Place, Prospects and Power: Community-Based Conservation, Partnerships, and Ecotourism Enterprise in Namibia

Arthur Hoole[1]

Abstract

Namibia's community-based natural resource management program (CBRNM) and communal conservancies have gained international acclaim for rural poverty alleviation and wildlife conservation on the commons. Community-based ecotourism enterprise development, premised on a stunning wildlife spectacle for international, 'up market' tourism, has played a central role in the generation of community revenues, employment and additional benefits.

The paper presents the evolution of institutional linkages and partnerships for community-based conservation in Namibia. The place and prospects for ecotourism joint venture enterprises with communal conservancies are given particular attention. The case of Torra Conservancy in the Kunene region of northwest Namibia is profiled as a model. Prospects for replicating the Torra model are evaluated, especially through examining the case of the Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy. Power relationships between and among private enterprise, community, and the state in the ecotourism partnerships are elucidated.

The paper applies data acquired through a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) approach conducted in Namibia as part of recent doctoral research. Findings demonstrate some tangible successes in community-based ecotourism enterprise development, as well as related issues in benefits distribution and power brokering. It is concluded that joint ventures in ecotourism enterprise development can contribute successfully to community-based conservation. But, issues of power sharing, governance and competition necessitate the further evolution of commons institutions to capture future, sustainable benefits from community-based conservation premised on wildlife and related ecotourism development.

Key Words

Namibia, community-based conservation, wildlife, conservancies, partnerships, enterprises, ecotourism

Introduction

Namibia's community-based natural resource management program (CBRNM) and communal conservancies have received international acclaim for rural poverty alleviation and wildlife conservation on the commons (World Resources Institute 2005;

[1] Recent PhD Graduate, Natural Resources and Environmental Management, Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba, Canada.

UNDP 2004). Namibia's CBNRM program originated in the early 1980s and communal conservancies, as common property resource institutions, have grown exponentially from an original 4 in 1998 to 50 in 2007 (Weaver 2007 Interview). Community-based ecotourism enterprise development, premised on a stunning wildlife spectacle for international, 'up market' tourism, has played a central role in the generation of revenues, employment and additional benefits for certain conservancies. My objectives here are to show the evolution of Namibia's CBNRM program, highlighting features for success and lessons learned from a commons perspective. As well, I aim to demonstrate the central role of ecotourism enterprise partnerships in this evolution, through reference to two particular conservancies, Torra and Ehi-rovipuka, in the Kunene region of northwest Namibia (Figure 1). The Torra case is frequently lauded as the 'flagship' of the conservancy system (World Resources Institute 2005; NACSO 2004) and features a key partnership with an international ecotourism enterprise. The Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy, established 3 years after Torra, is attempting to replicate the ecotourism partnership model, but has yet to achieve this. These contrasting experiences provide insights into the place and prospects of ecotourism enterprise development in community-based conservation. As well, related power relationships between and among community, private enterprise and the state are elucidated.

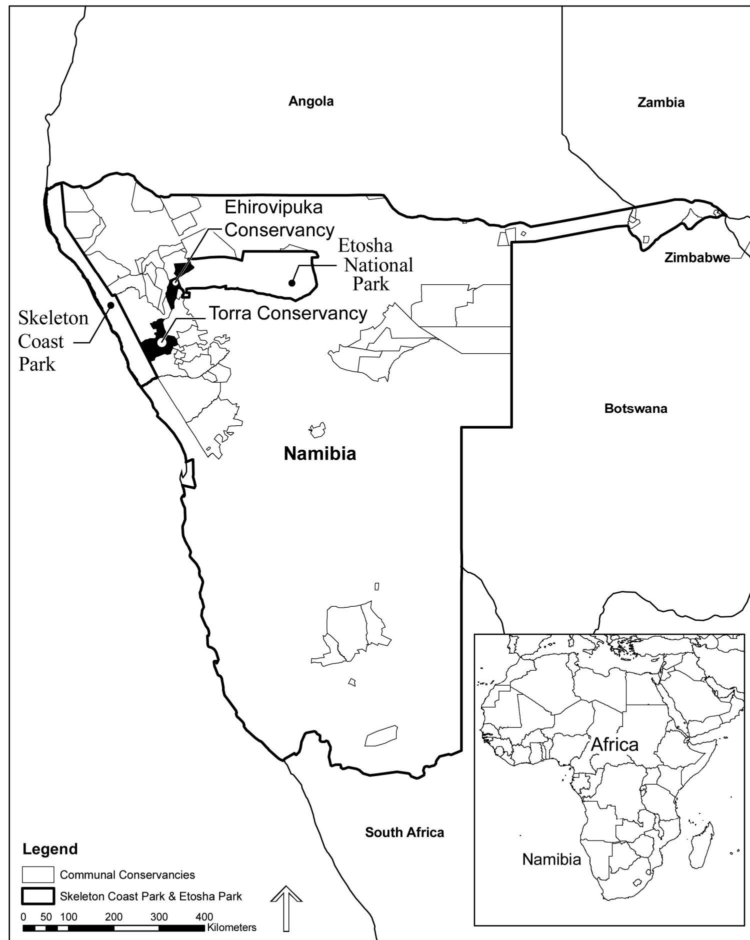


Figure 1. Location of Torra and Ehi-rovipuka Conservancies

Several key terms or concepts warrant brief elaboration. Community-based conservation (CBC) is based on the idea that if conservation and development can be simultaneously achieved, the interests of both are served (Berkes 2004). In the African context, community conservation has been defined as those principles and practices that stress that conservation goals are pursued by strategies emphasizing the role of local residents in decision-making for natural resources (Adams & Hulme 2001). Community-based conservation has been practiced in many forms, but in the broadest sense includes natural resources or biodiversity conservation by, for, and with the local community. The co-existence of people and nature, as distinct from protectionism and the segregation of people and nature, is its central characteristic (Western & Wright 1994). Community-based conservation is employed here as an overarching concept, inclusive of and interchangeable with community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). The term 'partnership' is employed to include any cooperative relationship

between two or more parties involving a sharing of responsibility, authority, and resources: human, financial or material. Ecotourism means environmentally responsible travel and visits to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate natural and cultural features, while promoting conservation, low negative visitor impact, and beneficially active socio-economic involvement by local populations (Ceballos-Lascurain 1996, as cited in The Tourism Company 2002:28).

Approach and Methods

I have taken a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach in this research employing case study and a variety of qualitative field tools (Chambers 1997; Berg 2004). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Namibia in 2006 with 33 key informants involved in CBNRM from NGOs, government ministries, conservancy communities and the university research community. The interview questions were general, open-ended, and explored the development of CBNRM in the country and institutional linkages. As well, conservancy site visits, participant observation, and structured communal villager interviews were carried out in 2007. A total of 40 villager interviews were conducted in Otjokavare, the main village of Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy. These interviews posed the same set of questions to each respondent concerning the development of the conservancy, attitudes and awareness about wildlife and villager experience with the conservancy. I employed a community interpreter and all interviews were conducted in Otjiherero, the language of the resident Herero people. I compared and triangulated the field data so acquired with authoritative regional secondary sources. This work was part of a wider doctoral research investigation concerning community-based conservation and protected areas in Namibia (Hoole 2008).

Evolving Partnerships – Namibia's CBNRM and Conservancies

In 1982, a national NGO, the Namibian Wildlife Trust, acting out of concern for severely depleted wildlife in Northern Namibia due to drought, armed conflict and poaching, appointed a conservator, Garth Owen-Smith, with long experience in the region. Smith collaborated with Chris Eyre, a like-minded government wildlife conservation official, and they engaged 4 local headmen, who shared a concern about the dramatic loss of wildlife (Jones 2001; Owen-Smith 2006 interview). The headmen appointed their own auxiliary game guards, later to be known as community game guards. These men were all respected hunters from local communities. The aim was to stop poaching (Jacobsohn 2006 interview) and the game guards monitored wildlife, reporting suspicious activities and poaching incidents to their headmen, who in turn informed government wildlife enforcement personnel. By the late 1980s, regional wildlife populations had noticeably recovered. The cessation of military operations by the South African Defence Force and improved rainfalls are recognized as contributing factors to wildlife recoveries over this period. However, the community game guard program was considered a major factor in stopping poaching and allowing wildlife to recover. Increasing demands for the program led to the formation of a new Namibian NGO, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) which continues to

this day to facilitate and support the development of CBNRM in the Kunene and Caprivi regions of northern Namibia.

Namibia gained independence in 1990 and the black majority government extended rights in wildlife to communal area residents that had previously been granted only to white farmers on private lands by the South African administration. During this same period, senior officials in the Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation, and Tourism were formulating proposed national policy and program responses to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) 1992, the signing of the Convention on Biodiversity in 1992 (UNEP 1992) and an emerging sustainable development discourse in Namibia (Jones 2006 interview). IRDNC Directors Garth Owen-Smith and Dr. Margaret Jacobsohn, based on their knowledge and experience working with local communities in the community game guard program, were requested by ministry officials to help design and conduct community surveys that eventually led to the drafting of policies and legislation for a national CBNRM program (Jones 2006 interview; Owen-Smith 2006 interview). USAID provided donor assistance under its 'Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Program,' through an executing agency, the World Wildlife Fund WWF (US). USAID and WWF (US) have remained main international donor agents in Namibian CBNRM until the present day, although other international donors have come in.

The resultant enabling legislation, the *Nature Conservation Amendment Act, 1996*, provided for the devolution of certain rights and uses of wildlife to communal area residents. These included rights to hunt, capture, cull and sale 'huntable game' such as springbok, oryx and kudu under quotas approved by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, as well as the right to use quotas of "specially protected game" such as elephant for trophy hunting (World Resources Institute 2005). Communal area residents are required to form a common property resource institution called a conservancy to participate in the CBNRM program and enjoy the rights in wildlife and related tourism development devolved under the legislation. Conservancies must be approved by and registered with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Registration requires a defined conservancy boundary, a defined membership, a representative conservancy committee, a constitution recognized by central government and a commitment to producing a benefits distribution plan (Long 2004). Common property resource design principles including external recognition, defined boundaries and membership were explicitly considered in the formulation of conservancy registration requirements (Jones 2006 interview). The setting of boundaries on communal lands for the exclusive use of wildlife by member residents satisfies two defining characteristics of common property resources: excludability, or control of access and; subtractability, wherein each user is capable of subtracting from the welfare of others (Feeny et al. 1990). In fact, commons are defined as resources for which exclusion is difficult and collective use involves subtractability (Oakerson 1992; Ostrom 1990; Feeny et al. 1990).

Multiple linkages and partnerships (Berkes 2002; Young 2002) are highly featured in Namibia's CBNRM program, originating as a few simple ones between local communities, a national conservation NGO and the national government wildlife agency during the community game guard program of the 1980s, to multiple cross-level linkages, involving several international donors, multiple national NGOs, the University of Namibia, private tourism enterprises, and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism

(Figure 2). USAID has remained a major international donor, although the WWF LIFE project is in its third phase, and activities are expected to wind down with the strengthening of national and local institutions (Weaver 2006 interview).

National NGOs such as IRDNC, the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations (NACSO), the Namibia Nature Foundation, and the Namibia Community Based Tourism Organization (NACOBTA) provide various technical support and capacity-building services to conservancies. NACSO is an umbrella organization for a dozen different national NGOs and the University of Namibia supporting CBNRM. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism is as an observer on all NACSO working groups; reflecting its overarching approval and registration role for conservancies. This role is reportedly evolving into greater direct funding support for NACSO-coordinated CBNRM support programs (Louis 2006 interview). A CBNRM unit was created in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism in 2002 to further facilitate the development of CBNRM as a national program (Long 2004). Most recently, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), through the World Bank, has funded a five year Integrated Community-Based Ecosystem Management Project (ICEMA), to help the ministry further develop its own capacities to support and broaden the application of CBNRM (Ministry of Environment and Tourism 2006).

The variety of institutional linkages, both horizontal and vertical, in Namibian community-based conservation shown in Figure 2 is not a literal portrayal of all institutions involved, at different levels of organization. What is evident, even at this schematic level, is an evolution of institutions and networks over several decades. As well, there is an emergence of networks of knowledge sharing among maturing conservancies. This is further shown in Figure 2 by suggesting a clustering effect of stronger linkages among the first established conservancies, while new conservancies are being quickly registered that are still individual entities, with nascent institutional capacities. The prominence of IDRNC is highlighted as the longest serving and only Namibian NGO dedicated entirely to facilitating CBNRM, as well as a central and consistent role played by USAID as an international donor. The central role played by the Government of Namibia, through its Ministry of Environment and Tourism, in the legal recognition of conservancies and devolution of rights in wildlife use and management is also depicted. Other international donors support single NGOs and there is a regionalization of NGO support for conservancies. This system of regionally-based, facilitating NGOs for CBNRM is particularly noteworthy. For example, in the Kunene study region, IRDNC serves as the lead NGO and other NGOs and NACSO channel their support through IRDNC. This has been an institutional arrangement that can offset competition among NGOs for donor funding and coalitions of NGOs have emerged to tap available donor funds (Louis 2007 interview).

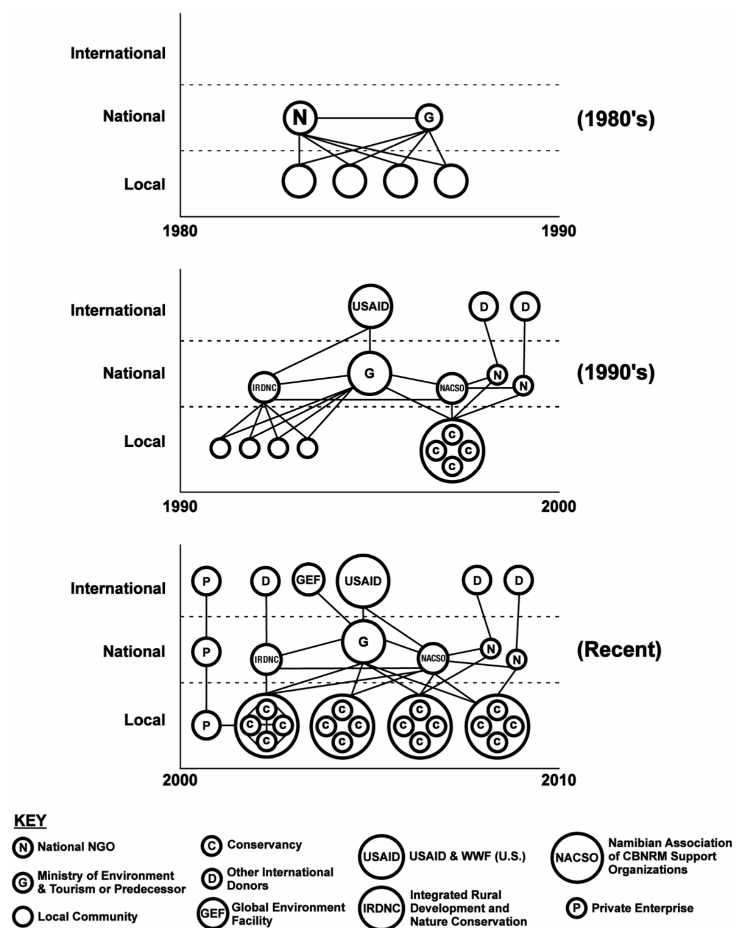


Figure 2. Evolution of Community-Based Conservation in Namibia

Small group size, location of users close to the resource, homogeneity among group members, and past experiences of social cooperation have been suggested as features of enduring common property resource management institutions (Ostrom 1990; Agrawal 2002). Not all of these conditions are well represented in Namibia's conservancies. Participating group sizes, while relatively small, are widely dispersed. The aridity and wide ranging wildlife combine to demand larger-scale ecological units for management than the smaller areas represented by individual conservancy boundaries. Distinct and varying ethnic groups comprise conservancy membership and some community residents have not formally registered as conservancy members. Moreover, the national history of social upheaval and segregation under ethnic and colonial conflicts and apartheid-imposed homelands has militated against long histories of social cooperation. Hence, the resilience and adaptability of conservancies remains uncertain (Odendaal 2006 interview).

Some conservancies are now quite well established, while others are in early stages of development. Indeed, IRDNC, as lead conservation NGO in the Kunene study region, categorizes conservancies as 'Fast Track,' 'Medium Track' and 'Long Track' for the purposes of determining the levels and types of support it is prepared to give in its facilitating role to conservancies. 'Fast Track' conservancies are judged to possess a good and diverse resource base for wildlife and tourism; 'Medium Track' conservancies have some wildlife and tourism potential, and 'Long Track' conservancies are judged to have quite limited wildlife and tourism potential (Nott 2006 interview).

The Torra Conservancy is a 'Fast Track' conservancy that has enjoyed particular success and recognition due to its partnership in an international ecotourism enterprise. It is regarded as a model that newly emerging conservancies are trying to emulate.

Torra Conservancy and Ecotourism

The Torra Conservancy in NW Namibia has received international recognition as a successful approach to community-based conservation and is a UNDP 2004 Equator Prize winner (World Resources Institute 2005; UNDP 2004) in recognition of its success in poverty alleviation and wildlife conservation. Torra encompasses 352,200 hectares of semi-desert and sparse savanna, with an annual rainfall of less 100 mm/year. Its small population of 1200 includes Damara and Riemvasmaker ethnic groups, with fewer Herero and Owambo people, dispersed in small pastoral villages. Principal livelihood activities include small and large stock farming (goats, sheep, cattle) small-scale vegetable gardens, wage labour, and some absentee wage earners. The conservancy is premised on conserving an impressive wildlife assemblage endemic to the spectacular and remote arid wild lands of the Kunene region. The wildlife includes elephant, black rhino, springbok, mountain zebra, giraffe, oryx, kudu, black-face impala, lion, cheetah and leopard and other endemic species. Many of these species move seasonally through the wider Kunene region that Torra Conservancy occupies with other established conservancies and two large protected areas, the Skeleton Coast Park and the Etosha National Park (Figure 1). Wildlife populations recovered impressively under the community game guard program that was precursor to and became a central activity of the conservancy (Nott et al. 2004).

Torra Conservancy has 450 registered adult members (NACSO 2004) and was gazetted as one of Namibia's first communal conservancies in June 1998, following promulgation of the *Nature Conservation Amendment Act, 1996*. Torra is recognized as one of the most successful conservancies, achieving operational self-sufficiency in 2002, following initial support from international donors and national NGOs. The conservancy has a management committee of 7 men and 2 women elected by the conservancy membership and employs 5 community game guards, a field officer, a community activist, and a receptionist operating out of a conservancy office. It conducts annual wildlife counts and monitoring and earns wildlife-based revenues from a joint venture lodge, trophy hunting, live sales of springbok, as well as providing for own use hunting of conservancy community members (NACSO 2006).

The main revenue-generating enterprise for the conservancy is a joint venture partnership with Damaraland Camp, an up-market, exclusive ecotourism resort with a 22 bed capacity operated by Wilderness Safaris, a South African tour company. This

ecotourism enterprise provides annual land rent revenue, monthly bed levy revenue and 22 full time jobs for conservancy members (Long 2004; Florry 2006 interview). Training and employment of conservancy members has also been achieved in some 40 other jobs in the Wilderness Safari lodge network beyond the Torra Conservancy (Florry 2006 interview; Weaver 2007 interview).

The Damaraland Camp's annual income contribution to the conservancy has grown steadily from approximately N $50,000 in 1997 to over N $300,000 in 2005 (Wilderness Safaris 2005). The conservancy has earned well in excess of N $2,000,000 from the camp since its inception. Damaraland Camp has been the single largest contributor to conservancy revenues and the single largest employer (Wilderness Safaris 2005).

The camp occupies an exclusive site with dramatic scenery and is accessible only by light aircraft or 4x4 vehicle. The main lodge and 11 tented camps are luxuriously appointed and are designed to blend unobtrusively into the wilderness setting. Solar power and other 'environmentally-friendly' practices for wastewater and solid waste disposal are featured. The fully-inclusive, daily rate (accommodation, meals, drinks, activities such as game drives) is about US $560 per person in low season, rising to about US $670 per person in the high season (The Cardboard Box Travel Shop 2008). Up-scale ecotourism joint venture lodges generated over N $7.6 million for all of Namibia's conservancies in 2005, amounting to nearly 56% of overall conservancy income (NACSO 2006).

A key feature of the joint venture is the land tenure arrangement for the ecotourism lodge. Wilderness Safaris was first introduced to local community representatives in 1994, through IRDNC. IRDNC acted as a broker and facilitated 'role playing' with a local community committee, to prepare for negotiations with Wilderness Safaris (Owen-Smith 2007 interview). In 1994, the Bergsig-De Reit Residents' Trust was created and a permission to occupy (PTO) for a tourist lodge was obtained from central government by the community trust. Wilderness Safaris in turn obtained a lease from the community trust and in 1996 Damaraland Camp was developed, as a joint venture with the community trust (Salole 2003). This relationship continued once the communities, with IRDNC's further assistance, attained conservancy status in 1998. Other provisions of the joint ecotourism venture between Wilderness Safaris and Torra Conservancy included 100% financing and risk by Wilderness Safaris for the first 10 years, with provision for an increasing equity position by the conservancy in extended periods of agreement, with the end objective of 100% ownership by the conservancy. Reportedly, the significant capital re-investments required to maintain an exclusive and remote operation like the Damaraland Camp have obviated against the conservancy's ability to increase its equity position and move closer to attaining outright ownership (Wilderness Safaris 2005; Van Smeerdiik 2006).

Beyond direct employment and cash benefits, other benefits have originated from tourism revenues. These have included fencing to protect livestock and crops from wildlife predation and foraging. Secure community water boreholes, supplies of diesel fuel for community water pumps, secure access to grazing areas and water for livestock have all been funded by conservancy revenues. Other community benefits include the ability to live and work in one's home area and keep families together, the ability to

continue to raise livestock for livelihood security and cultural purposes, as well as receiving highly valued wild meat from community hunts (Long 2002).

My personal site visits, field observations and key informant interviews suggest that while the ecotourism joint venture has produced the significant training, employment and conservancy revenues described, most conservancy households remain impoverished. I heard complaints about the lack of transparency in conservancy decision-making regarding community investment priorities for tourism-based revenues. Other allegations were that 'local elites' have been created who have appropriated vehicles and other conservancy benefits for their own use. The slow pace of growth in the conservancy's equity position in the tourism enterprise, few senior management training opportunities, low salaries and limited employee benefits were also reported as issues. One informant remarked that many community meetings and household visits were conducted to consult with villagers during the start-up period of the conservancy, but many fewer opportunities were now available to learn about how much revenue had accumulated in the conservancy account and how these funds were to be allocated by the management committee for community benefits. These types of allegations suggest that revenue benefits from ecotourism need to be accompanied by a commensurate development of financial management capacities, accountability, and governance arrangements to deal with a new found cash economy that did not exist prior to conservancy formation and joint venture ecotourism. Regardless, the Damaraland Camp joint enterprise between Torra Conservancy and Wilderness Safaris has served as an ecotourism model that other conservancies have aspired to emulate (Nott & Jacobsohn 2004).

Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy and Community-Based Conservation

Ehi-rovipuka was officially registered as a conservancy in January 2001. Ehi-rovipuka means 'the place of wildlife' in Otjiherero. The overall area of the conservancy is 1,975 km² (NACSO 2006). Herero people make up the conservancy population of approximately 2,500 with densities ranging from less than 1 person/km² to about 10 persons/km² in the larger village areas. There are approximately 30 different villages. Most villages are very small, with between 50 to 100 persons, comprising only a few extended family groups. The Herero are traditional pastoralists who have been semi-nomadic in the region for several centuries. They are now more sedentary but cattle remain central to their culture and livelihoods.

Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy has about 700 registered members currently (Ujaha 2007 interview). Membership, similar to other conservancies, is open voluntarily to all adults 18 years old or older who have lived in the conservancy for at least 3 years (Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy 2000). Members must also hold Namibian citizenship, be permanent residents of the conservancy area, and cannot be members of another conservancy. Membership is gained by signing a registration form that signifies that the member accepts the conservancy constitution, land use and wildlife management plans and is willing to uphold them. The conservancy management committee is the main governance body and it sets policies for conservancy operations and programs such wildlife monitoring, trophy hunting and ecotourism joint ventures (Figure 3). The management committee is elected by the conservancy membership for a 3 year term,

with the exception of two appointed traditional authority representatives . A conservancy chairman is appointed from among the elected management committee membership. Villages are organized in blocks that each elect two management committee representatives and also select representatives to attend the annual general meeting of the conservancy.

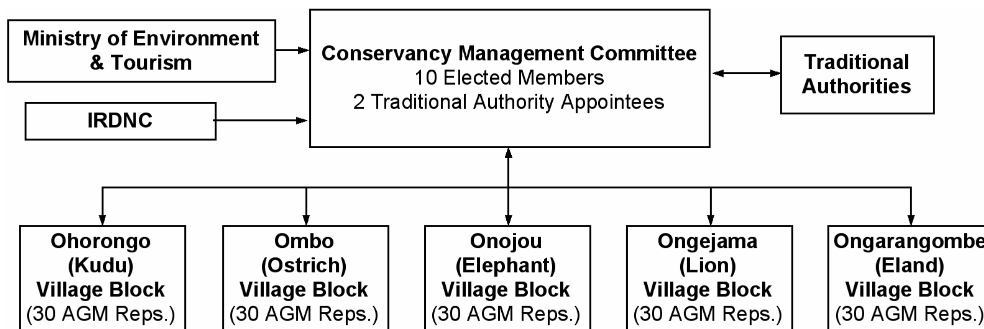


Figure 3. Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy Governance Structure (Ujaha 2007 interview)

The administration organization of the conservancy supporting the conservancy management committee is comprised of a small staff that includes a Field Officer, five community game guards reporting to the Field Officer and a Community Activator, a village woman recently appointed to facilitate women's projects and participation in conservancy programs (Figure 4).

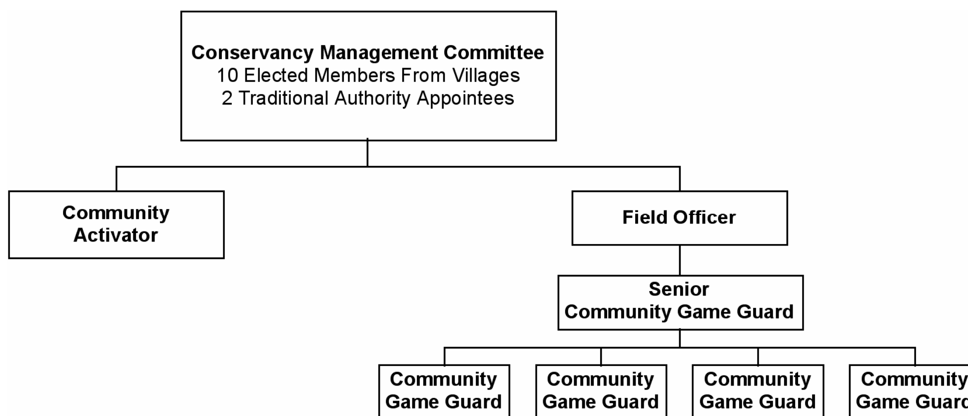


Figure 4. Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy Organizational Structure (Ujaha 2007 interview)

The conservancy derives its Herero name from its variety and relative abundance of wildlife including but not limited to springbok, mountain zebra, ostrich, eland, kudu, giraffe, oryx, duiker, warthog, steenbok, elephant, lion, leopard, cheetah, and hyena. Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy shares its boundaries with Etosha National Park and several other conservancy and tourism concession areas. Boundaries were negotiated with

neighbouring communities, a process that took over 3 years to complete (Ujaha 2007 interview).

Recent research in the Kunene region has found that livelihoods are primarily based on stock keeping, gardening, and limited employment. These activities were found to be supplemented by use of natural resources for food, medicines and occasional sale. Goats are critical assets for both consumption and sales (Long 2004). For income earning households, the average annual household income was just over N $8,000 (about US $1,300) and individual income averaged N $4,500 (US $750). Sources of income included crop sales, live livestock and meat sales, tourism employment, natural resource products sales, cash payouts from the conservancy, in the case of Torra, and government pensions (Long 2004:70). My research did not acquire similar data, but I infer from participant observation and other data I did obtain that both Torra Conservancy and Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy households are highly impoverished. Hence, high hopes and aspirations for revenues and employment from wildlife-based tourism prevail.

The evolution of CBNRM in Namibia has been described from a commons perspective. A principal interest in my community-based field studies was the place of 'community' in community-based conservation. I sought to learn about how villagers view wildlife conservation and how they actually participate in and benefit from CBNRM and the conservancy. I wanted to probe villager understandings and perceptions about how the conservancy actually got started. In other words, what level of community self-organization and participation has there been? Figure 5 summarizes findings and illustrates the importance of external interventions early in conservancy formation. The collaboration of Garth Owen-Smith with the Herero headman Kephas Muzuma is especially noteworthy, reinforcing the importance of leadership and cross-cultural collaboration in initiating community-based conservation. In fact, Kephas Muzuma was one of the 4 headmen that Smith had worked with during the 1980s in the precursor community game guard program earlier described. The roles of government and NGOs, notably IRDNC, are also reinforced by the villager responses. There was a fairly high non-response to the question of conservancy start-up (15%) showing that a considerable proportion of respondents did not know this history.

I inquired about who from the community was involved in conservancy start-up (Figure 5). Most of the 40 villagers interviewed (85%) noted a that task force of villagers was created by the traditional authority headman and council and received training from IRDNC. This task force included both men and women and they took the conservancy idea out among the villages, built understanding and support for the concept and helped negotiate the boundaries, a protracted process that lasted over 3 years. I asked an ancillary question about how the boundaries of the conservancy were established. Those that could reply (63%) recognized a process of negotiations with surrounding communities and traditional authorities by the community task force. A relatively large proportion (43%) did not know how the conservancy boundaries had been formed. Important points of understanding made by some villagers noted that boundaries defined rights of access to wildlife only and the conservancy included those communities who had agreed to share wildlife. Grazing, water rights and other resource access are not subject to the exclusionary role of the conservancy boundaries. The boundaries are well known at the community level; 80% of the villagers interviewed

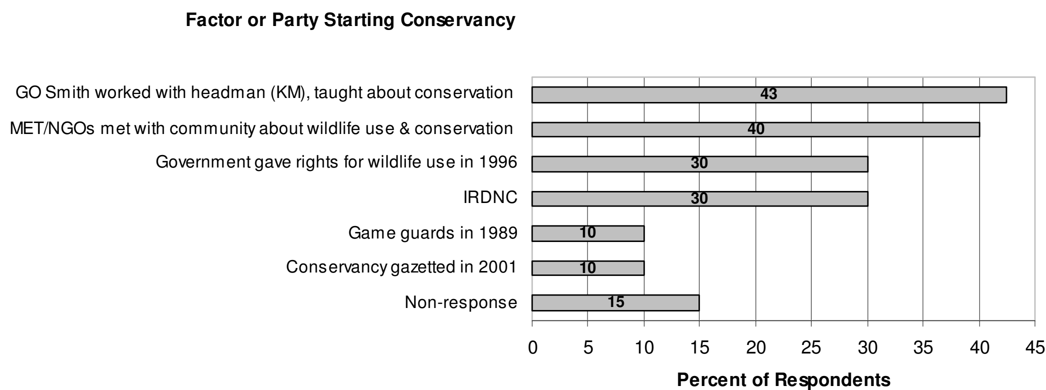
indicated they knew the boundaries, or at least, the different villages that made up the conservancy.

Therefore, conservancy start-up has featured both top-down and bottom-up dimensions. The idea originated and was enabled from outside and at higher levels of organization than the local community level. Yet, there was a high degree of self-organization at community level for the implementation of conservancy institutional arrangements, especially negotiating and finalizing the boundaries.

Formatted: Line spacing: single

I have earlier portrayed how dense social networks of NGOs evolved in Namibia to support CBNRM, conservancies and mediate international donor support. I wanted to explore this more fully at community level, to learn how aware villagers are about partnerships (Berkes & Adhikari 2006) in community-based conservation. Most (85%) identified IRDNC as the main partner, followed by the Namibia Community-Based Tourism Organization (NACOBTA) mentioned by 43% of respondents, then the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the ministry's Integrated Community-Based Ecosystem Management Project (ICEMA) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF Life), at 33% each. Several other partners or cooperating groups were mentioned once or twice.

Formatted: Footer, Line spacing: single



Formatted: Figure 1, Line spacing: single

Figure 5. Start-Up of Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy (N=40)

IRDNC has been a supporting and ongoing partner from the beginning. NACOBTA has recently played a prominent role, trying to assist the conservancy to find an investor for a joint venture tourist lodge (Katjiuongua 2007 interview) that has not happened to date. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) has played a central role in the registration and gazetting of the conservancy, collaboration in assigning wildlife quotas, and ongoing monitoring of conservancy governance. ICEMA has recently funded the start-up of a hunt camp with a trophy hunter in the conservancy and the WWF (Life) program has provided ongoing technical support for wildlife monitoring. The Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) and the Rössing Foundation provided early technical assistance to draw up the conservancy constitution. The Namibian Nature Foundation (NNF) has collaborated in institutional support for wildlife monitoring and related date base development and management. Several other NGOs, conservancies and ministries were mentioned once or twice by villagers. Overall, there was a high

Formatted: Line spacing: single

community awareness about the involvement of partners and cooperating groups, although the roles of these various parties were less known by villagers.

A community perspective of vertical and horizontal linkages for community-based conservation is derived from the structured villager interview responses and conversations with community key informants (Figure 6). It differs somewhat from the overall picture portrayed earlier in Figure 2. A regional level of linkages emerges more clearly, with IRDNC serving as the lead supporting regional NGO, coordinating support to Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy from other NGOs. Once IRDNC brokered initial relationships for the conservancy with other NGOS, those NGOs then set up direct bilateral relationships with the conservancy to provide technical support. Relationships to government are mainly with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. But, matters such as land leases for potential joint ventures with tourism enterprises now necessitate relationships with regional land boards and councils. Relationships with the villages, a trophy hunting enterprise and traditional authorities are also shown, illustrating the greater importance attached to organizational linkages at and across the local level.

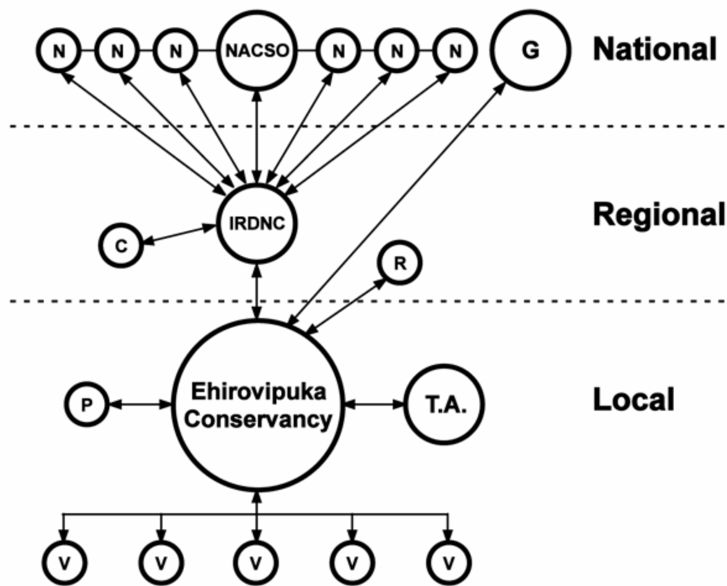


Figure 6. Vertical and Horizontal Linkages for Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy

Significant community revenues, jobs, wildlife meat and other benefits are attributed to CBNRM and the conservancy movement in Namibia (NACSO 2004; NACSO 2006). I wanted to learn if villagers were receiving benefits similar to those reported nationally and to those earlier described for the Torra Conservancy. Results obtained from the interview of the 40 villagers show much more modest benefits than those enjoyed by the Torra Conservancy. The main household benefit mentioned by respondents was wild meat (80%) followed by revenue to the conservancy from trophy hunting (23%). Other, more incidental responses noted a few full time jobs with the conservancy, some support for the local school, and a women's workshop for craft making and sales.

These results were complemented by discussions with community informants and my own field observations. Some revenue benefits have been realized to date from wildlife-based tourism and have come mainly from trophy hunting. At a conservancy AGM held in May 2007, it was reported that accumulated revenue in the conservancy bank account since 2001 amounted to nearly N $700,000, mainly attributable to revenue-sharing with the trophy hunting concession. Such funds have allowed the conservancy to contribute to its own operating costs, but it still receives about 50% of its operating budget from IRDNC. The wild meat benefits are highly valued, but are relatively modest. Some villagers reported that they received no more than 5 kg of meat each year for their extended family households, with some households having receiving none. The meat comes from the trophy hunter and the community has foregone community hunts in order to boost the success of the trophy hunting enterprise.

I asked villagers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy. The strengths they identified were mainly associated with community projects that produced revenue and capital improvements or purchases. These include the trophy hunting enterprise and hunt camp jobs, a 4x4 vehicle provided to the conservancy by IRDNC, a conservancy office building and borehole development. Other strengths noted include the fostering of a conservation attitude towards wildlife and increasing numbers of wildlife. Wildlife monitoring and the community game guards, wild meat, education and training, translocation of wildlife into the conservancy, and positive relations with government and NGOs were other strengths noted incidentally.

Prevailing weaknesses identified by villagers for the conservancy were poor management and priority setting. This shortcoming was largely attributed to a lack of trained and educated people on the conservancy management committee. The struggles of the conservancy to attract an ecotourism investment partner was mentioned frequently and the absence of transparency in financial management was viewed as a big problem. As well, the lack of support from the conservancy to improve school facilities and protection of pupils from wild animals, lack of success in negotiating access into the neighbouring Etosha National Park, the absence of problem animal control and unfair distribution of meat were noted. Other weaknesses or shortcomings mentioned more incidentally were failure to hold a conservancy annual general meeting (AGM) the previous year, no conservancy support for a proposed women's craft enterprise project and a need for more boreholes.

Villagers were asked if they thought the conservancy would be working well 10 years from now. Most (48%) indicated that this depended on whether or not there was proper management, capacity and transparency. A further 33% thought the

conservancy would be working well and would increase wildlife numbers and revenues to the conservancy from more tourism enterprise projects.

My surmise from these responses is that villagers have seen some benefits from the conservancy, including increased wildlife numbers, positive attitudes towards wildlife and a few revenue producing projects. However, as the conservancy revenues and infrastructure have started to build up there is a real frustration among villagers about poor financial management, accountability and the transparency of management committee decision-making. Villagers remain hopeful about prospects for community development and livelihoods based on wildlife conservation and wildlife-based tourism enterprises.

An Ecotourism Enterprise Vision for Ehi-rovipuka

Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy shares its eastern boundary with Etosha National Park (Figure 1). The park is 22,270 km² in area and is the major tourist destination area in Namibia, attracting at least 156,000 visitors a year (Turpie et al. 2004). The centenary of the park was celebrated in 2007 and it is widely considered one of the great national parks of Southern Africa. Yet, neighbouring communal areas receive few benefits from tourism and park programs.

The Herero of Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy were forcibly relocated from the western part of Etosha in the 1920's by the South African administration. They had traditional areas of resource use and occupancy in the park, including grazing stations, hunting areas and ancestral grave sites. When they tried to return to the park area in the 1970's this effort was spurned by a park conservation agenda and the building of the park fence (Hoole 2008).

My structured interviews with 40 villagers revealed that most (88%) believe they receive no benefits from the park today. Several villager commentaries are illustrative: "we cannot even bury our dead there any more" and; "the colonial system gave a lot of pain. We had hoped at independence that we might get some rights but nothing has come. We are crying from the past until now." And, "there you come to the wound. People get much pain when they hear of the park." I have characterized the dislocation of a community such as the Herero from traditional lands in a national park as a de-coupling of indigenous people from their local ecosystems (Hoole 2008).

I inquired further about the benefits villagers would like to receive from Etosha National Park. A joint venture tourism enterprise is highly sought after by the community within their traditional area in the park. The conservancy has made repeated requests to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for an entry gate and the rights to develop an enterprise based upon wildlife viewing in Etosha (Ujaha 2007 interview, Uaroua 2007 interview). This vision arises out of the model provided by Torra Conservancy and Damaraland Camp, but has gone unrealized. The conservancy then sought to attract a private partner for an ecotourism venture on its own conservancy lands, but without any success. It is likely that potential investors have not shown an interest because the best sites for such an enterprise in this vicinity, akin to the Damaraland Camp's exclusive location within the Torra Conservancy, lie inside the national park. Regional competition and the need for site exclusivity seem likely reasons for the lack of success in attracting an investor. An opportunity for the conservancy to develop a joint venture ecotourism

enterprise inside the park could serve as a re-coupling mechanism for social-ecological linkages that were previously decoupled by park administration and management policies. Recent research of Equator Initiative cases has shown that indigenous groups sought control over traditional lands as an essential element in restoring their societies and indigenous entrepreneurship was often used as a tool towards self-governance (Berkes & Adhikari 2006).

Discussion

My findings demonstrate that Namibia's CBNRM program and conservancies have evolved as a dense network of institutional arrangements of national NGOs supporting community-based wildlife conservation. National NGOs serve importantly as boundary organizations (Cash and Moser 2000) mediating international donor contributions that have provided the base funding since the early 1990's for the institutional development of CBNRM. Multiple linkages and networks, both horizontal and vertical, engaging local, regional, national and international levels of organization are evident. Partnerships have supported enterprise development in the tourism sector and partnerships have also been featured in capacity-building and institutional strengthening of conservancies as community-based conservation institutions. As revenues have grown for 'Fast Track' conservancies like Torra, so has the need for strengthened financial management capacities and greater transparency in governance.

Ecotourism enterprises premised on a stunning wildlife spectacle and wilderness settings have proven valuable for community-based conservation in Namibia. The replication of the Damaraland Camp – Torra Conservancy joint venture model is much sought after by other conservancies such as Ehi-rovipuka. Yet, challenges remain, both within these partnerships and also for creating new partnerships for communal conservancies. I suggest that inequitable power sharing lies at the root of challenges facing these partnerships.

I make reference to the tourism functional system (Gunn 1979) to illustrate the power sharing in the types of enterprise partnership described for the Torra Conservancy and Damaraland Camp. Table 1 summarizes the different roles and sources of power among private enterprise, the state and the communal conservancy.

Table 1: The Tourism Functional System and Power Relationships in Ecotourism Joint Ventures with Conservancies

TOURISM FUNCTIONAL SYSTEM COMPONENTS (GUNN 1979)	PRIVATE ENTERPRISE	THE STATE	COMMUNAL CONSERVANCY
TOURISTS: Characteristics, origins, activity interests, seasonality	Controls the entire process to source and attract up-market tourists within its global marketing infrastructure	Provides the policy support for promoting the national tourism sector	No direct role in sourcing tourists

TRANSPORTATION: Linking tourists to attractions	Controls relationships with airlines & surface transport providers to bring tourists to remote rural sites in Northern Namibia	Overall regulatory context for tourist entries and travel	No direct role in bringing international tourists to the conservancy area
ATTRACTIONS: The things to see and do; the lures to travel; things to satisfy	Controls off-site access to and packaging of attractions	Land policies devolving assignment of tenure rights to communal land conservancies; current legislation & policies prohibit conservancy ecotourism investments inside national parks	Controls the land tenure for the private investment partner's lodge facilities and area of operation on communal lands
SERVICES & FACILITIES: Lodging, food & beverage, retail	Makes the predominant capital investments in facilities & services	Regulatory context for standards	Provides local employees from member villages to manage and deliver ecotourism services on-site
INFORMATION-DIRECTION: Promotion, directions, marketing	Controls target marketing & direction for international, up-scale tourists and related pricing	National tourist lure & promotional Materials	No role until tourists are on site; then local guiding & interpretive programs

The private enterprise partner takes the lead role and effectively controls most components of the tourism functional system. The communal conservancy, with its devolved rights from the state to assign the land tenure to its private sector partner, has all important leverage in providing the exclusive development site for the enterprise in the first instance. In recognition, the conservancy receives annual land rent and a share for revenues. However, there is limited to no engagement of the conservancy in the other parts of the tourism functional system. This inherent power imbalance may pose issues for long-term sustainability of this partnership model that has driven much of the early success in Namibia's community-based conservation. Indeed, one key informant noted to me that certain private tourism partners of conservancies in the Caprivi region of Namibia seem to have now forgotten their obligations to increase the share of management and investment equity with conservancies, once they secured the land tenure for their operations (Owen-Smith 2007 interview). Another power imbalance is between the state and communal conservancies, in terms of access to and a share of the potential benefits from ecotourism development in the national parks. The case of Etosha National Park and Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy has been described. The state, through its Ministry of Environment and Tourism, denies the Herero of Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy rights of access to their traditional territory inside Etosha National Park. It is an irony that this same ministry actively promotes CBNRM and the conservancies,

but continues to deny the opportunity for Ehi-rovipuka to develop a joint venture ecotourism enterprise, in partnership with the park and a private investment partner.

Future disputes are predictable as conservancies seek to develop more wildlife-based tourism enterprises that will compete more intensively with one another. This will likely necessitate new institutional arrangements in resource sharing among neighbouring conservancies and their member communities

Conclusions

Results show that the prevailing characteristic of Namibia's CBNRM program is the facilitation and support of CBNRM by the national NGO community. Critical convergences of persons and events have been featured in the evolution of CBNRM and the rapid scaling up of conservancies from an initial 4 in 1998 to 50 in 2007. Namibian NGOs have evolved as boundary organizations at national and regional levels mediating the contributions of international donors and the legal requirements of central government with local conservancies, and facilitating capacity-building at communal conservancy level to meet registration requirements, management of donor funds and revenues from wildlife conservation and facilitating of tourism enterprises.

Benefits from wildlife-based tourism have promoted conservation, but challenges remain in benefits distribution and governance. Managing power relations and creating capacities to retain the place and voice of 'community' remain big challenges (Lachapelle et al. 2004). Ecotourism partnerships have a prominent place in community-based conservation and offer further prospects for community development, especially through new institutional relationships with national parks. But, the partnerships between communal conservancies, private enterprise and the state pose issues in power relations.

Power relationships necessitate vigilance by all partners to ensure the sustainable and substantive place of 'community' in community-based conservation. Competition among conservancies for tourism investments and attendant community benefits will necessitate new common property resource sharing arrangements to address the scale and distribution of ecotourism enterprise investments in relation to the fugitive nature of the wildlife resources and the availability of scenic and exclusive ecotourism development sites for the much sought after up-scale international tourist markets.

References

Adams, W. & D. Hulme, 2001. Changing narratives, policies and practices in African conservation. In: D. Hulme & M. Murphree (Eds.). *African Wildlife and Livelihoods: The Promise and Performance of Community Conservation*. Pp.9-23. James Currey Ltd. Oxford.

Agrawal, A., 2002. Common resources and institutional sustainability. In: E. Ostrom, T. Dietz, N. Dolšak, P.C. Stern, S. Stonich & E.U. Weber (Eds.). *The Drama of The Commons*. Pp.41-85. Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change. National Research Council. National Academy Press. Washington.

Berg, B.L., 2004. *Qualitative Research Methods*. Pearson Education Inc. Boston.

Berkes, F., 2002. Cross-scale institutional linkages: perspectives from the bottom up. In: Ostrom, E., T. Dietz, N. Dolšak, P.C. Stern, S. Stonich & E.U. Weber (Eds.). *The Drama of The Commons*. Pp.293-321. Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change. National Research Council. National Academy Press. Washington.

Berkes, F., 2004. Rethinking community-based conservation. *Conservation Biology*, 18(3):621-630.

Berkes, F. & T. Adhikari, 2006. Development and conservation: indigenous businesses and the UNDP Equator Initiative. *Int. J. Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 3(6):671-690

Cash, D. & S. Moser, 2000. Linking global and local scales: designing dynamic assessment and management processes. *Global Environmental Change*, 10:109-120.

Chambers, R., 1997. *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the first last*. Intermediate Technology Publications. London.

Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy, 2000. *Constitution of the Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy*. Otjokavare.

Feeny, D., F. Berkes, B.J. McCay & J.M. Acheson, 1990. The tragedy of the commons: twenty-two years later. *Human Ecology*, 18:1-19.

Gibson, D., 2001. *Wildlife Monitoring in North-Western Namibia*. Unpublished paper for World Wildlife Fund (U.S.). Windhoek.

Gunn, C.A., 1979. *Tourism Planning*. Crane Russak and Company Inc. New York.

Hoole, A., 2008. *Community-Based Conservation and Protected Areas in Namibia: Social-Ecological Linkages for Biodiversity*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manitoba. Winnipeg.

IUCN, UNEP, WWF, 1980. *World Conservation Strategy*. Gland.

IUCN, UNEP, WWF, 1991. *Caring for the Earth*. Gland.

Jones, B., 2001. The evolution of a community-based approach to wildlife management at Kunene, Namibia. In: Hulme, D. & M. Murphree (Eds.). *African Wildlife and Livelihoods: The Promise and Performance of Community Conservation*. Pp.160-176. James Currey Ltd. Oxford.

Lachapelle, P.R., P.D. Smith & S.F. McCool, 2004. Access to power or genuine empowerment? An analysis of three community forest groups in Nepal. *Human Ecology Review*, 11(1):1-12.

Long, S.A., (Ed.), 2004. *Livelihoods and CBNRM in Namibia: The Findings of the WILD Project. Final Technical Report of the Wildlife Integration for Livelihood Diversification Project (WILD)*. Directorates of Environmental Affairs and Parks and Wildlife Management, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Government of the Republic of Namibia. Windhoek.

Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 2006. *Strengthening the Protected Area Network (SPAN) Project*. Republic of Namibia, Global Environment Facility, United Nations Development Programme. Windhoek.

NACSO, 2004. *Namibia's Communal Conservancies: A Review of Progress and Challenges*. Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations. Windhoek.

NACSO, 2006. *Namibia's Communal Conservancies: A Review of Progress and Challenges in 2005*. NACSO. Windhoek.

Nott, C., A. Davis & B. Roman, 2004. The Torra Conservancy in Namibia. In: C. Fabricius, E. Koch, H. Magome & S. Turner (Eds.). *Rights, Resources and Rural Development: Community-based Natural Resource Management in Southern Africa*. Pp. 199-209. Earthscan Publications. London.

Nott, C. & M. Jacobsohn, 2004. Key issues in Namibia's communal conservancy movement. In: C. Fabricius, E. Koch, H. Magome & S. Turner (Eds.). *Rights, Resources and Rural Development: Community-based Natural Resource Management in Southern Africa*. Pp.194-199. Earthscan Publications. London.

Oakerson, R.J., 1992. Analyzing the commons: a framework. In: D.W. Bromley (Ed.). *Making the Commons Work: Theory, Practice and Policy*. Pp.41-59. ICS Press. San Francisco.

Ostrom, E., 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Salole, M., 2003. *Torra Conservancy and Tourism Development: Merging Two Disparate Worlds in Rural Namibia*. MSc. Thesis, University of Surrey. Surrey.

The Cardboard Box Travel Shop, 2008. [Online:www.namibian.org/travel/lodging/private/damaraland.htm. Accessed April 2008].

The Tourism Company, 2002. *Manitoba Adventure Travel and Ecotourism Sector Analysis*. Travel Manitoba. Winnipeg.

Turpie, J., G.M. Lange, R. Martin, R. Davies & J. Barnes, 2004. *Economic Value and Financing of Namibia's Protected Areas*. Anchor Environmental Consultants CC. Rhodes Gift, S.A.

UNDP, Equator Initiative, 2004. [Online: www.undp.org/equatorinitiative. Accessed June 2004].

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 1992. *Convention on Biodiversity*. Nairobi.

Western, D. & R.M. Wright, 1994. The background to community-based conservation. In: Western, D., R.M. Wright & S.C. Strum (Eds.). *Natural Connections: Perspectives in Community-Based Conservation*. Pp.1-12. Island Press. Washington.

Widerness Safaris, 2005. *Empowerment in the Tourism Sector Through Partnership, Torra Conservancy and Wilderness Safaris Namibia; Damaraland Camp Case Study.* Unpublished. Windhoek.

World Resources Institute, UNDP, UNEP & World Bank, 2005. *World Resources 2005: The Wealth of the Poor-Managing Ecosystems to Fight Poverty*. World Resources Institute. Washington.

Young, O., 2002. Institutional interplay: the environmental consequences of cross-scale interactions. In: E. Ostrom, T. Dietz, N. Dolšak, P.C. Stern, S. Stonich & E.U. Weber (Eds.). *The Drama of the Commons*. Pp.263-291. Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change. National Research Council. National Academy Press. Washington.

Key Informants

Ms. Pascolena Florry, Manager, Damaraland Camp, Torra Conservancy, July 2006

Dr. Margaret Jacobsohn, Founding Director, Integrated Rural Development and Nature conservation (IRDNC), Wereldsend, July 2006

Mr. Brian Jones, Environment and development Consultant, Windhoek, July 2006

Ms. Olga Katjiuongua, Tourism Joint Venture Administration, Namibia Community Based Tourism Association (NACOBTA), Windhoek, June 2007

Ms. Maxi Pia Louis, Coordinator NACSO Secretariat, Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations, Windhoek, July 2006

Ms. Karen Nott, Coordinator, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), Windhoek, August 2006

Mr. Willem Odendaal, Legal Researcher, Legal Assistance Centre, Windhoek, July 2006

Mr. Dave Van Smeerdiik, Manager, Wilderness Safaris, Windhoek, July 2006

Mr. Garth Owen Smith, Founding Director, IRDNC, Wereldsend, July 2006

Mr. Garth Owen Smith, Founding Director, IRDNC, Damaraland Camp, May 2007

Mr. Gerson Uaroua, Community Game Guard and Former Chairman, Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy, Otjokavare, May 2007

Mr. Asser K. Ujaha, IRDNC Field Officer for Ehi-rovipuka Conservancy, Otjokavare, May 2007

Mr. Chris Weaver, Chief of Party, WWF(US), Windhoek, June 2007