned sleepily on the horizon, Ou Dawid the baker arose early as usual. As he walked to the bakery he stopped in his tracks and gaped. Glistening in the early morning sunlight was a huge body of water. “It worked! It worked! Wake up everybody! Come and see our dam!” he yelled.

Soon the whole village was awake, and everyone ran to admire their handiwork. “This is surely one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen,” cried Ester the teacher. “There is now enough water for everyone.”

People ran back to their houses to collect buckets and tins – anything in which they could carry water.

“Wait!” boomed Fabian. “Stop that at once. You are all very foolish. If you all take some water, there will soon be nothing left for anyone.”

“He is right,” agreed Oom Koos. “We must save the water for the future. Go home, and put away your buckets.” The villagers looked at each other and slowly began to nod their heads. Obediently, they shuffled back to their houses and put away their containers.

As time passed, the village became an unhappy place. The children stopped playing in the streets and there was no more laughter. With nothing better to do, people began to quarrel among themselves. They blamed each other for the smallest things. They ignored the strangers who continued to visit their village and marvel at the sight of the magnificent dam.

Ou Dawid had to close his bakery as he had too little water with which to make bread. Piet watched as his animals became thinner and thinner and eventually died. Augusta the gardener watched her vegetables droop and wither away. Ester could no longer give any school classes as the old school building had finally crumbled away. There was no water with which to build bricks or make cement. Doreen the shopkeeper was often away as her children were constantly ill. Her shop became dirty and neglected.

One day, as Ester sat on her step, the old man from the hills approached her. He was looking for Doreen so that he could buy more tobacco, but the shop was closed. “What has happened?” he asked, frowning. “Why are you all so unhappy?”

“We do not have water,” she replied, shaking her head from side to side.

“No water? But you have this remarkable dam. My child, think back to my words that day you visited me in the hills. You will find an answer to your problem if you think hard enough.”

When she looked up again, the old man had vanished. She thought and she thought. Then...

“Of course! Let me call the villagers together. We have to take action now!” she cried.

People were unhappy to be called to yet another futile meeting, but, with nothing better to do, they met at the village hall.

“We have all been so foolish,” Ester told the crowd. “We have this magnificent dam, yet we have forgotten why we wanted it in the first place. What good is it if we do not make use of it? What good is it if our livestock, our gardens and our children are thirsty?”

“But we will waste the water if we use it,” grumbled Fabian.

“Yes, but by not using it we are wasting more of it. We are unhappier now than we were before the dam was built. When we went to ask the old man to help us, he cautioned us to look beyond the current problem. He told us to remember to work together and to share, otherwise all the riches in the world will mean nothing and we would be poorer than we are now.”

“He is a foolish old man. I am sure he has dagga in that pipe of his. Why should we listen to him?” complained Oom Koos.

“Because he is wise. Every day, a little bit of water evaporates. We could be using that water for our needs,” said Ou Dawid.

“We have worked together in the past to find solutions, so let's try to find a way in which we can use our precious water sustainably,” Doreen replied. “After all, it may rain again.”

“Yes. Working against each other and allowing ourselves to become divided has not helped. This beautiful dam has become a burden to us. Our strength is in our unity, so let's give it one last try,” said Piet.

[W1]*****

A year passed. One day, after the first rains of the season, the old man came down from the hills in search of fresh supplies. The village seemed strangely deserted. He wondered if the villagers had become thirsty and moved away.

First, he passed Ou Dawid's bakery. Ou Dawid was nowhere to be seen. The old man peered through the window. There, on several baking trays, were some of the most delicious-looking biscuits, vetkoek, cakes and doughnuts he had ever seen. And there were many varieties of bread.

Next, he walked past Piet's farm. His cattle, goats and sheep were all fat and he had built a new chicken run. The chickens clucked contentedly as they laid their eggs.

Augusta's garden was full of healthy-looking vegetables and she had planted some fruit trees that were beginning to grow tall and bear fruit.

As he passed the silent school, the old man saw a shiny plaque on the wall. He squinted his eyes and read that the school had been honoured by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture as the most improved school in Namibia. Not a single child had failed their exams. There were new

windowpanes in all of the windows and the walls of the new classrooms were covered in bright, cheerful pictures.

The store had been whitewashed and was larger than before. But Doreen and the children were nowhere to be seen.

He stroked his beard and puffed his pipe. Where were the villagers? His thoughts were interrupted by the sound of cheering coming from the village hall. As he approached the building, he saw that the entire village had gathered there.

Ester ran towards him. “Welcome!” she cried. “You are just in time for the rain festival. We remembered your wise words and have worked together to achieve something special, something remarkable,” she explained.

“After I met you last year, I thought about what you had told us. We held a meeting and realised we were so busy fighting among ourselves that we no longer took the time to stand back and admire our handiwork, being this dam. We had forgotten its original purpose.

“What good was it if we were thirsty? What good was it if only strangers admired it but we did not see what a wonderful thing we had created? We put aside our differences and tried to come up with solutions that would suit all of us.

“We shared our ideas and asked some experts from afar to give us some guidance. We drew up a plan that enabled us to have a plentiful amount of water, while preventing evaporation. We even have enough water to sell to neighbouring villages. We used that money to fix the school and there is enough left for at least three seasons in case the clouds ever forget to visit us again.

“Thank you for showing us the way,” she smiled. “Please join us in our festivities – it is the largest feast we have had in years and will go down in history as one of our happiest moments.”

Then the festival started. Once again, the people feasted and danced until the early hours of the morning and laughter could be heard in the streets.

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