

Lessons from the Field



**Community-Based Natural Resource Management
(CBNRM)**

IRDNC'S EXPERIENCE IN NAMIBIA

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Lessons from the Field

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Message from the Honourable Minister of Environment and Tourism of Namibia: Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah

During the past year Namibia celebrated twenty years of independence and we looked back with great pride at our progress. We took stock of our achievements with the shift into a new development phase under the National Development Plan III, examined ten years of progress against our shared Millennium Development Goals and considered the way ahead with just twenty years to reach Namibia's Vision 2030.



I note with great interest that Namibia's pioneering NGO in the national Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), has also undertaken an important review of its progress. From its early beginnings as a small project in the remote north west of Namibia, IRDNC has grown to support CBNRM in the Kunene and Caprivi regions working with 26 registered and 30 emerging conservancies and a Residents Association, to gain and exercise their rights to manage, use and benefit from their wildlife and related tourism opportunities. It has also begun groundbreaking work with conservancies to realise the potential of their high value plant species and to spearhead initiatives to improve rangeland management with conservancies.

The national CBNRM programme and the work of IRDNC marks a similar timeline to independent Namibia running from the early 1990s up to today where it is an important role player alongside the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, our NGO partners that form the Namibia Association of CBNRM Support Organisations and the members of the private sector.

During this time, IRDNC and the CBNRM programme has gone through a number of phases in its work and development. Across the last twenty plus years the organisation has supported rural Namibians in their quest to stop poaching and recover impressive populations of wildlife. IRDNC worked with the newly independent government to



understand the needs and desires of local people that were translated into the ministry's flagship legislation that allows for the formation of Communal Area Conservancies.

This opportunity has been seized by over 60 conservancies in Namibia and IRDNC's major focus over the last 15 years has been to support the legal registration of 26 conservancies. During this time conservancies have made remarkable progress not only in the revival of wildlife in the communal areas, but in creating and harnessing tourism opportunities that have allowed conservancies to move towards sustainability and share benefits with their members. Making all of this sustainable is where the organisation and the Namibian CBNRM programme currently finds itself.

So in this critical phase, IRDNC has taken the time to review its work and to try to understand just what has led to the successes experienced by conservancies, IRDNC and the CBNRM programme over the last twenty years. This learning has been captured for us in this unique document. This book conveys a rich array of knowledge and understanding that has come directly out of IRDNC's work in the field, alongside conservancies and their partners. Like the best lessons in life, these have been gained through experience in the field, both negative and positive.

I would urge that we take this opportunity to use learning that is shared in this rich and thorough document. We often do not use lessons learnt because they are poorly formulated or inadequately shared. This book, in line with our responsibility, provides us with an important opportunity. It contains lessons that are based on the CBNRM programme's real activities and collective experience, lessons that are clearly captured, meaningful and relevant to Namibia, and possibly to our neighbours and community development and conservation programme across the world. Let us strive to build on this shared knowledge, to strengthen our partnerships and better manage the challenges and opportunities that we will continue to face in the National CBNRM programme.

Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah

Honourable Minister of Environment and Tourism of Namibia

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This book is a collective effort. Senior IRDNC staff attended a workshop at which key lessons were identified and lead writers for each chapter identified. Drafts were discussed and reviewed by staff in the field. To ensure rigor and enhance objectivity a number of our CBNRM partners reviewed chapters which then went to an external editor. A task force comprising Dr Margaret Jacobsohn, Anna Davis, Karen Nott and Karine Nuulimba coordinated the volume.

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CONTENTS



Chapter 1: A SMALL AFRICAN SUCCESS STORY 12

Overview of the book	14
Our history	15
National achievements	16
Contribution to national income	16
Nobel Prize winners	17
Beyond natural resources	18
Making it happen	18

Chapter 2: ON UNCHARTED GROUND 20

The situation before CBNRM	22
The start of CBNRM	24

LESSONS:

1) Develop a real relationship with your target community, not just one related to your sphere of interest.....	25
2) Aim to stop poaching, not merely to catch poachers.	26
3) Ownership must be invested in local users; partnerships are between equals.....	28
4) Benefits are essential, but sufficient time and resources must be invested to facilitate community-based ventures: best practice is best developed through implementation	31
5) Donors don't know best.....	33

Human – wildlife conflict cannot be stopped, any more than traffic accidents can be, but management and mitigation can reduce impacts.	34
---	----

Chapter 3: PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE. 36

LESSONS:

- 1) The development of policy for social and economic change needs broad-based local consultation and negotiation. 40
- 2) Build a robust, common understanding of legislation and policy among stakeholders and clarify implementation roles. . . . 40
- 3) Foster confidence and build key skills. 41
- 4) Remain flexible, and look for creative or alternative ways of working.. 43
- 5) Facilitate relevant forums for learning, monitoring, exchange and accountability. 45
- 6) Recognise that as different partners have important roles at different times, appropriate linkages should be maintained. 47
- 7) CBNRM practitioners need high levels of self awareness and should regularly evaluate their roles and capacity. 48
- 8) Withdrawal of support should be slow and strategic. 49

Chapter 4: TRANSFORMING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN COMMUNAL AREAS . 52

LESSONS:

- 1) Be prepared to offer long-term and strategic support to community-based enterprises. 56
- 2) The role of a facilitator as honest broker is essential, but requires self-reflection, consistency and a proactive approach. . . 57
- 3) Multi-level interventions are essential, including local negotiations between partners, regional tourism planning and programmatic engagement in national policy formulation. 58
- 4) The value of financial returns, as one of the drivers of CBNRM, should not overshadow the importance of localised collective responsibility and governance 60

CASE STUDIES:

1. The challenges of equitable sharing of benefits from community based businesses 62
2. Negotiating a joint venture lodge 65
3. Namibia's first conservancy campsite concession in a national park . 69
4. Sustainable craft enterprises and lessons learnt 73



Chapter 5: DIVERSITY AND GROWTH. 78

LESSONS:

- 1) Use special strategies to ensure that women, as major users and managers of the resources, are decision makers. 81
- 2) Embedding the enterprise within conservancies (or other representative social structures) ensures sustainable management of the resource and equitable benefit sharing; it also reduces dependency on the external facilitator of the enterprise. . . . 82
- 3) Triple bottom line: Don't neglect the social component of the enterprise. 84
- 4) Make time to identify and engage with all stakeholders. 85

CASE STUDY: Omumbiri perfume resin harvesting. 86

Chapter 6: COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACHES FOR MANAGING BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM PRODUCTIVITY 90

LESSONS:

- 1) Conservancy structures serve as an excellent entry point to establish community-based projects simultaneously in many communities . . . 95
- 2) Sustainability of community-based projects is dependent on achieving tangible livelihood benefits for individual community members. 95
- 3) Embed knowledge and skills locally within conservancies. 95
- 4) Don't put all your eggs in one basket 96
- 5) Collaborative management is the most effective strategy to maximize natural resource management benefits with the least effort and resources. 96

Chapter 7: ON A TIGHTROPE: SYNERGY OR CONFLICT? 98

LESSONS:

- 1) Negotiate and maintain a common vision with new partners early in the relationship. 103
- 2) To avoid conflict, be proactive in facilitating the involvement of stakeholders, existing and new, in a project area. 105
- 3) Be aware of and use the different strengths of partners. 105
- 4) Conflicts are inevitable in CBNRM because the stakes could hardly be higher – ownership over and benefits from valuable natural resources..... 106
- 5) In community conflicts, the NGO's role is to retain the moral high ground. 107
- 6) Doing CBNRM in a war zone requires that you change your methods, not your objectives. 109
- 7) See donors as equal partners. 110

Chapter 8: RUNNING AN AFRICAN NGO..... 112

LESSONS:

- 1) Three- to five-year funding cycles may be convenient for the donor, but work that requires people to change attitudes and behaviour needs more time. 115
- 2) Practice what you preach. 115
- 3) Maintain goals while remaining flexible, thereby giving the organisation the space to make and take opportunities. 116
- 4) Effective teams need diversity; different skills and a variety of outlooks and cultural values bring strength and creativity to an organisation. 118
- 5) Be open to changing the NGO's focus and role as needs change; take enough time each year to reflect on how and why activities are being undertaken. 120
- 6) Ideas are just five percent; the remainder is in the actual implementation..... 122
- 7) As your energy goes where your attention is, focus on the solution, not the problem 122

ACRONYMS: 124



*From little date seeds, great things are born.
- Namibian proverb*

CHAPTER

A SMALL AFRICAN SUCCESS STORY

**Why the world needs
community-based approaches
to managing resources and
services**



Overview of the book
Our history
National achievements
Contribution to national income
Nobel Prize winners
Beyond natural resources
Making it happen

OVERVIEW

This collection of enduring insights and lessons learnt during three decades of working with rural communities presents an African field perspective on how conservation, rural development and the growth of a strong civil society can be successfully integrated. It has been compiled by field workers of Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), a Namibian non-governmental organisation (NGO) and trust and all lessons are based on first-hand, practical experience.

Lessons cover work done both before and since legislation in support of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) was passed in Namibia. The book should therefore be useful to those working in countries without an enabling legal structure or within a different legal context.

IRDNC, one of Namibia's oldest NGOs, pioneered CBNRM in Namibia in the 1980s, with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) family as its partner since 1990. Although this book is about what we have learnt, teamwork and partnerships underlies all achievements. Our partners include the Namibian Government, the 15 NGO and other members of the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO), Namibian and western Zambian communities, the University of Namibia, the Polytechnic of Namibia, donors and private sector.



Overview of the book

IRDNC's origins lie in the arid north-west of Namibia, where it evolved out of a pioneering partnership between a small group of conservationists and community leaders in the early 1980s. Their aim was to find joint solutions to the massive decline in wildlife, including black rhino and desert-adapted elephant, due to illegal commercial and subsistence hunting, exacerbated by one of the worst droughts in decades.

Chapter 2 outlines how community-based solutions turned the situation round within two years and also covers subsequent natural resource management (NRM) lessons in a developing African country.

Chapter 3 looks at the process of putting new policy into practice, and what we learnt from helping young community-based organisations (CBOs) to grow.

Chapter 4 focuses on learning from efforts aimed at transforming the tourism industry in communal areas.

Chapter 5 highlights the lessons derived from diversifying beyond wildlife and tourism into high-value indigenous plant enterprises, with women as the main users and managers of the resources. A case study reveals the "triple bottom line approach" (people - social; planet - ecological; and profit - economic) used in one successful business.

Chapter 6 covers lessons learnt from implementing community-based approaches to managing biodiversity and ecosystem productivity, both up-scaling to larger landscape work and downscaling to smaller units within a conservancy. A case study on implementing a community-based fire management project illustrates our lessons.

Chapter 7 deals with NGO learning from forging partnerships and managing conflicts at a range of different levels.

Chapter 8 looks at running an African NGO, with multiple donors and many target communities, and what we have learnt during different phases of IRDNC's evolution.



Our history

When Namibia gained Independence in 1990, IRDNC was a team of just six people based at a remote field station called Wêreldsend, on the edge of the Namib Desert in the north-west of the country. With donor funding, the NGO supported 25 community game guards (CGGs) appointed by the traditional authorities (TAs) in Kunene Region and ran a small environmental awareness project for local high school pupils. Its other project, initiated in 1987, pioneered the distribution of a small bed-night levy from safaris led by project staff in the area of Puros. The levy was paid to local people in recognition that they were custodians of the wildlife on which the eco-tourism activities were based, thus linking benefits to conservation of the resource.

Thanks to community support, poaching had been brought under control, and game numbers were building up. Resources and funding were limited, but the NGO was ready to take on an expanding role and to make inputs into changing national policy.

With the long liberation war over, a newly independent, democratic Namibia was filled with optimism for the future. The time was ripe to translate a CBNRM vision and its early achievements into a programme that was relevant to a newly emerging democracy. This moment in history presented an opportunity for significant change, not just to right the ills of the past, but also to establish ground-breaking new conservation legislation that sought to meet the aspirations of local people. This would be done through the legally constituted local structures of conservancies and later, community forests, which restored local ownership of resources such as wildlife, trees and high-value plants.

This period saw the expansion, at the invitation of traditional leaders, of IRDNC's Kunene Region project into Caprivi Region. So began CBNRM in the north-east of Namibia – a hostile and divided region characterised by considerable distrust between local people and government



conservation authorities. Like the Kunene project, the Caprivi project started out slimly resourced with a small team of part-time CGGs and a project manager.

Since then, the NGO has grown and re-invented itself a number of times. Today it employs 77 people and works with 56 registered and emerging Namibian conservancies, and provides technical input as part of a consortium working with more than 20 village representative structures in western Zambia. Its work includes facilitating community-based approaches to rangeland restoration in six of Namibia's regions, helping communities to use fire as a management tool, and the sustainable harvesting and international marketing of high-value products from indigenous plants.

Since its earliest days, IRDNC's purpose has been to link conservation to the social and economic development of the people who live with wildlife and other valuable natural resources. Its goal is both sustainable development and sustainable conservation, done in an African way. As the programme developed, capacity building and improved local community mobilisation revealed that the growth of a strong civil society was closely associated with CBNRM; IRDNC's work therefore stands on three legs:

- improving Natural Resource Management at local and larger landscape levels;

- diversifying and strengthening local economies; and
- enhancing local democracy.

IRDNC's activities now form part of a broader CBNRM movement in Namibia which embraces wildlife management and a variety of tourism products in conservancies, community forests, community water management, community fisheries and a range of community-based agricultural projects.

Implemented through conservancies and community forests, Namibian CBNRM is based on well established economic and management principles:

- devolution of rights and responsibilities to the lowest appropriate level;
- proprietorship and tenure over the resources in self-defined geographic areas; and
- creation of appropriate incentives through empowerment, economic opportunities and the reinforcement of cultural and heritage values.



National achievements

Twelve years after its humble beginnings in the north-west, CBNRM was legally entrenched by the new Namibian Government through the passing of policy and legislation in 1995 and 1996. This opened the door for residents of communal areas or state land – which collectively comprise 41% of the country – to gain consumptive and non-consumptive rights over wildlife (and later over forests) in return for responsible management of these resources. The legal vehicles to acquire these rights, communal conservancies, are member-defined, multiple-use areas which the residents themselves zone for different land uses, including farming, mixed farming and wildlife, tourism, core wildlife etc.

In 1998 the first four communal conservancies were gazetted; by 2011 the number of conservancies across the country had risen to 64, with more than 20 emerging. There is also one residents' trust, the equivalent of a conservancy, inside a national park. Registered conservancies now cover about 135 000 square kilometers, which is over 16% of the country. It is expected that the number of conservancies on communal lands will peak at around 80. Thirteen community forests are registered, with another 40 emerging. About 240 000 people – a fifth of all rural Namibians – already live within a communal conservancy.

Communal conservancies have thus greatly added to Namibia's network of areas under sustainable NRM, creating linkages between national parks, which themselves account for 16.5% of Namibia, and facilitating national and trans-frontier wildlife corridors.

Contribution to national income

From 1990 to 2009, the cumulative CBNRM contribution to net national income (NNI) – defined as the value of goods and services that CBNRM activities make available to the nation each year – surpassed N\$1.18 billion. In 2009, CBNRM



directly and indirectly contributed more than N\$266 million to the country's economy. In the same year, direct CBNRM benefits to rural people – those who live with wildlife – amounted to more than N\$42 million (*Communal conservancies: A review of progress and challenges in 2009; 2008; published in 2010 and 2009 by NACSO*).

Thriving wildlife populations in the north-west – and steady recoveries in the other regions where CBNRM is being applied – attest to the national programme's conservation achievements. Over the same period, Namibia has also witnessed an unprecedented growth in rural democracy in some of its most remote corners, as local people have found their own ways of linking rural development to the wise use of natural resources. In no small measure, this too can be attributed to CBNRM.

Nobel Prize winners

Given its profound impacts on systems of land tenure and resource utilisation, it is inevitable that CBNRM has been the target of some academic criticism. However, it has received the international recognition it deserves, not just in conservation circles, but also in economic and

political arenas through the work of three recent Nobel Prize winners.

In 2004, Kenya's Wangari Maathai became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Her community-based work is rooted in local ownership and governance of forests and clearly demonstrated the link between the environment and the growth of democracy.

The work of two winners of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, Muhammad Yunus in 2006 and Elinor Ostrom in 2009, also supports the principles that underlie CBNRM. Yunus was recognised for his efforts to create bottom-up economic and social development through the Grameen banking system, a type of self-help organisation which worked well until big corporate banks became involved, and Ostrom for her ground-truthed analysis of self-organising collective governance of common property. Her work rejects state or private-sector ownership as the only viable solution to the "tragedy of the commons" and illustrates how both have frequently failed. Ostrom's preconditions for stable arrangements to co-operatively manage common property resources could easily be used to describe an "ideal" Namibian communal area conservancy.

Beyond natural resources

Community-based management extends well beyond natural resources. Collective local governance of common property as an alternative to centralised management by the state (or regional governments) or private enterprise is being applied in diverse settings in many countries.

- In the United States, inner-city rejuvenation projects have allowed tenants of slum buildings to use their rental payments to acquire ownership of their apartments, resulting in renovated buildings and healthier, safer recreation and living environments, at minimal cost to the authorities.
- In Orangi, the largest shantytown in Karachi, Pakistan, a community-based project has transformed filthy lanes where sewage used to run. Because local people are now able to pay for and build their own sewage systems, instead of having to rely on inefficient central services, Orangi has clean streets and efficient drains and piping. The Orangi Pilot Project is being replicated in cities across Pakistan, Nepal, Cambodia, Vietnam, South Africa and Sri Lanka, and is one of many effective community-based water and sanitation projects in poor urban communities.
- Many South African communities are taking collective responsibility for cooperating with their local police force to help them address crime; in Namibia, three police stations have been built by communities.

Other examples abound. The underlying principles in all such cases include local users of a resource or service taking responsibility; local ownership; the linkage of rights or benefits to responsibilities; partnerships between communities and authorities; and critically, the development of various forms of local social organisation to create accountable, collective

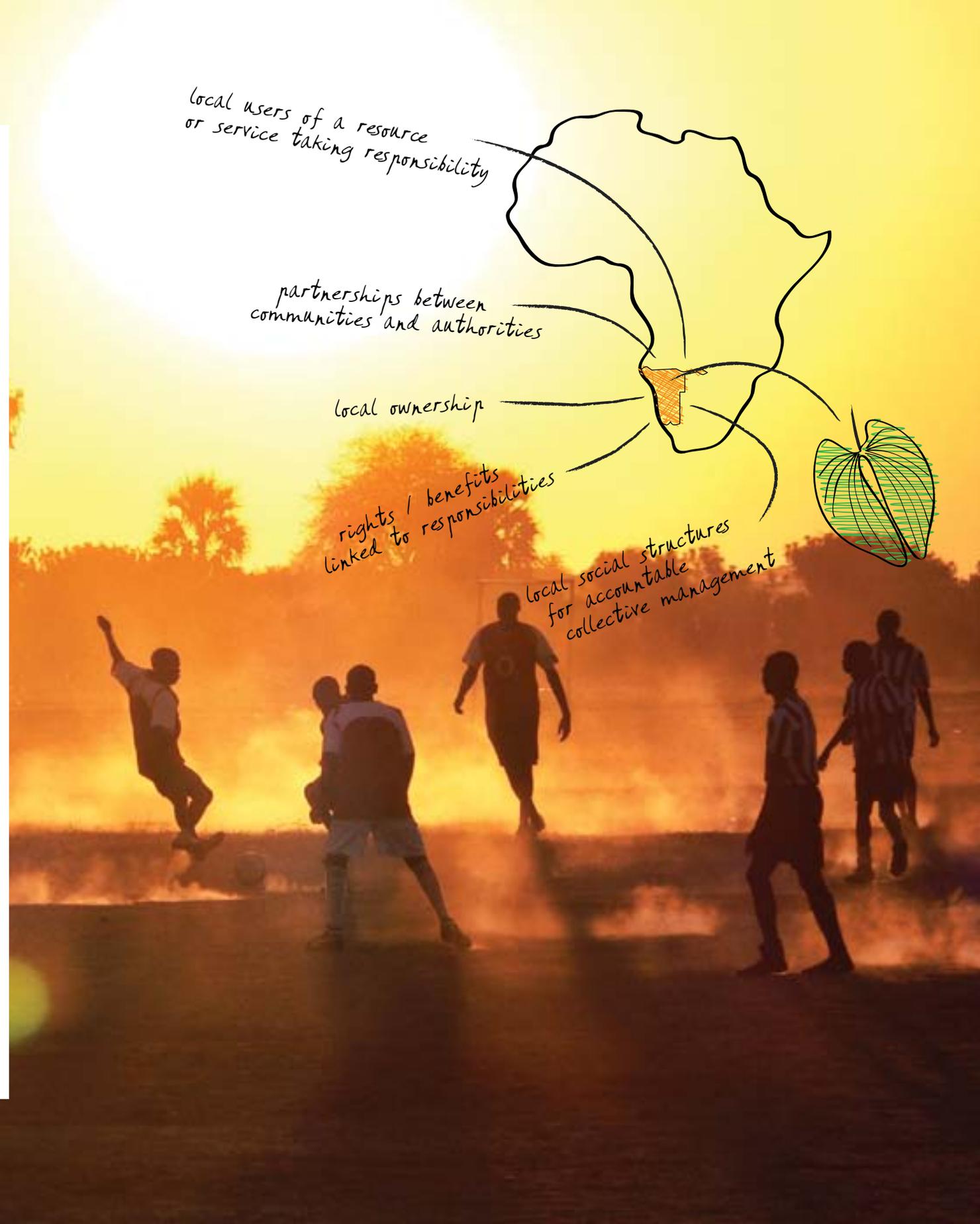
management structures. In some situations these local structures already exist or can be attained through the modification of existing structures; in others, they need to be newly established.

The following chapters clearly demonstrate that far from being restricted to the realm of wildlife, CBNRM is about people and changing entrenched attitudes and social assumptions. Many of its lessons are as relevant to attempts to change consumer patterns or cut carbon emissions as they are to remote communities in Africa living with wildlife.

All the technology and money on earth will not provide lasting solutions to complex problems such as climate change or HIV and AIDS unless a critical mass of people change their attitudes and commit to new ways of behaving. The challenges associated with CBNRM projects in rural Namibia and Zambia differ from the international challenges we face only in scale and specific content. They all require that people reach consensus, manage conflicts, are willing to change their attitudes, and crucially, that plans and decisions are translated into action.

Making it happen

IRDNC makes things happen “on the ground”. We believe that this emphasis on implementation may well be the NGO’s single greatest contribution to CBNRM. Our practical focus has come at a cost, however, and we have published relatively little over the years. This book tells some of our hitherto untold experiences, both what has worked and what has not.



*Start your farming with people,
not with cattle*
- Himba proverb

CHAPTER

ON UNCHARTED GROUND

**Developing a community-
based approach to natural
resource management**



2

- Getting started
- Building trust
- Stopping poaching
- Ownership of wildlife
- Fostering a local vision
- Human - wildlife conflict



LESSONS LEARNT

1. Develop a real relationship with your target community, not just one related to your sphere of interest.
2. Aim to stop poaching, not merely to catch poachers. Don't put your energy into opposing something (waging war against poachers, deforestation, desertification, climate change etc.), rather focus on building something in its place.
3. Ownership must be invested in local users; partnerships are between equals.
4. Benefits are essential, but sufficient time and resources must be invested to facilitate community-based ventures: best practice is best developed through implementation.
5. Donors don't know best.

Human - Wildlife Conflict cannot be stopped, any more than traffic accidents can be, but management and mitigation can reduce impacts.

This chapter charts lessons learnt from confronting NRM challenges in a community-based way since our pioneering days in the 1980s, when massive illegal hunting of elephant, black rhino and many other species was threatening to exterminate north-western Namibia's precious wildlife heritage.

Legislation supporting CBNRM has been in place in Namibia since 1996. Our early lessons predate this legislation, however, and illustrate what can be achieved even without the advantage of legal backing.

Today's challenges are more diverse but no less urgent, and continue to provide rich learning grounds. We face climate change and extreme weather episodes, including massive flooding, increasing human populations with higher aspirations than previous generations, CBO governance challenges, human – wildlife conflict, and non-alignment of natural resource policy and practice by different government agencies, to mention but a few.

Two points need highlighting: firstly, that the important lessons we learnt in our earliest days are as relevant today as they were then; and secondly, that although this chapter has NRM as its specific focus, the lessons are all about people – farmers, rural home-makers, wage earners, unemployed youths, traditional leaders, government staff, politicians and NGO workers.

IRDNC's experience

In the politically hostile environment of an African country still under colonial rule and embroiled in a liberation war, initiating a community-based approach to protecting endangered species, and later, to NRM and rural development, required levels of commitment verging on missionary zeal.

Doing conservation in a war zone is discussed in Chapter 7; suffice to say here that keen judgment had to be exercised regarding when to defy and when to confront the previous government.

Keeping a low profile was often the best course of action, but there was also a need to build relationships with those in authority. Even in times of peace, this is a skill that is important for all NGO workers, albeit in less intense and volatile contexts.

The situation before CBNRM

Kunene

Kunene Region, formerly known as Kaokoveld, lies in the north-west corner of Namibia, covering approximately 100 000 square kilometres. It borders the cold Atlantic Ocean to the west with the rugged Angolan wilderness to the north, and in the 1980s was wild and remote. Thirty years later, even with its expanded road network and sprinkling of lodges, campsites, bush airstrips and occasional little village shops, this starkly spectacular landscape is still one of the most challenging places in which to live and work in southern Africa.

In the 1970s, about 50 000 people, mainly from the Himba, Herero, Damara, Riemvasmaker and Nama groups, shared this magnificent and diverse area of desert plains, mountains, rugged canyons and ephemeral rivers with a wide variety of arid savannah and desert-adapted wildlife species. These included elephant, black rhino, giraffe, plains and mountain zebra, kudu, gemsbok, impala, springbok, duiker, steenbok, klipspringer, dik dik and warthog. Lion, leopard, cheetah and both spotted and brown hyena still existed but Cape hunting dogs were already virtually locally extinct.

Then, as now, the region had no formal conservation status, having been de-proclaimed as a game reserve in 1970. Over the next decade, large-scale illegal hunting of all species escalated, with government officials, politicians, South African military personnel, Portuguese-speaking refugees from Angola (after 1975) and increasingly, the local population all being involved. Factors contributing to poaching by

Facing the new rhino and elephant poaching threat

As one of the three main southern African rhino states, Namibia needs to remain vigilant against the recent upsurge in elephant and rhino poaching in both South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The lessons we learnt in the 1980s and 1990s are still relevant, and must not be forgotten. Retired CGGs are being deployed to ensure that the younger generation of CGGs have all the anti-poaching skills they need.

Highly organised gangs – in some cases even using a helicopter – have killed hundreds of rhino and elephant in South African since 2008; the 2010 figures for rhino poaching are the highest in many years. Sales of rhino horn and elephant ivory have been shown to involve Chinese, Malaysian and Vietnamese buyers. Elephant poaching has also increased in Caprivi over the past two years. All we learned about stopping poaching in the 1980s may again be put to the test.

The Namibian Government has relocated black rhino back into conservancy areas, thus spreading the populations more widely. It is also endeavouring to ensure good teamwork between itself, NGOs and conservancies.

Previous success in black rhino conservation in Namibia's north-west can be attributed to the adoption of a three-pronged approach once CGGs had stopped almost all illegal hunting:

- 1) The government takes responsibility for law enforcement and management, including appropriate technology.
- 2) The entire population is individually identified, and there is regular monitoring by NGOs and local conservancy staff.
- 3) Local communities actively participate in and support wildlife conservation efforts, resulting in a sense of ownership and vision for the future. Economic benefits from conservancies are slowly climbing to a level where they will have a significant local impact.



local people included the proliferation of military firearms during the war and a commercial incentive introduced by non-resident middlemen for ivory, rhino horn and hides. The situation was exacerbated by the need for bush meat during the devastating drought of the early 1980s, which wiped out 85% of domestic stock.

By 1982, only small populations of all species survived. Elephant were down to fewer than 250 animals, black rhino to under 70. A 1982 air census revealed more than 120 elephant carcasses and scores of rhino remains, and this was only the tip of the iceberg. The future of the north-west's wildlife looked very bleak indeed.

Caprivi

The situation in Caprivi Region in the north-east corner of the country was no better. Then, following Independence in 1990, traditional leaders invited IRDNC to establish a CBNRM project. This former wetland paradise, with its hauntingly beautiful floodplains and rivers, its lush riparian woodlands, mopane forests and savannah mosaics, had already lost its rhino and giraffe, and was well on the way to having only small, isolated populations of its 22 hoof-stock species and its predators, including crocodile, wild dog, leopard, cheetah, lion and hyena.

The start of CBNRM

With very little funding, a small team, regarded by most orthodox conservationists as the lunatic fringe, followed seven basic steps in Kaokoveld to set up Namibia's first community-based conservation project:

1. Building trust within local communities
2. Joint planning and decision-making *with* communities
3. Active participation in conservation by local communities
4. Shared responsibility and accountability for wildlife-related issues

5. Facilitating direct economic benefits to local communities
6. Building the capacity of local communities to jointly manage natural resources
7. Creating environmental awareness

The first year of the earliest pilot project was taken up with steps one and two. The seed for the appointment of the first community game guards (CGGs) was planted by a headman who noted that he and his people did not want to see wildlife die out altogether, but could do nothing to prevent this as they had no money to pay their children to guard it. The project offered to raise some funds, and a pioneering partnership with community leaders was initiated. The first of a network of CGGs – local men appointed by and responsible to their traditional leaders – started work in 1983. In spite of intense scepticism in conservation circles, within 18 months the poaching situation in Kaokoveld had been turned around. With populations of all species of wildlife steadily increasing, a major opportunity for future development had been secured for north-west Namibia. In other regions where CBNRM had not yet been implemented, however, wildlife continued to disappear no matter how good the rains.

Even with wildlife recovering in the north-west, a long and arduous road lay ahead to entrench CBNRM. It was important to expand the project to Caprivi, as this highly populated region is more typical of much of Africa – if CBNRM could work in Caprivi, it could work virtually anywhere. Here, nearly a decade later, we faced a more complex socio-political situation: much higher population density, major tribal conflict, and higher levels of human – wildlife conflict, with elephant, hippo and bush pigs regularly raiding fields. Nevertheless, although implementation methods had to be adapted, the same steps and broad principles eventually paid dividends, and common lessons emerged in these two very different regions.

1 *Develop a real relationship with your target community, not just one related to your sphere of interest.*

What this means is truly caring about people's ordinary concerns, not just your own conservation agenda. This is the route to mutual trust and respect.

- **Respond to what people say they need**, not what you think they need. In the early days in Kunene, the first team of CGGs was appointed by their community leaders just after the worst drought in living memory. Families had lost most or even all of their stock, and people were hungry. There were no shops outside main centres, and in any case, people had no money. Therefore, as requested, food rations – bags of maize meal, oil, sugar and tea – were part of the game guard's payment. Up to 20 people were sharing each monthly ration. As more local shops opened, we supported the rural economy by buying rations locally. In time, CGGs wanted money rather than rations. In Caprivi, people's major concerns centred on conflicts with wildlife – especially elephants in fields. Accordingly, this was made a priority focus of the early CGG activities.
- **Be accessible, live locally.** Staff did not just "visit" the project from the capital – they lived in the target area and their doors were always open to partners, including local people.
- **Respect local institutions** and where possible work through them. In Kunene, we worked with headmen and elders; in Caprivi, with its more structured tribal authorities (TA), the khutas – tribal courts – were the first point of entry. Staff also engaged with teachers, farmers' unions and any other local grouping.
- We tried to **work with relevant government bodies** and significantly increased this effort once a legitimate government was in place after Independence.
- **Recognise and care about the problems and concerns of your partner**, not just your own agenda. This is critical for real synergy. There's no point in trying to protect a resource from over-exploitation unless its users have alternatives. The programme may be able to help identify these. Actions such as giving lifts and first aid and assisting remote rural dwellers to acquire ID documents by making contact with relevant government officials and advocating for a mobile ID outreach deepens relationships and strengthens mutual understanding. In West Caprivi, when parents were concerned about school children drinking at a bar run by Kavango businessmen, we helped community staff to convey concerns to the bar owner and get support from both police and teachers. There are also often ways local people can help you, and it is only when assistance is flowing in both directions that there is real partnership.
- **Find a balance.** Inexperienced field workers and junior local staff run the risk of being exploited by some community members, some of whom may be family or neighbours, so a balance needs to be found. Many staff members have been confronted by belligerent people making accusations such as "This is supposed



Lessons Learnt

to be a community project but you're not helping us. I need a lift to town". A practical solution was for our vehicles to carry laminated copies of vehicle use policy, including for funerals and medical needs. As many conservancies now have their own vehicles, they also need to deal with similar situations.

- **Proceed slowly, step by step, at the community's pace, not the donors'.** We made a mistake in Caprivi by moving too fast. Levels of hostility against nature conservation authorities were so high that in one instance, a postman was mistaken for a conservation official, and shot! Threats of physical violence were common, and we were told by community members that anyone working as a CGG would have his house burnt down.

Six months after we had obtained donor funding to set up a CGG network similar to that in the north-west, despite many meetings, nothing seemed to have been achieved. Sceptical Caprivians were convinced that we were out to steal their land or cheat them. Then we managed to persuade one khuta to appoint a few CGGs, pushing the need for jobs as a major incentive. But our relationship with the TA and communities was not yet close enough, and one of the first CGGs continued to hunt illegally while receiving his CGG salary and a number of other game guards failed to perform adequately. The TA would have known these men were unsuitable, but did not care, as they saw the CGG network as IRDNC's, not theirs.

- **There are no short-cuts.** Our experience in Kunene was different, because sufficient time was taken to first build relationships of trust and respect. When initiating a community-based project, the first, critical phase is slow and painstaking work – and there are no short-cuts.

2 *Aim to stop poaching, not merely to catch poachers. Don't put your energy into opposing something (waging war against poachers, deforestation, desertification, climate change etc.), rather focus on building something in its place.*

In this case it helped to develop a local vision of wildlife belonging to the people, not the government, and one day being more valuable alive than in a cooking pot. As this vision spread, people stopped seeing poachers as Robin Hoods, stealing from the rich to help the poor. If the people were the owners of the wildlife, it was their own resource that was being plundered. Thus, within two years in Kaokoveld, illegal hunting was a socially unacceptable activity in which only a small minority of the population engaged. The majority of people had changed their attitude and supported their local game guards.

- **Listen.** Because in the early days we listened a lot more than we spoke, the vision that emerged was a local one – not just ours. Our ears are probably our most important tool.
- **Link rights/benefits to responsibilities.** The community's own game guards were tasked with looking after the community's own wildlife.

Share responsibility with community leaders – illegal hunters were sometimes fined by their own headmen. Such actions may be more of a deterrent than the courts, particularly as in Kunene's Himba and Herero societies, the entire patrilineage is expected to contribute domestic stock towards the fine, not just the offender. In Caprivi, for the first few years, all poaching was reported to TAs before the government, even though government officials were unhappy about this. It took time, but some of the chiefs began acting accountably when they realised that they really were responsible to do so. Chief Joseph Tembe Mayuni went a step further and fined not only the poacher, but the poacher's village headman, on the grounds that he would have or should have known about game meat coming into his village.



While illegal hunting does still occur from time to time in Caprivi with its porous boundaries with Angola, Botswana and Zambia, it has been drastically reduced, and culprits are likely to be caught through good teamwork between communities, conservancy game guards, government officials and NGO staff. Records show that poachers target national parks rather than conservancies because they are at greater risk of being apprehended inside conservancies.

- **Play the ball, not the man.** We treated poachers with respect. They are often just men trying to earn some needed money – the real criminals are the dealers. By sticking to this principle, we never alienated the relatives of a poacher, even if he was convicted. Our approach was very different from that taken in the “rhino wars” being fought elsewhere in Africa, where despite scores of poachers being shot, rhinos continued to be lost.
- **Stand in the community's shoes.** Our Kunene poaching cases were discussed with the community leadership, and we even tried to take leaders and the family of the accused to attend the court case. This was appreciated by remote communities, who now knew what was happening to their family member. In one early case when three men living at a remote village were caught hunting illegally, we suggested that one of them stay behind to take care of the farming and families, and only two be charged. They decided who would stay. Because of this empathetic approach, attitudes did not harden against us – or wildlife.

- **Trust your partner's judgment.** Some of the best Kunene CGGs have been former poachers. Their leaders knew how effective they could be against illegal hunting. Such appointments of convicted elephant and rhino poachers worried some people at the time, but these committed community leaders were proved to be right.
- **Technology is not enough.** High tech radio telemetry approaches to rhino protection may be appropriate in these modern times but cannot replace local community support. If the people living in the area are not passive about poaching, there will be early warnings about unusual activity or strangers about.



3 **Ownership must be invested in local users; partnerships are between equals.** These basic tenets of CBNRM are more easily proclaimed than put into practice. Some practitioners think they are following CBNRM principles, but in fact they are not; CBNRM is then criticised as “not working”, when it has not actually been applied.

- **Don't cut corners on joint planning and decision-making.** Officials of South Africa's former Natal Parks Board once asked us at a Wilderness Conference why their CBNRM project was not working – after all, they were allowing their neighbouring community to collect firewood and prized medicinal herbs inside the park one day a week, but poaching was continuing. There had been no negotiation with this community – the conservation authority decided what to offer. Therefore, the community had no ownership over the park-use agreement and felt no accountability regarding what happened in the park.
- **Nurture a local vision.** The decision to ban all hunting in Kaokoveld in the 1980s was made by the regional ethnic authorities of the time and the traditional leadership. It took time – many meetings and informal discussions – to reach this decision, but the investment paid handsome dividends. Conserving wildlife for future benefits for the whole community became the local authorities' own policy. Most people agreed to support the policy; the few who did not became outlaws in their own society, and CGGs had no difficulty in assisting the authorities to obtain convictions.

- **Whose idea is it anyway?** It is all too easy to side-step such a long, slow process. Often we know – or believe we know – exactly what should be done, so we tend to present our ideas to the community. They appear to go along with this, but the ideas remain ours, not theirs. IRDNC staff learned to listen first and only present our ideas afterwards – and in any event, the community often reached the same conclusion.
- **Real partnerships are equal.** There is a tendency for this sharing of power to be misunderstood by some, with the perception that all power is being handed over to the community. However, as an equal partner, IRDNC feels free to advise and disagree with communities. As CBOs mature and earn their own income, it usually becomes necessary to formalise such partnerships, as has now been done with most of our target conservancies. Signed memoranda of understanding outline the services we provide and the commitment of the conservancy to work with us on such issues.
- **Why, how and by whom?** Successful CBNRM implementation is not about what should be done. It's about why, how and by whom it should be done. If communities participate in making these decisions, they are likely to have ownership of future actions, and therefore to implement and support them.
- **Active participation** on the part of the community is an essential aspect of linking responsibilities to rights and benefits. CGGs became professionally engaged in conservation; their leaders had the power to hire and fire them, and were accountable for them. The project paid CGGs and had the right to discuss their concerns with the leaders if someone was not performing adequately, but in the end, the decision was not ours.
- **Joint action against problem animals.** It is also critical to involve communities in actions such as alternative water provision for game, the protection of community water points against elephants, the installation of electric fencing and other control methods for problem animals. In Caprivi, IRDNC and the local khuta decided to try electric fencing between Mudumu National Park and a major cropping area. The NGO provided the solar-powered fence and the training to maintain it; the community's role was cutting the poles to erect the fence, putting up the fence with project staff and on-going maintenance. The lack of a local NRM structure – before conservancy legislation – greatly hampered this initiative, as support for the khuta was not strong.
- **Women are also stakeholders.** IRDNC learned that in addition to the involvement of a local NRM institution, the participation of all stakeholders, including and in particular women, is crucial in human – wildlife conflict mitigation projects. The men of the villages neighbouring the park refused to do the fencing work without pay. In those early days they regarded the elephants as IRDNC's or the government's, and thus felt that they ought not to have to work for nothing. The anthropologist on the team found the way forward, pointing out that her analysis of the various farming tasks showed that women did most of the work in the fields, and were therefore likely to have greater motivation to protect their crops.

This was indeed the case, and remarkably, we discovered that women – the wives, mothers and sisters of the men with whom we had been meeting – did not even know about our offer of a trial electric fence. Most of them had been away from the villages, in the fields, while we met with the men. The women quickly sorted out their men, and the poles were cut and the fence erected by a joint team of community and project members.

Women are often keen motivators for poaching if they need food to feed their families. The idea of appointing local women as community resource monitors (CRMs) whose tasks include keeping women informed about CBNRM issues grew out of such experiences.



- Know the local social geography.** Ensuring that all stakeholders are involved means doing a survey of the local social geography, even if you think you know an area well. This helps you avoid being tripped up by a group whose legitimate (or illegitimate) interests are being threatened by your well-meaning interventions. In the mid-1990s, we were keen to get a Sesfontein conservancy task force operational in a key wildlife area. Even though we could see that one powerful group was not engaged in the process, we pushed ahead, saying that they'd join once the benefits from a conservancy started flowing. Instead, they saw the conservancy as a threat to the power and patronage they had enjoyed since colonial days, and they opposed its development in every possible way. This became an acrimonious conflict – within the community, between Herero and Damara, between factions within both these groups, between the five traditional leaderships in the Sesfontein area, between political parties and between this particular faction and IRDNC. The conflict took a few years to resolve, in the process seriously testing our donor's resolve. The vast area governed between the five TAs became three conservancies, namely Anabeb, Sesfontein and Purros. The Sesfontein Conservancy committee remains reasonably representative of all its factions.
- Resolve disputes before development.** It can be a hard call: whether to stall or to forge ahead. In Caprivi, we believed a powerful TA held rights in an area, only to discover later when a project was underway that these rights were disputed by a neighbouring TA. This dispute within Salambala Conservancy's core wildlife area has still not been resolved more than 15 years later, and the conservancy has thus lost lucrative private sector investment opportunities. Just a few rebel families, some of whom moved into the core area after it had been proclaimed, continues to stall development for several thousand conservancy members. Government involvement and a court order failed to resolve this particular historical conflict over land and authority between the Subia and Mafwe TAs. Ultimately, the NGO can merely be a catalyst and provide a forum for communities to resolve their own issues.

Lessons learnt

- Beware of privileging information.** Assuming something to be true because you heard it from local people is a common pitfall, especially for researchers who often naively privilege “community” information – obtained from their particular group of informants - as being the “true” story. Communities' social boundaries and identities shift according to needs and expediency. This is true everywhere in the world, not just in rural Africa. Implementers need to be in a position to understand local situations and values, and for this reason senior local staff who understand the principles of CBNRM are our bedrock.
- Nuances and timing.** It is almost a cliché that one must recognise and respect local knowledge and skills, but there are important nuances regarding when to integrate the local with the modern and technical. We did not “train” the first teams of Kaokoveld CGGs, choosing rather to build on their own local knowledge and provide them with some basic information on collecting evidence at a poaching site. The time would come later for capacity building, but at that stage entrenching a sense of ownership over wildlife was more important than adding on skills.

After the project was closed down by the previous regime in the mid 1980s, government conservation authorities agreed to take over the CGGs, as their major role in ending illegal hunting was obvious. Our donor continued to provide funding for them, but this funding now went to the government. In some areas, the CGGs were badly neglected by lazy officials who failed to collect reports and deliver rations on time, or at all; in others, they suffered from too much attention.

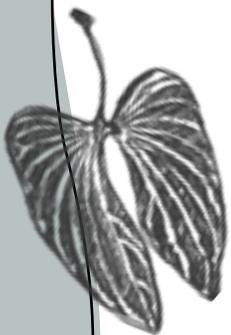
Khorixas conservation staff wanted to turn these men into auxiliaries, and even take them into the government staffing structure. IRDNC opposed this on the grounds that they would then become like any other anti-poaching unit, and community ownership of both the CGG system and of wildlife would be dissipated. Obtaining funding to restart the project (in spite of concerns that we were subversive SWAPO supporters) enabled us to head off this threat.

We also fought against the government's demands that CGGs wear auxiliary uniforms and only provided them with good walking boots and later, with basic khaki clothing. Today conservancies use uniforms and badges with conservancy emblems to denote local ownership of wildlife. Conservancy management of resources also require community skills to be enhanced with study tours and courses, and a wide range of participatory training tools and activities. The ability to change and adapt to new contexts is thus always essential.

4 Benefits are essential, but sufficient time and resources must be invested to facilitate community-based ventures: best practice is best developed through implementation.

In addition to social benefits and empowerment, direct economic benefits must flow from communally managed natural resources. From 1987, IRDNC started testing wildlife and tourism income-generating activities. This required flexibility

Lessons learnt



and imagination, particularly before the conservancy legislation had been passed. The early pre-conservancy Puros Project showed that communities could equitably manage and distribute income from a small tourism levy, paid by guests of the earliest safaris to Kunene that were organised by the Endangered Wildlife Trust in South Africa. Also in 1987, the government was persuaded to conduct small game harvests, initially conducted by their own staff, but later by communities themselves, in those areas where wildlife was recovering well.

- **Invest in innovation.** A great deal of effort went into the development of innovative ventures that were good examples of best practice and embodied key principles of CBNRM. This sometimes required disregarding a short-term cost/benefit model and working till we were sure we had addressed the “triple bottom lines”. For example, private sector entities would undoubtedly be more efficient in running a campsite, but embedding the enterprise in the conservancy enhances the community’s stake in the conservation of wildlife, which is the foundation on which their business is built. Variations of these models continue to be extensively used within target sites.

- **Link benefits to natural resources.** When a lodge owner asked for help with distributing a voluntary nightly bed levy to the communities neighbouring his concession in the early 1990s, we used the process to learn and to develop best practice ahead of the financial benefits we hoped would be coming with CBNRM legislation. Meetings were held with all involved, and we asked local leadership to appoint a task force to work with us. Participatory mapping and surveys in villages revealed local social geography, and we even produced a pamphlet, translated into local languages, explaining the link between the lodge’s gesture and wildlife conservation.

It emerged that a prominent traditional leader was not trusted to manage collective money on the community’s behalf, and a separate committee was set up in this area. Predictably, the headman tried to disrupt the process, but once a forum for democracy had been established by grassroots negotiation and consultation, his years of unfettered control of power and patronage were numbered.

- **Individuals vs. community.** Sometimes we got it wrong. In both Kunene and Caprivi, the first attempts at facilitating cultural villages failed because too much attention was focused on individuals (the manager-owner of the enterprise) and not enough on getting broader community buy-in for the enterprise.
- **Demonstrate principles with best practice.** In Kunene, several local hunting seasons were supported in a way that was clearly in line with principles of equity, responsibility, participation and good governance. Local meat distribution plans were facilitated for the community harvests in 1993 and 1995. We assisted with transport but obtained agreement from participating communities that they would cover certain costs pre-paid by IRDNC. For example, we advanced money to buy ammunition, but this had to be repaid with funds generated by the sale of skins. Similarly, our first community-owned campsite at Puros was built with a loan, not a hand-out.

- **Identify and focus on principles; don’t be distracted by detail.** The Damaraland Camp joint venture between a community and private sector broke new ground and established a precedent for change in Namibia’s tourism industry. These early joint ventures required intensive, time-consuming NGO support. Before the community could enter into a legal contract, IRDNC helped them set up a resident’s trust which later, after legislation, became Torra Conservancy. The various negotiations for this joint venture – Namibia’s first – also required considerable work with the community. This investment of time and resources needs to be seen in the broader perspective of bringing about social and economic changes with the potential for impacts at a national level.

5 Donors don’t know best.

Environmental awareness, or environmental education, as it used to be known, went out of fashion because of the difficulty associated with quantifying its direct outcomes for donors. It is also difficult to make it sustainable as a project, and it can seem like a bottomless pit to those having to fund it. Our earlier education project with schools, teachers and unemployed youths was shelved. However, enhancing environmental awareness should be one of the most important of all our activities, all the more so in the light of climate change and other emerging environmental problems.



- **Our relationship with nature.** We live in a world where, while others struggle to survive, shopping, eating and drinking are the major forms of recreation for many of our town and city dwellers. Relatively few people have a direct relationship with nature or have experienced the wilderness at first hand. Yet given the right

circumstances, being in the wild, exposed directly to its wonders, can have a profound impact on anyone. IRDNC has had experience with a diversity of people, including militant teenagers from underprivileged townships, urban politicians trying to escape their roots, and local teachers who hate the idea of camping and are terrified of wild animals. Almost without fail, they returned uplifted and enthused by an experience that is “bigger than real”, to quote one participant. Of course, this requires staff who are skilled at re-contextualising our relationship with nature in such a way that it makes sense, and has a lasting impact on visitors. Like most NGOs, IRDNC does very little environmental awareness work these days, as funding is difficult to source and other work, with more immediate results, seems more compelling. This is a gap that needs to be filled.

Human - Wildlife Conflict

Human – wildlife conflict cannot be stopped, any more than traffic accidents can be, but management and mitigation can reduce impacts.

Where people live with wildlife, conflict is inevitable. The Namibian Government, NGOs and now also community-based organisations continue wrestling with this problem.

Yet serious human – wildlife conflict almost always involves some or all of the “big five” species, and the affected area therefore has high earning potential from tourism and hunting. The challenge is to find ways to balance individual losses with collective conservancy benefits. Conservancies may earn collective income, but if it is used for the community development projects so beloved of politicians and some donors, this will be of little comfort to a farmer whose cow is taken by a lion or crocodile; or whose crops – needed to feed her family – have been trampled or eaten by hippo; or who wakes up to discover that elephants have damaged the water supply.

- **There is no ‘final’ solution.** Before and since conservancies, IRDNC has worked with communities and government to apply the full gamut of mitigation methods. These range from ditches and stone walls to protect water points against elephant, providing alternative game water points, solar powered electric fencing around crops, community game guards over-nighting with farmers at vulnerable fields, trip alarms, tin cans on wires to deter against hippo, “chilli bombs” and rags as deterrents against elephants, to shooting a problem animal. All these measures have helped to some degree, as did loud noises – e.g. shooting in the air or drumming - and fires. But rarely do they solve the problem permanently. For example, elephant are too smart to be blocked from where they badly want to go by mere electricity, and they soon learn to use their tusks or branches to break fencing, or even, as has been observed in Caprivi, to push a sub-adult bull into the fence!
- **Ownership and local organisation help.** The establishment of conservancies made it easier to reduce wildlife’s impacts on local economies. Conservancies provide an organised, representative community structure with which to engage, and while individual farmers obviously still suffer losses, the sense of local ownership over the wildlife makes finding joint solutions more feasible. These structures also enhance quality control, consistency of application and information sharing regarding methods. For example, when using chilli as an elephant deterrent (either rags dipped in chilli-laced oil on fencing around crops or the smoke from smouldering balls of dried elephant dung mixed with chilli) the distance of the fence or the coils from the crops is crucial. Conservancy staff can ensure that all farmers know this.
- **Old local knowledge** provided a simple and elegant solution to crocodile predation on both people and stock along the Zambezi and other rivers. When asked, elders recalled that in the past branches were used in the river to create safe areas for women to do their washing, or for domestic stock to drink. A pilot barrier constructed with modern, more secure materials was facilitated, and conservancy staff then spread the method.
- **Self-insurance for conservancies:** In spite of successes in mitigating the impacts of conflict with wildlife, the problem remains a serious one for individuals who suffer losses. The Human – Animal Conflict Conservancy Self-Insurance Scheme (HACCSIS) emerged as a viable option within conservancies. It was based on sound CBNRM principles such as local ownership and management of the scheme to avoid false claims, and rights being linked



to responsibilities. The farmer had to be a member of the conservancy and could only claim if he or she had adhered to a pre-agreed problem animal management strategy worked out by the conservancy committee in consultation with the members. In one conservancy, members might not be paid out if they had lost cattle which were in a designated wildlife zone or a park, or if a stock enclosure had not been strengthened to keep out predators; another might determine that claims for crop losses could only be paid out if efforts had demonstrably been made to deter elephants, for example with chilli bombs and/or rags. There was also a time limit for the submission of claims, so that

conservancy staff could verify them, and a claims review panel which included traditional leaders and government and NGO staff. After the scheme had been piloted and adapted to make allowance for the specific nature of problems, it was expanded across a wider area, with conservancies paying half of each claim and donor funding supplying the rest. The scheme worked better in some areas than in others, and a number of important lessons were learnt in the course of its facilitation, all of which were shared with government agencies and partners.

- **Basic principles** make a scheme work, but this does not guarantee that politicians will accept them. Shortly before the 2010 general election, the government announced that it would be implementing a version of the HACCSIS scheme. While in theory this is exactly what IRDNC hoped would be the case, it is important that the basic principles which made the scheme work are not dropped in the government project. Fraudulent claims are likely to escalate if rights and benefits are not linked to responsibilities. Some government field staff are well aware of what made the scheme work on the ground. IRDNC’s role is now to help such government staff as needed and to continue assisting conservancies, while lobbying for better understanding of CBNRM in decision-making circles.
- **Living with lions.** Where people live with predators, problems will inevitably arise, but there are ways to enhance both human and stock safety. Puros Conservancy is working on a pilot project with lion researcher Dr Flip Stander, IRDNC and WWF. Three men were trained to use telemetry tracking equipment for a well habituated and collared local lion pride. This team keeps the community informed about the pride’s location so that stock can be moved if necessary, and they are being trained to take tourists out to see lions, thus adding to conservancy income. It is not just technology which is reducing this problem, however, the sense of ownership the conservancy members have over “their” wildlife, including the lions, plays a crucial role in enabling this remarkable tolerance of dangerous predators on the part of herders. The majority of adult members in this remote conservancy who want a job, have one, either in tourism or in the conservancy itself. They know that without wildlife, these jobs would not be available. The situation regarding lions remains dynamic, and the measures in place are a mitigation option rather than a solution.

He who climbs a good tree always gets a push
- Caprivian proverb

CHAPTER

PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE

Changing policy

First community-based structures

Entrenching key principles

Developing consistent approaches

Nurturing local confidence and skills

Good governance

Building women's capacity, not just filling quotas

Phasing out support

3

LESSONS LEARNT

1. The development of policy for social and economic change needs broad-based local consultation and negotiation.
2. Build a robust, common understanding of legislation and policy among stakeholders and clarify implementation roles.
3. Foster confidence and build key skills.
4. Remain flexible, and look for creative or alternative ways of working.
5. Facilitate relevant forums for learning, monitoring, exchange and accountability.
6. Recognise that as different partners have important roles at different times, appropriate linkages should be maintained.
7. CBNRM practitioners need high levels of self awareness and should regularly evaluate their roles and capacity.
8. Withdrawal of support should be slow and strategic.



This chapter covers the period from Namibia's Independence and the early 1990s, when the groundwork for new CBNRM policy and legislation was being done, through the introduction and implementation of the communal area conservancies to the support that IRDNC now provides to more than 56 registered and emerging CBOs in Namibia, and 24 village representative structures in western Zambia.

The period saw a shift to a new phase, where community involvement in conservation came to be endorsed by law. During this period, CBNRM moved from a conservation focus to a broader programme, with our efforts increasingly being centred on building strong, well governed local structures capable of engaging in business and tourism ventures based on wildlife, and developing an array of other enterprises based on natural resources.

IRDNC's experience

Several key events early in this phase informed subsequent developments. The newly formed government through the Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism (as it was known at the time) began to explore ways to lawfully involve rural people in managing and benefiting from wildlife and tourism. IRDNC played a central role in the community consultation and negotiation aspects of a series of socio-ecological surveys in communal areas. This process enabled rural residents to make direct inputs into

legislation, thereby laying the foundation for an exceptional level of local ownership of the legislation that was developed. The surveys clearly indicated that local people wanted to have rights to manage and benefit from wildlife and tourism in their areas, and were willing to assume the concomitant responsibilities.

As a result, the government developed new laws to give communal area residents living on state land the same rights over wildlife and tourism as those held by farmers with freehold land tenure rights. The Wildlife Management, Utilisation and Tourism in Communal Areas Policy was passed in 1995; and in 1996 the Nature Conservation Amendment Act changed the Nature Conservation Ordinance of 1975, enabling communities to form common property resource management institutions called conservancies. The first four communal area conservancies were gazetted in 1998.

Considerable groundwork went into helping community task forces prepare for the registration of the early conservancies and meet the legal conditions. Such task forces could be chosen at meetings by local leaders and by popular vote, whereas committees needed a more formalised democratic nomination and election process. IRDNC's role changed from implementing projects with communities to that of providing a support structure for emerging and registered conservancies, while working with the renamed Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and a growing number of NGO partners.

Note

Conservancies are established by self-identified groups of people who choose to work together and fulfil the conditions to become registered with the government. Key requirements are that they have a clear and mutually acceptable set of boundaries (agreed to by neighbours), a defined membership, a committee that represents those members, a constitution to guide the functioning of the conservancy and a plan for the equitable distribution of benefits. These community-based organisations need logistic and technical assistance, including formal training, on-the-job support and start-up funding. Subsequently, conservancies have also been required to have wildlife management plans and to submit their land-use plans to Regional Land Boards.



IRDNC's strategy was to focus its resources on supporting areas with high wildlife and tourism potential that were also key conservation areas. These early conservancies were important pilots that provided inspiration and guidance to the host of conservancies that followed. Four conservancies were registered in 1998. By 2011 the number of legal conservancies was 64 with another 20 emerging.

At first, many community members simply did not believe that they would have the ability or be given the rights to manage and benefit from wildlife. But the vision that CBNRM would offer a significant opportunity for a diversified economy and improved livelihoods had taken root within community leadership. The pilot approach was again crucial. Our first community-based structure (which predated conservancy legislation) was known as the Ward 11 Residents Association and Trust and provided a working example for other areas of what communities could achieve. This CBO later became Torra Conservancy.

IRDNC expanded its focus and worked with conservancies as they embarked on a number of

initiatives, including facilitating Namibia's first tourism joint venture between a CBO and the private sector. Damaraland Camp was opened in 1996 after two years of negotiations between the Ward 11 Residents Association and Wilderness Safaris Namibia. There are now 29 operational joint venture tourism contracts in Namibian conservancies, with a further 13 being negotiated. Consumptive utilisation has also grown to play a key role in income generation in conservancies, and by 2010 there were 32 hunting concessions and a number of high-value plant enterprises benefiting conservancies.

A range of lessons were learnt while working with fledgling conservancies regarding the provision of support to registered CBOs that are managing a complex array of resources. Initially, a great deal of time and energy was put into processes such as resolving boundary conflicts and facilitating equity and a good balance of power, control and access. This early investment subsequently enabled IRDNC to deal more effectively and rationally with difficult issues.

1 *The development of policy for social and economic change needs broad-based local consultation and negotiation.*

A solid case for meaningful policy change was created through broad-based consultation and negotiation through socio-ecological surveys conducted after Independence. These surveys fulfilled a number of purposes and were a critical part of the process. Whilst they enabled input from local community members, they also brought together groups who were in conflict with conservation, or were at least not aligned around related issues.

- **Involve all and be prepared to listen.** IRDNC's community facilitation experience ensured that a wide range of local stakeholders were involved in these surveys, not just the leadership – women, different age groups, workers and the unemployed were all included. Being listened to by government staff was a unique experience for most, and the open, non-prescriptive process contributed to the remarkable degree of popular support that continues to drive the national programme.
- **Affirm people's right to express their feelings, even when you do not agree with them.** We needed to do some conflict management when government staff reacted to exaggerated claims made by some community members about intemperate past behaviour of officials – one hunting dog shot became the annihilation of all of the community's dogs; a warning shot fired by conservation officials over the heads of a group believed to be poachers, but who were in fact women collecting water lilies, became the attempted murder of defenceless women. We had to step in to keep discussions from being derailed, as angry officials stood up to dispute community interpretations of events. The concept of hearing how the people felt, even if you did not agree with them, was new to many on the survey. This was essential for the success of the process.

2 *Build a robust, common understanding of legislation and policy among stakeholders and clarify implementation roles.*

It took time for all stakeholders, including mid-level government conservation staff, to be fully aware of the content and relevance of new CBNRM-enabling policy and legislation. We also learned the importance of a clear and shared understanding of who plays what role in implementing such legislation. Some players who were opposed to or threatened by the rights and responsibilities given to conservancies tried to pervert or deliberately misinterpret the legislation. Thus, while conservation leadership in the new government was supportive, some staff below ministerial level had yet to be convinced that communities could be trusted. Others, from both left and right, felt that power needed to be centralised in government's hands, not shared with people in remote areas.

- **Support the government with information and interpretations of legislation.** This was a major early role, and one which required training at different levels. For example, IRDNC and NGO partners developed and delivered courses

for emerging conservancies to enable them to understand their rights and responsibilities, and the requirements for being registered. Other tools and techniques were a conservancy card game, radio programmes, community theatre and vision mapping. Initially, some MET staff were hostile, as they felt that this was their role, even though they did not have the capacity to do the job themselves. But with time, and a strategy of planning and delivering training in partnership with the MET, NGO support came to be acknowledged as being essential.

- **Focus on implementation with early supporters,** irrespective of middle management opinions and views. IRDNC was able to forge ahead and make progress with individual local MET staff who supported the new legislation and registration process. Had field staff waited for support at all levels, the work would have stalled.
- **Recognise and co-opt specialist expertise where necessary.** IRDNC's experience and skills enabled it to pioneer the first community-private sector tourism joint venture, but we lacked some of the knowledge needed to ensure a fair deal. We therefore worked with the Legal Assistance Centre and resource economists in the Directorate of Environmental Affairs (DEA) who scrutinised the financial package and gave inputs which have shaped all such subsequent deals.



3 *Foster confidence and build key skills.*

An early focus was on building the confidence of local people. Starting with the leadership, skills were fostered that would enable these communities of subsistence farmers to manage and benefit from wildlife and tourism. While few yet had the skills to run conservancies, there were many local people with experience, wisdom, determination and vision. This was built upon, enhancing confidence through experiential learning. It demonstrated that seemingly insurmountable tasks such as negotiating with the private sector could be successfully performed. Well facilitated study tours helped people to broaden their world experience.

- **Identify and focus on key skills at key times.** These included:
 - o facilitation skills to help conservancy residents with diverse interests embrace a common purpose;
 - o management and administrative skills – developing plans, running structured meetings, keeping minutes of decisions, keeping track of progress and reporting back, managing small start-up grants etc; and
 - o getting the timing of training right – people retain skills they need to apply immediately but forget knowledge that remains abstract; for example, this means teaching people to draw up budgets and plans when they need to actually perform these functions, not too long in advance.
- **Be prepared for two-way learning.** Our learning curve was as steep as those faced by our target communities. Older community members' conflict management skills were often better than ours, and the resolution of most conflicts was best left to them. Our role was therefore to provide logistical support to a local team trying to manage conflict, or to offer a forum for the discussion of conflicts. Another useful strategy was to take community leaders to other regions where similar disputes had been resolved by communities.
 
- **Invest in resources to equip communities.** Conservancies, like other organisations, need certain resources. Our role included raising funds to equip them with, for example, offices, two-way radios (pre-mobile phones) and vehicles, or at least access to transport.
- **Avoid jargon.** Common at CBNRM conferences, jargon alienates community members and local practitioners alike. Facilitators need to ensure that they avoid such terminology; where possible, they should do their work in a local language.
- **Translation is a real skill.** When translation is required, don't underestimate the complexity of this task. Work with new translators to ensure that they understand and have the right words for key concepts before they start translating.
- **Demonstrate to national decision makers that CBNRM can work.** The newly formed government required exposure to the potential value of wildlife and tourism. Together with IRDNC and partners, MET's Directorate of Environmental Affairs worked on strategies to provide decision makers with the evidence that

CBNRM could and did work. The DEA was also responsible for an early series of publications and presentations that provided scientific and economic data on the recovery of wildlife and the value of benefits generated by conservancies (both tangible and intangible). This is an ongoing task, particularly as ministers, deputy ministers and permanent secretaries change every few years. It was also critical to ensure that regional governors and councillors understood how CBNRM could benefit their constituents. The annual State of Conservancy Report, which contains inputs from all partners, is an important advocacy tool.

- **Field exposure is essential.** There is no substitute for exposing key partners – senior government officials, donors and community representatives – to direct experiences in the field. Much senior time and resources have been spent over the years hosting important partners, showing them the work where it is taking place, as well as exposing them to local community perspectives. Such trips are never a waste of time, even though benefits may take time to become apparent.

4 **Remain flexible, and look for creative or alternative ways of working.**

Despite the clear parameters of the conservancy legislation, which is based on solid common property management philosophy, implementation involved lateral thinking and flexibility. There are always unforeseen barriers in the way of putting policy into practice. Approaches must also change as the programme evolves.

- **Political savvy and ingenuity may also be required.** In the early days of conservancy registration, it was often difficult to predict or understand the underlying causes of delays. Some were a result of community discord; others came from MET head office stalling when confronted with conflict or problems. IRDNC's local staff had insiders' insights into local issues, and armed with this knowledge, they were able to work with our technical assistance staff on innovative ways to move forward. An example was a conflict that arose in Torra Conservancy, where one small group did not want to be part of the conservancy. After local staff identified the area and individuals involved, IRDNC proposed to MET that the registration of the conservancy go ahead, but with the conflict area excluded until a settlement was reached. Torra was then registered, and several years later the inhabitants of the disputed area chose rather to join a neighbouring conservancy.
- **Adapt guidelines and templates for local needs.** Today, the national programme is still dealing with flawed conservancy constitutions. All of us were in uncharted territory, and none of the partners focused on localising constitutions. A template constitution was provided by the MET, and while some of it was suitable, hindsight has shown that certain clauses were neither realistic nor useful for the running of rural CBOs. A time-consuming process of reviewing constitutions through participatory village-level consultations in Wupero, Sobbe and Kwandu conservancies has shown that locally developed constitutions lead to improved compliance and governance.



- **Go below committees.** As conservancies matured, it became clear that there were gaps in our implementation strategy. It was a trade-off: we used our limited time and resources on committees, and thus left behind ordinary conservancy members. Translated posters about the roles and responsibilities of ordinary members vs. those of committees were produced and public meetings were held, but these were inadequate to ensure widespread local understanding. As a result, there was confusion and conflict at early Annual General Meetings (AGMs). While intense training for committees is needed (and needs to be repeated when a new committee is elected), it is just as important to reach the public – those who vote for a committee.
- **Spread the training.** Going below committees requires a number of approaches. For example, committee financial training should include some influential ordinary conservancy members to spread knowledge and understanding of accountability for collective income. It is also useful for the conservancy to divide itself into smaller units, each with its own representatives, to decentralise decision making and spending.



- **Require financial rigour.** Support NGOs and conservancies have also learnt that large amounts of conservancy income should be kept in an account separate from the day-to-day running costs account, and should have different signatories. It has also emerged that women seem to make better treasurers than young men, and we have yet to see a case of theft or fraud involving a woman in this role.
- **Plan diligently and be passionate.** The early days of assisting conservancies to register stretched the NGO's limited resources. We needed to be both flexible and strategic. This required careful planning, plus commitment and passion from the staff in this pioneering phase.

5 **Facilitate relevant forums for learning, monitoring, exchange and accountability.**

A range of forums have been developed to facilitate exchange and learning, and importantly, to allow for peer review and accountability.

- **Allow for structured joint planning.** What started as a structured quarterly planning meeting for the NGO's own staff in the early 1990s grew into an important forum for peer learning and review. These quarterly planning and evaluation workshops are now integral to the programme. All target conservancies and IRDNC staff come together with government, other support agencies and researchers to report back on the past three months and plan for the upcoming quarter. All parties are thus held accountable for their plans and performance. The workshops also provide learning, sharing and feedback opportunities; they enhance co-ordination of technical inputs and peer review by conservancies and others.
- **Adapt as the situation requires.** The high number of conservancies renders holding these meetings in remote areas a logistical challenge, and they have had to be adapted and split into sub-regions. Nevertheless, their value far outweighs the costs. Conservancies now share costs, for example by providing meat and their own transport.
- **A national steering committee keeps it all together.** Another key early planning and coordination forum was the national steering committee set up by the WWF/ United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) programme that started in the mid-1990s and preceded a national CBNRM association of support organisations. At a time when there was major growth in the CBNRM programme, this committee met quarterly to provide oversight and guidance to the WWF-LIFE project. But because its members reflected the key players in CBNRM, both from the field and the national capital, Windhoek, it served as a formidable national-level think-tank and forum for coordination of the entire programme.
- **Rules don't fit all situations.** In developing countries, where the pool of specialists is usually small, customs that apply in large, well established countries do not always work. Having people who were directly involved in implementing the programme as members of the early LIFE steering committee created synergy and drove the work forward, even if having such a committee was not standard practice elsewhere. When grant decisions were tabled that pertained to organisations whose representatives were present, it was simple enough to require that such representatives reclused themselves. Those on the committee who were not implementing CBNRM proved the least likely to attend meetings.
- **A national association of CBNRM support organisations can help with coordination and advocacy.** In marked contrast to other USAID-funded projects in the region, which generally retained their "outsider" identity, from the start Namibian ownership of the LIFE programme was acknowledged and promoted, and this was an important reason for its success. The second phase of the LIFE

programme called for a Namibian CBNRM body to guide its activities and assist with national coordination. After some birthing problems, the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO) was established. Leanly staffed, its role is not to implement CBNRM but to help its members coordinate their work through working groups and to do advocacy work for the national programme.

- **Exposure visits can be powerful learning experiences.** They need, however, to be carefully structured and well facilitated, particularly for adults being exposed to working examples of new ways. Community members had to learn about the tourism and wildlife industry. Representatives were taken on numerous vigilantly orchestrated experiential learning trips to lodges, campsites, national parks, game auctions, taxidermists, and so on. Experience and first-hand learning enabled people to think beyond local issues and apply and adapt what they had seen to local conditions. For example, attending the annual Namibian Game Auction made a powerful impression on community leaders, who had not yet realised that wild animals were so valuable or could even be sold. Being tourists for the first time also had an impact on people and enabled them to better understand tourism.
- **Conduct local level monitoring.** A number of activities coordinate planning and review progress. Local-level monitoring is reviewed biannually through the “Event Book” audits. Developed with both technical and local inputs, the Event Book system is a management tool for conservancies. Game guards use event books to record game and spoor sightings and various events, including illegal hunting and human – wildlife conflict. These records are collated and transferred into a file for committees to use in management decisions. Caprivi’s CRMs (all local women) use a similar system. Audits bring together neighbouring conservancies so that monitoring records can be checked and reviewed, contributing to implementation rigour and the sharing of data. The group awards prizes to the conservancy and the individual game guard whose event books are best kept. The system has been adapted by the MET for use by its staff in national parks, and several neighbouring countries have also adapted it to suit their own purposes.
- **Foster conservancy accountability.** Local-level AGMs and other report-back platforms have become a focus of technical support. Required by constitutions, the AGMs and intermittent General Meetings are key instruments for conservancy



communication and decision making. Supporting conservancies to run effective and constitutional AGMs, as well as other regular feedback mechanisms, contributes to greater accountability and transparency between committees and the people they represent. The fact that a number of AGMs have been stopped by members - and committees told to produce a better financial report, for example - illustrates that ordinary people are starting to understand their rights.

- **Make use of participatory programme evaluations.** These have been used for knowledge generation rather than just the compilation of recommendations for donors and the NGO. Well structured, participatory and improvement-orientated external evaluations have allowed the organisation to be accountable to its donors and target communities, and has added to both understanding and action. They take longer, but are worth the investment.

6 Recognise that as different partners have important roles at different times, appropriate linkages should be maintained.

At different stages in most projects, different stakeholders need to be involved. What is important is to make sure that the right people are identified and are able to make meaningful contributions at the most appropriate times. For example, programme interest in conservancy game guards has waned at times, partly because poaching had been brought under control, but also because institutional support and facilitation of income generation were compelling needs. However, the escalating rhino and elephant poaching crisis in southern Africa since 2008 has put the spotlight back on these men.

- **Find meaningful ways to keep founder stakeholders involved.** In the early days, there was much focus on working through the local TA, CGGs and individual MET staff. This shifted to working with appropriate local groups who had a mandate over wildlife and development issues. Many of these groups became the conservancy committees, which continue to be the main focus of IRDNC’s work. Some of the older community members and TAs felt bypassed and excluded, and in some cases actively boycotted conservancies. Ways to re-involve them so that their wisdom and the stability they provided was not lost had to be found.
- **Balance knowledge with wisdom.** New CBNRM institutions require skills which are usually provided by younger people who are literate, at home in a digital environment and can drive. While these skills are important for the running of a conservancy, a balance between knowledge and wisdom is needed. A Himba conservancy’s elegant solution was twinning young, literate workers with an older and wiser person. The young worker was described as the pen that writes; the older worker as the hand that holds it. Unfortunately, this model is uncommon.
- **Be prepared for the tension that change causes.** As conservancies matured, it was important that they took over the management of their CGGs. This proved to be a difficult process. Although they were identified and appointed by their traditional

leaders and communities, they had been given logistical and technical support by IRDNC for many years. When registered conservancies had the requisite funds and skills to take over the game guards, the change was met with strong objections. Many of the older CGGs had concerns about falling under a conservancy committee made up of younger people. The process was carefully facilitated through a number of heated meetings, and now CGGs are well established in the conservancies. The same process had to be negotiated with CRMs in Caprivi.

7 *CBNRM practitioners need high levels of self awareness and should regularly evaluate their roles and capacity.*

Support agencies must be able to play a number of roles with a solid mandate and concomitant confidence. NGOs can become so absorbed in the development philosophy surrounding community empowerment that communities are either expected to take on more responsibilities than they can handle (and then fail) or the practitioners try to mask or downplay the central role their NGO is playing. At times IRDNC has been criticised for being too heavy in its level of involvement. After evaluating such inputs our conclusion was that our approach is in response to real needs as perceived by our ground view. We should try to be realistic about the level of capacity of communities – and not risk disempowering people by handing over too many responsibilities too quickly. Good judgement is required to be able to move between heavier and light touch approaches in response to local situations.

- **Be prepared to play a variety of roles.** IRDNC has been in the field for many years, during which time it has played a number of different roles (some assigned, some assumed); this has required the ability to shift and adapt. The NGO has often had to play a brokering role between conservancies and partners, while at the same time remaining neutral and objective in the face of internal community conflict. Without a range of staff bringing both technical skills and local understanding, this would not have been possible. Understanding local politics and power relations is a strength, but the intuition of local staff regarding when to bring in external players to help solve local deadlocks is also important.
- **Participation is hard work.** The more participatory the process, the stronger the facilitators need to be. It's not enough to define roles and responsibilities and let the process take its course. Participation, like democracy, is hard work, and strong leadership makes for more effective implementation. This lesson applies equally to international NGOs, local NGOs and CBOs. Practitioners need to evolve continuously to remain relevant to the changing support needs and expectations of partner communities without losing sight of the NGO's own mission.
- **Build women's capacity** – don't just fill quotas. The participation and inclusion of women in CBNRM has been an interesting journey. An early step was ensuring that women had the same access to information as men, and special strategies had to be developed to achieve this. Another important aspect was building the capacity of women to engage in CBNRM at different levels. Local women working for the NGO proved to be important as role models for other women.

Lessons learnt

- **Lead by example.** Support agencies generally have a high level of visibility within communities, particularly when they are field-based, and they need to set high standards of governance within their own institutions. An example of leading by doing, not just talking, relates to IRDNC's senior management forums, which guide our regional work. Such collaborative group leadership has major advantages, but can also be more challenging than having one leader at the head of a hierarchy. However, it has elements of what we are asking of conservancies who are led by committees; our own collaborative leadership experiences should thus enrich our work with CBOs.



8 *Withdrawal of support should be slow and strategic.*

Fully independent CBOs have been used by the programme as markers of success. As conservancies have evolved, however, we have learnt that for a number of reasons, NGOs still have a role to play. One is the range of new opportunities to address major environmental challenges provided by these organised local structures. Thus we are working with conservancies on range restoration, fire management and trans-boundary synergy, among other things. Then there is the issue of conservancy capacity itself – committees change as new members are voted in at democratic elections, and skills and institutional memory can thus be lost. Training is still required, and new sustainable delivery strategies have to be developed by national programme partners. Monitoring tools have also been designed to help conservancies evaluate performance and accountability. Entrenching democracy is a long road.

- **Allow sufficient time for the transfer of management and accountability.** A role of IRDNC has been to provide small start-up grants to new conservancies to assist them to employ staff and fulfil management obligations. The grants were used as

Lessons learnt

a learning opportunity for committees who managed the funds themselves, but were accountable to the NGO. With facilitation, committees developed their own budgets so that in time they would not need further support.

Holding conservancies accountable for donor grant money is relatively straightforward compared to the accountability issues that arise once conservancies start earning their own income. We were ill equipped to engage with this stage of the programme and had to play catch-up to engender an understanding of accountability for collective income. In a number of cases, such money is still not being adequately managed. Good lessons have been learnt about the timing of support withdrawal and ways to facilitate internal mechanisms for control and management. Some CBOs have called us back in to help set up systems and control measures.

- **Employment benefits must be weighed against the need to limit operating costs.** IRDNC viewed keeping conservancy management costs down as being important. Not all conservancies agree, however, and we have seen costs rise as conservancies sometimes chose to employ more people than we believe necessary. But as these are independent CBOs, this is their choice, and there is merit in a conservancy providing as many local jobs as possible. However, building systems so that operating costs do not use all potential benefits is also important. This involves sustainability planning with conservancies, and the provision of tools to keep operating costs reasonable and stable, thereby allowing greater scope for income to be used to the benefit of members through projects and cash dividends.
- **Loans should be repaid, but often aren't.** A type of illicit use of conservancy income has been "loans" to community members. Most, however, have never been repaid. A specialist in this field is needed to help conservancies institutionalise a loan fund.
- **Phasing out grants should be done with care.** Allowing time for a conservancy's income to build up before withdrawing their grant funding is another strategy that has not always gone according to plan – because of pressure from donors, inadequate funding and poor engagement by the private sector. As benefits from living with wildlife are meant to flow from conservancies, it is important that not all their income is swallowed by management costs. However, the transfer of full costs has sometimes taken place before conservancies are able to absorb these.
- **The private sector's role in meeting costs must be understood.** Adequate benefit-sharing arrangements between conservancies and the private sector have been slow to come to fruition. Conservancy operating costs include salaries of staff, the maintenance of an office, vehicles, day-to-day management and meetings. Seeing all conservancy income going into conservation management has disillusioned some members. Ways to better engage and educate private sector tourism enterprises whose businesses depend on communities being prepared to continue to live with and conserve wildlife are thus critical.

Lessons learnt

The more participatory the process, the stronger the facilitators need to be

*When the music changes,
so does the dance
- African proverb*

CHAPTER

TRANSFORMING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN COMMUNAL AREAS

Bottom lines

Honest brokering

Shifting perceptions

Social empowerment

4

LESSONS LEARNT

1. Be prepared to offer long-term and strategic support to community-based enterprises.
2. The role of a facilitator as honest broker is essential, but requires self-reflection, consistency and a proactive approach.
3. Multi-level interventions are essential, including local negotiations between partners, regional tourism planning and programmatic engagement in national policy formulation.
4. The value of financial returns, as one of the drivers of CBNRM, should not overshadow the importance of localised collective responsibility and governance.

CASE STUDIES:

- i The challenges of equitable benefit sharing from community-based businesses
- ii Negotiating a joint venture
- iii Namibia's first conservancy campsites inside a national park
- iv Sustainable craft enterprises

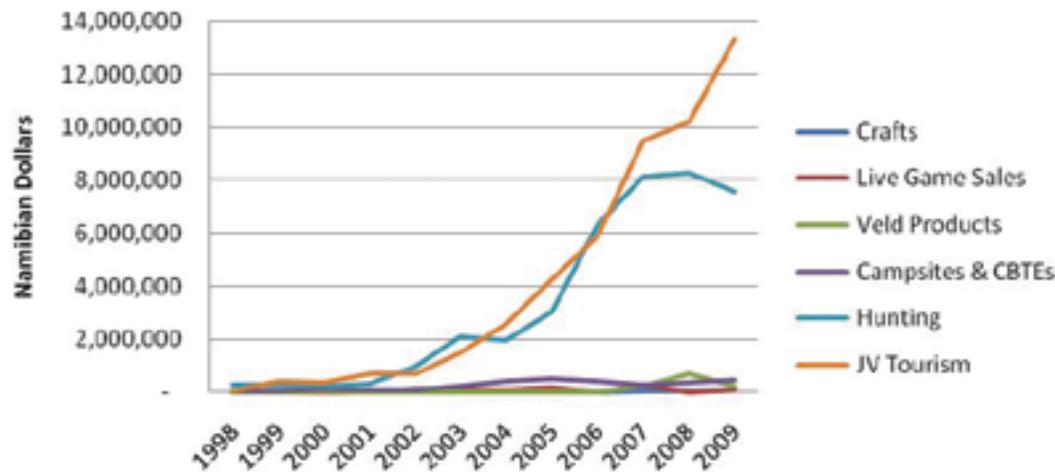
This chapter describes lessons learnt through assisting conservancies to develop their own tourism businesses and engage with private sector tourism in Kunene Region and Caprivi Region. In addition to adding to our understanding of a holistic and integrated CBNRM programme, this summary of lessons may provide a useful checklist and planning tool for those embarking on new enterprise development initiatives. It also provides a framework for assessing progress being made with projects. Each context is different, however, and there is no holy grail – only principles..

A triple bottom line approach guides our tourism and enterprise work with communities – seeking to link income generation to conservation and to social empowerment. The lessons, supported by case studies, focus mainly on joint venture (JV) lodge partnerships, and conservancy-run campsites where members have collective rights over the natural resources upon which the enterprises depend.

IRDNC's experience

In 1996, legislation was passed giving consumptive and non-consumptive rights over wildlife to conservancies. These rights were extended in 2002 to cover products from community forests. Since then, IRDNC has placed considerable emphasis on assisting conservancies to develop their income flow from wildlife- and plant-based enterprises. When the first conservancies were registered in 1998, there were only four community-run campsites and one community – private sector JV lodge in Kunene and Caprivi. In addition, a lodge owner had started a traditional village for tourists in Caprivi, and IRDNC was working with a Damara community on a living museum in Kunene. IRDNC had also mobilised Caprivi communities to sell thatching grass to the private sector from roadside depots, building on an initiative started by a lodge operator, and had helped facilitate once-off cash distributions from one lodge in Caprivi and another in Kunene.

Benefits (N\$) in IRDNC Focal Areas



Growth of income and benefits accruing to conservancies in IRDNC focal areas

These initial early investments laid the foundation for an impressive growth in the number of conservancies benefiting from tourism-based ventures. In Caprivi and Kunene alone, by the beginning of 2011, a total of 76 ventures were operational: 26 JV lodges, 22 trophy hunting concessions, three premium hunting and six shoot-and-sell agreements, 11 campsites, and three craft markets; five veld products were also being marketed.

Along with partners from NACSO's Business Livelihood and Enterprise Working Group, IRDNC has been instrumental in raising funds and facilitating the design and construction of a variety of tourism ventures, including campsites, a self-catering lodge and an up-market lodge, all of which are owned by conservancies. IRDNC enterprise units in Caprivi and Kunene have also taken the lead in capacity building, providing critical training to such operational aspects as enterprise management, maintenance and marketing. The NGO has furthermore served as a neutral broker in the negotiation of a range of JVs and hunting concessions, while simultaneously training and assisting CBOs to negotiate

with the private sector in these deals. A small IRDNC team has worked closely with hundreds of craftspeople (mainly women) and helped to develop sustainable markets (see the crafts case study in this chapter).

A week in the life of an Enterprise Unit officer might range from facilitating negotiations between an inexperienced community and an impatient businessman, assisting a building contractor to ferry materials across a flooded river to an island campsite and training conservancy members in managing a campsite, to working with a conservancy committee and staff on managing income from lodge fees and campsites. Such daily tasks are supplemented by leading periodic exposure visits for conservancy members to experience, for the first time in their lives, what it means to be a tourist. Time also has to be spent helping conservancies and private sector manage conflicts and maintain their relationships.

IRDNC has for many years assisted conservancies to generate benefits. The results of these efforts reflect steady increases each year.

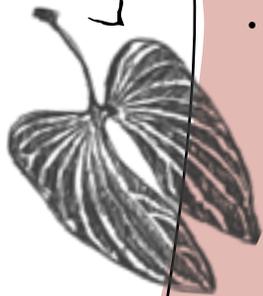


1 *Be prepared to offer long-term and strategic support to community-based enterprises.*

The development of successful community-based tourism enterprises is a time-consuming process that requires sustained, long-term support far beyond the scope of a typical three- or five-year donor funding cycle. Experience has taught that such ventures, whether community-run or in partnership with private sector, require technical investment well after the initial capital and negotiation investments. While the initial support will be more intense, a dripping tap approach over time – with regular, low-key monitoring and support to follow up training – has proved to be the most appropriate approach for creating a sustainable foundation for community-based enterprises.

- **Consistent support to both conservancies and the private sector** is necessary to promote good levels of mutual understanding, respect and trust, and is important for the growth of an effective partnership. Because rural communities are less experienced than private sector enterprises, when – as they often are – time and resources are in short supply, support has sometimes been biased in favour of the communities, resulting in inadequate focus on private sector requirements.
- **Beware of unrealistic expectations.** A recurring concern is unrealistic community expectations of high returns in the short term. Consequently, when these returns do not materialise, stakeholders can become disillusioned and withdraw their support for CBNRM activities. NGOs need to be rigorous when discussing potential benefits and keep communities and leaders properly informed of progress and setbacks.
- **On-going dialogue is needed.** The signing of a JV contract is just the start of a formal relationship between a conservancy and an investor. Regular dialogue is essential for the establishment of effective communication and a long-term relationship built on trust. Nevertheless, the contractual obligation for regular Joint Management Committee meetings is often not given the attention required, ultimately leading to poor communication, conflict and distrust. The assisting NGO is pivotal to ensuring that such meetings do take place. Those JVs who do meet on a routine basis have proven to have the most robust partnerships.
- **Local experience needs room to grow.** The performance of community conservation businesses is not determined by good intentions, correct terminology, appropriate policies and available funding alone; the experience acquired through the often-taxing process of actually working towards these ends is just as important. Mistakes will be made, but it is important that communities be given the opportunity to learn from their own mistakes and experiences. For example, they need to learn the difference between a genuine operator wishing to have a partnership and one who promises everything, but delivers little.

Lessons learnt



2 *The role of a facilitator as honest broker is essential, but requires self-reflection, consistency and a proactive approach.*

- **The divide between the private sector and conservancies must be bridged.** The private sector and conservancies have very different agendas, priorities, ethics and world views. Contractual negotiations are just the start in reconciling such deep-rooted differences. For the private sector, time is money, but if negotiations are rushed through, problems will inevitably arise. Communities are never homogenous; because all local interest groups must be involved, they require time to reach consensus. NGOs can offer useful services to both sides, particularly in promoting an understanding of the different perspectives and needs of each party.
- **Terminology can be a barrier.** A more superficial, yet equally challenging factor, is the language and terminology barrier that exists between the private sector and local stakeholders. Differences in terminology can easily lead to misunderstandings that can set back a negotiation process and damage trust between parties. For example, a committee's request for a meeting or for information, if not accompanied by the "please" and "thank you" demanded by "western" etiquette, can be misunderstood as a rude demand. A facilitator's starting point is to help the two groups to understand each other's agendas and priorities, and to communicate at the same level with one other. A useful process is to bring all parties together – the conservancy leadership, private sector representatives, regional council and government conservation and tourism staff – for a two- to three-day workshop. This starts with all parties describing their visions for the future, and their key issues, including their respective problems and needs in relation to tourism.

Remarkable overlaps emerge, as well as differences. This carefully facilitated process should continue for long enough for the conservancy to visit the enterprises and for the private sector to gain a real understanding of the conservancy's role and outlook. This can only happen when the parties spend sufficient time together. Contractual negotiations are not discussed until a final session, by which time the visions of the parties are likely to be more closely aligned.



- **Take up the challenges associated with honest brokering.** To be an honest broker, the facilitator needs to understand the perspectives of private sector and the community, as well as inherent biases in his/her own views. The facilitator

Lessons learnt

is also a stakeholder, insofar as he/she has contractual obligations to donors or the government, and is likely to take a moral stance, such as not wanting an inexperienced community to be manipulated in a contractual relationship by the more experienced private sector. It is essential for the facilitator to exercise caution when expressing his/her views or proposing a course of action. Failure in this regard may result in the facilitator losing the trust of one or both parties, and consequently the ability to play the role of a neutral broker.

- **Don't lose sight of environmental priorities.** A good facilitator will ensure that sustainable management of the environment is not forgotten in the negotiations. For example, lodge owners in Kunene's Marienfluss Conservancy were concerned that placement of community croplands close to the Kunene River would destroy riverine vegetation and the tourism appeal of areas near their lodges. The NGO was able to point out that clearing natural vegetation for crop growing on river banks anywhere, not just near the lodges, causes riverbank erosion and is illegal. A win-win solution was found: the lodges provided a small water pump so that crops could be grown inland, away from the river.



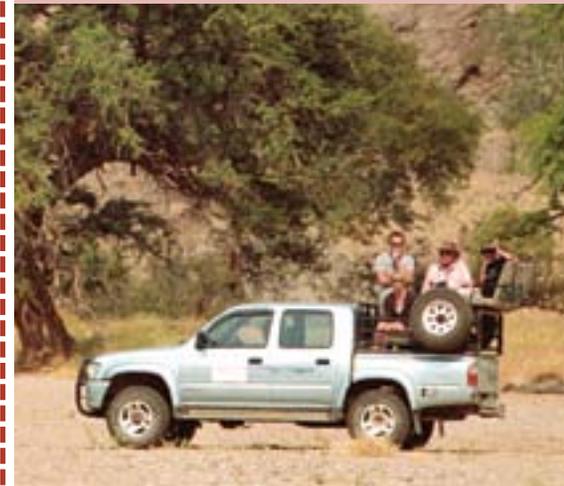
- **Earn respect and trust.** It is essential for a good facilitator to gain the respect and trust of all parties, including conservancy committees, community members, TAs and other local leaders, private sector partners, government staff and others. This requires time, effort, impartiality and a proactive approach. Senior NGO staff have on occasion been called on to mediate in a lodge staff strike or a demonstration against a lodge by a community.

3 **Multi-level interventions are essential, including local negotiations between partners, regional tourism planning and programmatic engagement in national policy formulation.**

- **Move from the local to the national.** The Namibian CBNRM programme started at the grassroots level, where it acquired a groundswell of community support. However, an important factor behind its entrenchment and expansion was the work done at policy and legislation level. The rights and roles that go together with meaningful community involvement in conservation and tourism have been effectively enshrined in policy and legislation. Namibia's strong policy

and legislative CBNRM framework devolved rights to the user-level, specified responsibilities which ensure sustainable management of natural resources, and unlocked new opportunities that have allowed CBNRM to flourish.

- **Navigate ambiguities.** Existing community-based legislation is neither comprehensive nor unambiguous. For example, conservancies have both consumptive and non-consumptive user-rights over natural resources, but not over land, which is regulated by other legislation and management structures. This means firstly that conservancies may not be able to enforce certain tourism exclusion obligations that are a key requirement of most of the JV contracts; and secondly that they may need to enter into multiple and often complex partnerships with other stakeholders such as TAs, Land Boards and individual land users to comply with their own contractual obligations. Constructive and proactive



engagement with other line ministries that control key resources (land, water, grazing, etc.) is required. Conservancies also need to lobby their local politicians and TAs to recognise these CBOs as the de facto bodies dealing with tourism and hunting.

- **Changing people's perceptions takes time.**

Despite some encouraging attitudinal shifts, tourism and trophy hunting continue to be perceived by most

black Namibians, including government staff and leadership, as a "white" industry. The fact that most tourism companies are still owned by whites or have foreign shareholdings underpins this perception. The CBNRM programme is working hard to transform the industry, but it will take time to foster trust from both the political leadership and the industry. The same perception to some extent still affects wildlife conservation, although by directly involving communities in conservation and tourism and by developing African ways of doing conservation, CBNRM is helping to change this situation. As documented elsewhere, it is not enough to facilitate community benefits and involvement – it is also essential to ensure that these achievements are clearly and repeatedly communicated to decision makers.

- **Paradigms still need to change.** It is important to scale up local tourism efforts to the level of the industrial sector in Namibia. This will necessitate engagement not only with lodge owners, but also with representatives of the industry (such as national hospitality and hunting associations) if a true paradigm shift is to take place. The industry has for decades operated in communal areas in an unstructured

and exploitative manner. More than 40 per cent of Namibia's communal lands (over 16 per cent of the entire country) is now registered under conservancies, and legislation gives these CBOs consumptive and non-consumptive rights over resources that are the foundation of tourism, including hunting enterprises. Despite this, many operators continue to attempt to circumvent conservancies, or seek to meet only the bare minimum standards of involvement, protesting that employment opportunities constitute enough of a benefit for local communities. Some lodges regard fees as handouts that will be wasted by the conservancy committee. Once the contract has been signed and tenure (leasehold) secured, many lodge managers then reduce the level of engagement to the minimum possible. This paradigm must change, and the industry must recognise the conservancies as legitimate and valid partners.

- **Champions for JVs must be encouraged.** The notion that conservancies are managing and conserving the natural resources upon which their enterprises are based has not yet been adequately internalised by some private sector entities.



Although the majority of conservancies are doing relatively well (and conservation on communal lands has never been stronger), some conservancies are still weak, and make mistakes. Stories about conflict and error seem to circulate more easily within the tourism industry than those about achievement and success. Intensified advocacy is needed, and those actors in tourism who are champions for JVs with conservancies should be identified and promoted.

- **Zonation is essential.** Conservancies and private sector must understand and respect the conservancy's zonation rules. For example, photographic tourism and hunting are not comfortable bedfellows; only if zones are clearly demarcated and all parties abide by these zones can both flourish. In Caprivi where conservancies are relatively small, Wuparo conservancy has overcome the challenge of choosing between trophy hunting or tourism by bringing their JV lodge and trophy hunting partners together to jointly find ways to manage these two conflicting forms of land use in the same area.

4 **The value of financial returns, as one of the drivers of CBNRM, should not overshadow the importance of localised collective responsibility and governance.**

Conservancies can become too focused on immediate economic and financial returns. While there is an obvious need to generate income, this should be balanced with social and conservation benefits. The challenge is to ensure that financial returns are not seen as an end in themselves, but as a means towards the attainment of social and environmental goals.

- **It's not only about money.** One should be wary of allowing the CBNRM programme to be driven solely by financial considerations. If support agencies and community members become too focused on financial gain (which is understandable in areas of extreme poverty), they might lose sight of the relevance of conservation and good governance, and the sustainability of the entire programme would be threatened. Where this has been allowed to happen, questionable decisions have been taken by community members. For example, regarding quota setting for trophy hunting, some conservancies have been known to request off-take numbers far in excess of what is sustainable. Such short-term exploitation of the resource base would threaten the future of both the conservancy and its private sector partners.
- **Accountability needs to be taught.** Ironically, large sums of rapidly generated income are increasingly becoming a major challenge. Without innovative and well considered approaches that address and implement good financial governance, conservancies can be undermined by less scrupulous members. Training materials, courses for treasurers and regular follow-up services to support committees have not been able to fully address the need for transparency and accountability in all conservancies. A comprehensive review of constitutions, and specifically their terms relating to financial governance, is required. In addition, it is important that conservancy management staff tasked with financial governance, along with other influential community members, be made aware of financial flows and decision-making procedures so that they can understand and exercise their oversight role.
- **Good role models for accountability and responsibility are worth their weight in gold.** Such models are all too scarce in Africa – and indeed in the whole world. Where there are popular international champions of good governance, their views should be promoted and spread locally, for example through inspirational videos of their speeches and of related governance projects.
- **Social empowerment.** Those sceptical about the benefits of social empowerment should be reminded that the early successes of community conservation in the northwest of Namibia (the home of the largest free-roaming population of black rhino in the world) were achieved by establishing a vision and sense of local ownership of wildlife through direct involvement of communities in conservation. Minimal financial benefits accrued in the early days; it took nearly 20 years, from the earliest community-based activities in the early 1980s, for the CBNRM programme to become nationally entrenched and for communities to start generating financial returns from lodges and hunting.

Note

These four lessons have been drawn from the Namibian context, yet have relevance beyond Namibia's borders. Irrespective of where one is working, there is a need to have a long-term commitment, a balanced approach that ensures good communication, and healthy partnerships that can address the complex nature of relationships and financial governance.

CASE STUDY 1

The challenges of equitable sharing of benefits from community based businesses

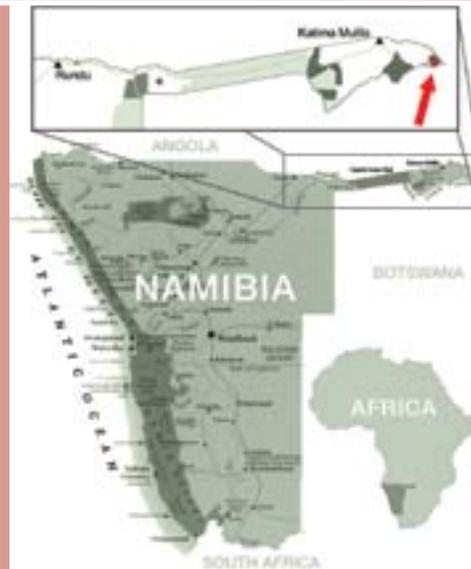
The facilitation of self-governance systems that ensure collective benefits from community efforts are not hijacked by a few individuals is a universal concern when addressing common property management issues. Community-based conservation stands or falls on the philosophy that all users of the collectively owned natural resources should benefit, not just some. The following examples highlight instances where attempts were made to hijack benefits from conservancies and the actions taken to counter these situations.

Kasika Conservancy

In 1997, a tourism operator obtained a PTO (Permission to Occupy) from government for a piece of communal land on the Chobe River. This was done in agreement with the Traditional Authority who obtained assurances that he would receive an annual payment and that his family members would be employed. Prior to Namibia's independence this was the accepted way to obtain a tourism site in communal lands.

In 2003 the PTO was sold to a new operator and Chobe Savanna Lodge was constructed and opened. In 2005 the newly registered Kasika Conservancy, with legal rights over tourism and a mandate from the Traditional Authority, began their joint venture negotiations. In 2007, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the conservancy and lodge and fees were for the first time paid to the conservancy committee.

However, the payment of significant fees to the conservancy set-off a series of problems. The conservancy and operator lost the



Kasika Conservancy

support of the TA, who no longer received any income from the lodge. Knowing that the lodge and conservancy were unpopular with the TA, the customary landholder of the lodge area (a strong-willed elder of the Kasika community) pressurised the new conservancy chairman (a young, inexperienced school-leaver) to pay him N\$ 40 000 per year for setting aside "his land" for a lodge. Despite resistance from the conservancy committee, the landholder obtained approval from the TA, and from conservancy members at a conservancy AGM. A year later, the problem compounded when the same landholder agreed to support, in return for a similar fee of N\$ 40 000 per year, a leasehold application for a new houseboat operator in an area that had been set aside by the conservancy for the exclusive use of Chobe Savanna Lodge.

CASE STUDY 1 continued

These case studies further reinforce the validity of the CBNRM lessons learnt in relation to the creation and sharing of community benefits over more than 25 years.

The conservancy challenged the application on the basis that there had been no negotiations with them, and that the new leasehold application would breach their existing contract with Chobe Savanna. But the TA overruled the conservancy's objections and instructed them to write a letter of support for the houseboat operator. As a result, in 2009, the Caprivi Land Board approved the lease application of the houseboat operator and declined the leasehold that had been submitted by Chobe Savanna Lodge. This was despite the fact that without the leasehold, Chobe Savanna's potentially highly profitable partnership with the conservancy, and associated 25 community members' jobs, would be put in jeopardy. In response, Chobe Savanna announced that their contract with the conservancy had been breached and their fee payment was halted.

This damaging precedent where the landholder had greater influence over land allocation than the conservancy had serious implications. Firstly, other customary landholders observed that despite the conservancy being in place and having the legal rights over tourism, it is still possible to benefit directly from the operators. Many of them have since directly approached the owners of the remaining tourism operations, including King's Den Lodge, houseboats and even trophy hunters. Secondly, it presents the possibility that current and new operators will attempt to negotiate directly with the customary landholders and TAs, which could ease their access to land, and lower their fees. In effect, such actions would totally undermine the purpose and viability of the Kasika Conservancy.

With some manoeuvring behind the scenes, IRDNC was able to reverse this extremely

worrisome situation. Prior to the final Land Board and TA hearings on the matter, IRDNC briefed (verbally and with back-up documents) a number of key people, including the chief on the situation and the consequences of such illegal arrangements. As a result, both the Land Board and TA agreed in separate meetings it would be inappropriate to give a right of leasehold for a commercial tourism agreement between a tourism operator and an individual landholder.

The lessons learned from this case include:

- A clause in the joint venture agreement with the conservancy should include a fee to the TA in recognition of the value of the leadership the TA provides.
- Contractual agreement of zonation for exclusive areas for tourism operators should be agreed on and signed not only by the operator and conservancy, but also by the TA and the customary landholder.
- Conservancies should consider compensation for customary landholders' loss of livelihoods from grazing, cropping, and fishing due to a tourism operation on the basis of those most affected receiving higher benefits.
- All parties must clearly understand the agreement and its ramifications.

Lianshulu village versus Balyerwa Conservancy

The following case highlights two examples of attempted hijackings of benefits by Lianshulu village, one of the member villages of Balyerwa Conservancy. The first example concerns a lodge that was constructed in the

CASE STUDY 1 continued

conservancy, and the second, a campsite concession in the Mudumu National Park. In 1990, just days before Independence, the out-going South African government gazetted the Mudumu National Park, forcing the relocation of communities living inside the park. After independence the new government recognized the plight of the displaced Lianshulu community and offered them a tourism concession in the Park. However by the mid 1990s, the negotiations ran into trouble and stalled because Sauzuo Village who had given up land for the relocated Lianshulu community, also wanted to benefit. Later, in 2007, four villages, namely Mbambazi, Sauzuo, Nongozi and Lianshulu formed Balyerwa Conservancy. This unlikely 'marriage' was impelled by the need to have a conservancy to sign a contract with a company that was willing to build and operate a lodge in the area. It was also the structure the Ministry of Environment and Tourism required for granting tourism concessions in a park.

After the signing of the contract, the former conservancy chairperson, a Lianshulu resident, denied the legitimacy of the deal and gave the newly opened lodge an ultimatum to pay Lianshulu village directly or he would start ploughing a field in front of the lodge. The lodge did not back down, and when ploughing began the lodge took the unusual action of immediately closing down operations and sent all staff home. Whilst this was a costly decision, it worked, as within a week there were so many complaints made against this man from his community that he stopped the ploughing and the lodge was able to continue with business as normal.

In the second incident, Lianshulu village contested Balyerwa Conservancy's application to be granted a Campsite Concession in Mudumu National Park. After the Balyerwa Committee (which included the representatives from Lianshulu Village)

successfully submitted their application to MET, other representatives of Lianshulu Village objected to the application, unless all the benefits went to their village. Lianshulu's position was based upon the fact that they were the only community to have been evicted from the Park. Consequently, they believed Lianshulu should be the sole benefactor to the concession.

Lianshulu village's efforts to secure benefits to compensate for their eviction from the park were legitimate. Also legitimate, were the demands from host communities in which Lianshulu people were relocated, to be compensated for their loss of resources and land. Due to the broader conservancy's inability to resolve internal disputes, MET decided to postpone the awarding of the concession. Funding which IRDNC had secured to develop a conservancy campsite in the Mudumu concession was redirected to another project. This situation illustrates the lesson that conservancies should consider equitable distribution of benefits that take account of the resource losses experienced by each member village.

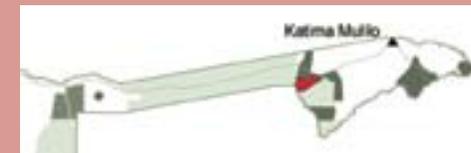
Successes, challenges and key lessons

Communal area conservancies allow poor, rural communities to receive much-needed income. But the receipt of large sums of money places immense pressure on local institutions that need strong leadership and planning skills to counter inequalities and the competition of local interests to access conservancy income. Conflict is to be expected when money comes into play. This is particularly so with new collective decision-making structures, and inexperienced leadership. It is believed that time, capacity building, and experiential learning will provide conservancies with the knowledge, skills, and maturity to address new challenges around governance of collective financial benefits.

CASE STUDY 2

Negotiating a joint venture lodge

Mashi Conservancy in the Caprivi Region was gazetted in March 2003. The conservancy covers 297 km² and has a population of about 4 000 people. Most of the Mashi Conservancy income and benefits come from trophy hunting and a joint venture agreement with Namushasha Lodge. This mid-market lodge is located on a prime site on the Kwando River and has easy access to Bwabwata National Park, where wildlife includes elephant, buffalo, lion, and leopard. It is one of two lodges in the conservancy and was the first one to sign a formal benefit sharing agreement.



Mashi Conservancy

When Namibia Country Lodges purchased Namushasha Lodge in 1998, they inherited a 99 year lease (which had been issued prior to Namibian Independence), and a bad relationship with neighboring local communities. Under the previous operator, a token fee was paid by the lodge to the Traditional Authority, but it was discretionary and would change from year to year with little relevance to the performance of the lodge. The fee could be halted any time that the lodge thought the "locals were not behaving". Not surprisingly the relationship between the lodge and the community was poor.

A prime objective of entering into a JV negotiation was to improve and formalize relationships and work out benefit sharing arrangements between the lodge and the

broader community, as represented by the conservancy. The resultant contract also provides a framework for conservancies to take responsibility to conserve their wildlife and the surrounding area.

As a precursor to JV partnerships in Caprivi, a survey of existing lodges, including Namushasha Lodge, was conducted. The survey informed the process that was then used to facilitate negotiations. The survey also raised the concern that the conservancy legislation does not give a conservancy sufficient authority to fulfill the obligations agreed in a contract around the granting of exclusive rights over particular areas. It was thus recommended that representatives of the TA and the Village Development Committee (VDC) be directly involved with conservancies in JV negotiations.

This 2003 report produced a detailed activity and output schedule for the Mashi negotiations which led to the following process and results:

- Establishment of a **Reference Group** in April 2005. The group represented stakeholders that had legitimate rights or interests to the lodge and who would have any potential obligations towards a JV agreement. They included representatives from the conservancy, VDCs and TA.
- An official **Letter of Commitment** was signed in July 2005 by members of all the TAs, the VDC and the conservancy, formalizing the mandate of the reference group and clarifying their institutional roles. For example the conservancy would sign on behalf of the community and would collect and bank the fee. The letter was endorsed by the Traditional Authority.

CASE STUDY 2 continued

- A series of **Structured Workshops** were held between April and July 2005. The purpose was to develop an understanding of tourism, business, finances, partnerships, negotiation and contractual matters that would strengthen the Reference Group's understanding of a JV partnership.
- An Information / Offer package ("**The Dossier**") intended to initiate individual negotiations, was sent by the Reference Group to Namushasha Lodge at the end of 2005. This included the management plan and zonation map of the conservancy and an offer of what the conservancy could contribute to improving the attractiveness of the lodge business. There was a blank template for the investor to fill out a counter offer.
- A two-day **Stakeholder Workshop** for the Reference Group and all investors in Mashi Conservancy, including Namushasha Lodge, was held in August 2006. The purpose was to develop trust and awareness by establishing a common conservation vision of the area and to increase the understanding of the respective positions and priorities of the two partners, i.e. private sector business needs and community development needs.
- Based on the respective offers, the **Individual Negotiations** between the Reference Group and Namushasha Lodge started in earnest in 2006. This required a further four meetings to discuss individual clauses of the contract; the most contentious being the length of the contract, the holder of leasehold operating fees and the zonation of the exclusive area (see section below). IRDNC's role, together with local officials of Ministry of Environment and Tourism, was a delicate balance between acting as the 'honest



broker' and ensuring the playing field was level. A lawyer was hired to ensure legal compliance and rigour.

- In 2007 the **Contract was Finalised**. The Managing Director of Namibian Country Lodge and the Chairman of the conservancy signed the contract at a ceremony held at Namushasha Lodge and it became effective from January 2007.

The key arrangements of the joint venture agreement are:

- The conservancy makes available to the operator the Lodge Site, Exclusive Area and other Traversing Areas for a 15 year period with a 15 year renewal option.
- The Conservancy undertakes to provide an exclusive tourism area to the operator free from any new settlement or agriculture, and in which hunting is prohibited.
- In return, the Operator shall pay a fee on: 1) either the turnover starting at 6% growing to 10% by year 8; or 2) if greater in value, a fixed annual fee increasing from N\$ 6 000 per month in year 1 to N\$ 14 500 in year 8.

CASE STUDY 2 continued

- The operator undertakes to operate the lodge to the best of its ability in order to maximize financial returns to the conservancy, generate wage income and develop skills and capacity in the lodge staff.
- Both parties agreed to the formation of a Joint Management Committee (JMC) responsible for implementing the JV, resolving conflict and nominating candidates for employment.

Since the signing of the joint venture agreement in 2007, Namushasha Lodge has made regular fee payments to Mashi Conservancy, totaling N\$ 566 288 by the end of 2009. With the addition of payments towards local services and wages, the Lodge has contributed a total of N\$ 1 949 518 into the local cash economy of Mashi Conservancy.

Successes, challenges and key lessons

The relationship between Namushasha Lodge, the conservancy, and other stakeholders has not always been easy. For example, the local village area that initially gave the land started questioning why the money should go to the broader conservancy. They claimed the income should be theirs and not shared with the conservancy committee and the three other village areas that are far from the lodge. This disregards the fact that wildlife, on which tourism is based, impacts on all villages in the conservancy and needs a joint conservation effort. The tensions were exacerbated by tribal conflict and compounded by a relatively weak and ineffective conservancy that was unable to take constructive steps to address the concerns of both the village area and the lodges. A breakdown in relationships with the lodge manager in



2009 was a symptom of the loss of trust between the various stakeholders including the conservancy, local village area, the traditional authority and private sector. Each party wanted to see the benefits come to them and the lodge does not believe that the conservancy is meeting their contractual and moral obligations.

Such diverse interests illustrate how challenging it is for an uninformed lodge manager (trained to manage lodges and tourism, but not for working with rural communities) to maintain good relationships with difficult and competing communities – an often forgotten, and yet crucial, aspect of the job when running a lodge in a communal area. The lodge manager needs to have the ability to take culturally sensitive, proactive and constructive actions required to forge and maintain complex relationships.

The situation is not yet fully resolved, but after months of meetings involving local leaders, facilitated by MET and IRDNC, the conservancy committee has taken the lead in addressing concerns about unfair benefit distribution. In the 2010 revenue distribution, all villages received benefits equitably, and one of the dissatisfied villages has indicated that it is reviewing plans to break away from Mashi Conservancy.

CASE STUDY 2 continued

The Namushasha experience demonstrates the following key points:

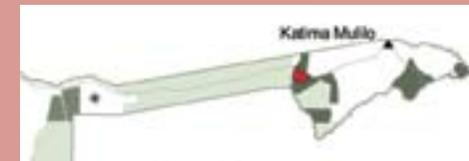
- The hard work of a JV is not in signing the contract, but rather in maintaining an effective and constructive relationship after the contract has been signed. Despite the smiles at the signing of the contracts, there remain deep seated differences between conservancies, the private sector, and various community stakeholders.
- Communication around JV operations and benefits is essential. If Mashi Conservancy members were aware that over three years Namushasha had paid close to N\$ 2 million in fees and benefits to the conservancy and its members, perhaps they would be more embracing of the partnership.
- The local NGO has a critical role in fostering the relationship between the conservancy and a lodge or assisting in the resolution of disputes between competing interests. NGOs like IRDNC straddle the interface between community and private sector and, when trusted by both parties, can successfully assist conflicting groups to come to agreement.
- Finally conservancies need help to strengthen their leadership, technical skills, and overall ability to instill a better local understanding of the conservancy's role as caretaker of the wildlife and tourism in the area. There is no quick fix to these challenges. Conservancies will have to acquire experience and confidence over time to perform these tasks, and the local NGO is a key source of this capacity-building.



CASE STUDY 3

Namibia's first conservancy campsite concession in a national park

Mayuni Conservancy in the Caprivi Region was gazetted in December 1999, and covers 151km² with a population of about 2 500. Income and benefits come from a shared trophy hunting concession, two joint venture agreements (Mazambala Island Lodge and Susuwe Island Lodge) and the Nambwa Campsite in neighbouring Bwabwata National Park. Historically, people lived in the park and during the early conservancy boundary discussions the issue of including part of Bwabwata Park in the Conservancy was raised. It was turned down by Ministry of Environment and Tourism because conservancies cannot be registered in a park. But with lobbying from IRDNC, government agreed to consider giving out tourism concessions in the park, along the Kwando River.



Mayuni Conservancy

In accordance with their innovative Parks and Neighbours Policy, and subsequently the Tourism and Wildlife Concession on State Land Policy, the Namibian Government formally awarded Mayuni Conservancy a campsite concession in Bwabwata National Park. Nambwa is one of three campsites currently in existence in Namibian parks, the other two being Kwandu Conservancy-owned Bumhill Campsite and N/goabaca Campsite, owned by the Kyaramacan Resident's Association in Bwabwata National Park. Nambwa's facilities comprise six open campsites that are set in mature

riverine forest overlooking the floodplains and backwaters. The campsite is currently an example of a successful community owned business. In its first year the camp generated a net income of N\$ 43 000 and over the years it has provided permanent employment for five people and averaged an annual turnover of N\$ 140 000.

Below are some of the key milestones that led to the MET awarding campsite concessions inside National Parks to conservancies:

• West Caprivi Socio-ecological Survey – 1990

At Independence the Ministry of Environment and Tourism conducted a socio-ecological survey of West Caprivi, assisted by IRDNC. The survey provided the social and political platform from which the idea of giving communities tourist rights in a park could be pursued.

• Parks and Neighbours Policy – 1994

The policy, which reflected IRDNC's philosophy, reinforced governments' commitment to view neighbouring communities as partners and primary stakeholders that should be given the opportunity to benefit from the natural resources they live with.

• Drafting the Bwabwata Vision - 1995/6

IRDNC was consulted extensively throughout the drafting of this important document that translated the conservation, tourism, equity and partnership visions of MET into tangible steps, including the various options for granting community concessions within the park.

CASE STUDY 3 continued

- **MET consults community – 1998**

The Under-Secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism held community meetings with Mashi, Mayuni and Kwandu Conservancies to discuss the Bwabwata vision document. The communities were asked whether they wanted to share one lodge site, or whether each wanted their own individual campsite. The conservancies chose the latter option, and Nambwa, already a popular informal camping location, was the natural choice for Mayuni.

- **Environmental Assessment done – 1998**

An environmental assessment was performed to assess the tourism product, and consider operational conditions and obligations of the conservancy. Issues such as number of sites, vehicle numbers, use of river, and campsite staff behaviour were highlighted.

- **Cabinet Endorses Bwabwata vision – 1999**

MET obtained the approval of Cabinet for the Bwabwata plans.

- **MoU between MET and Mayuni Conservancy signed – 2003**

In 2003 IRDNC helped to facilitate the signing of a five-year MoU between MET



and Mayuni Conservancy. Much of the agreement was based on the outcomes of the Environmental Impact Assessment which outlined the environmental responsibilities and obligations of the conservancy, specified the activities, duration, location, layout, environmental management, admission regulations, management facilities and reporting requirements.

- **Donor funding sourced – 2003**

IRDNC was able to source about N\$ 250 000 from the WWF/LIFE programme to develop the campsite.

- **Campsite completed - May 2003**

IRDNC hired a skilled contractor to design and build the campsite in a way that combined excellent design and stylish construction with ease of maintenance. The construction took three months and the campsite started receiving guests in June 2003, with MET's Permanent Secretary officially opening it.

- **Management options chosen**

Three different management options were discussed by the conservancy: the conservancy could lease out the concession to the private sector; manage the campsite itself; or give the campsite staff the mandate to take responsibility for day-to-day decisions. While the conservancy in principle chose the latter model, in practice they became too involved in daily management issues, failing to distinguish the difference between delegating and taking responsibility.

- **Business Plans – 2005**

In partnership with WWF/LIFE, IRDNC provided ongoing support to the operational aspects of the campsite using a Business Plan and Performance Monitoring checklist. The business plan focused on the marketing,

CASE STUDY 3 continued

training, reinvestment, monitoring and maintenance plans of the conservancy as well as the subsequent costing and cash-flow implications and projects. Once a year, a business review took place to collect and assess data from the previous year and plans for the coming year.

- **Performance Monitoring – 2005 to present**

Monitoring was and remains based on a checklist that was identified jointly with the campsite staff conservancy representatives and covers customer satisfaction, finance and administration standards, cleanliness and appearance, and maintenance of buildings and equipment. A conservancy enterprise officer reports back to the conservancy's enterprise and management committees as well as to conservancy membership at AGMs.



- **Staffing Structure**

The campsite has five campsite jobs (manager, treasurer, guide, maintenance person and gardener) and all have yearly, renewable contracts that depend on their annual performance. The campsite manager reports to the conservancy enterprise officer, who in turn, reports to the enterprise committee, a sub-committee of the conservancy management committee.

While day-to-day issues are handled by the campsite manager, important decisions such as recruitment of campsite staff are made by the conservancy management committee. Performance is monitored by the conservancy enterprise committee using checklists that are scored, and monitoring graphs act as tools to record and illustrate campsite performance.

- **Social and Conservation benefits**

Nambwa Campsite is currently in its sixth year of operation. Apart from generating an average of N\$ 140 000 turnover per year and providing five jobs, there have been major social and conservation benefits. By directly granting the neighbouring communities a stake in the park through this concession, MET has promoted good conservation practices by park neighbours, including a decrease in poaching and other illegal activities. An improved relationship between communities and MET officials has also occurred.

Successes, challenges and key lessons

The primary reasons for the success of Nambwa include:

- Recognizing the historical rights of communities:** Some families living adjacent to Nambwa campsite used to live in the park at times before it fell under state control.
- Those most affected should benefit:** The immediate neighbours have the greatest impact on the resource base and will experience the most conflict with wildlife.
- Balancing rights with responsibility and authority:** MET gave the concession to the community because they had formed a conservancy and thereby

CASE STUDY 3 continued

shown a commitment to conservation. Furthermore, a conservancy is a legal body that can be held accountable and can enter into contractual obligations, i.e. a MoU for a tourism concession.

- iv. **Empowerment is about more than just being given rights, but also being given freedom of choice:** The conservancy was given the choice between having a lodge or a campsite. They chose the latter, which may well have resulted in less revenue and job opportunities, but it certainly increased their level of ownership and commitment in supporting good conservation practise in a National Park.
- v. **Support does not stop with the construction - an ongoing support package is required:** This does not mean only assisting with business plans and performance monitoring. It also requires regular follow-up visits where a support organisation works with the campsite staff, i.e. plumbing maintenance or financial accounts. People learn from doing tasks under supervision, rather than just being told what to do and then being left to themselves.

Equally there have been numerous challenges due to slowly evolving skills and capacity.



A continuing concern is whether the financial systems are being adequately implemented. This problem has been compounded by a disjointed relationship between campsite staff and conservancy committee, with the latter often having an undue influence and taking the income generated without proper accounting procedures. In 2007 IRDNC helped review and strengthen the financial monitoring system. However, systems are only as good as the people managing them and the right selection of campsite (and conservancy) personnel is critical to the viability of a business.

A longer term challenge remains to develop sufficient business experience. Although staff are capable of the day-to-day running of a campsite, there is much pressure for the profits to go towards conservancy needs with too little being invested in marketing and maintenance. This situation needs to be rectified if the campsite is to expand or increase its profitability.

Despite these challenges, Nambwa has demonstrated that with the right policy, political will and technical support, it is possible to have a profitable and functioning campsite that has a positive impact on conservation.

CASE STUDY 4

Sustainable craft enterprises

Crafts are helping hundreds of Caprivi women – working from home, in their own time – to earn a steady income, while enhancing their role as strong, active and creative members of their communities. The craft project has also helped to revive a cultural heritage of basketry which had rapidly been disappearing.

Crafts had traditionally been made in Caprivi for domestic use, and it was not until the early 1990s that small-scale selling started. By the mid 1990s, IRDNC saw the potential for some of the more marginalised women in Caprivi – those with the lowest employment opportunities – to earn income through the making and selling of crafts from their own locally managed craft outlet.

Accordingly, in 1996 a group of women were assisted to establish their own outlet, the Mashi Craft Market. Now, on average 250 women a year benefit financially; individual earnings have risen steadily from virtually nothing to between N\$3 800 and N\$14 000 a year. Women have also benefited socially from producing and selling crafts in a sustainable and environmentally conscious way. Several local jobs, for saleswomen and a manager at the market, have been created.

Mashi Craft Market started as a small reed-and-thatch structure in Kongola, on a busy tourist route through Caprivi, in the middle of the Mayuni, Mashi, Kwandu and Wuparo conservancies. These make up the Mudumu North Complex, through which they co-manage their resources and share their quotas. The outlet is now being enlarged and rebuilt as part of

a tourism hub project, and enjoys the full support of the Mudumu conservancies.

Initially, 11 craft groups from the surrounding conservancies would meet regularly, and between them they formed a management committee of eight. They adopted a constitution outlining the market rules, including a membership fee and a 40% commission. The income derived from the commission paid for the saleswomen, and on their request, IRDNC provided initial funding for a manager, and subsequently an advisor to help run the market.

As Mashi Craft Market developed, members from other conservancies throughout Caprivi joined – mainly women, but also a few men. Items from Zambia and Zimbabwe are also sold. With technical input from IRDNC and Rössing Foundation, the manager introduced the financial and monitoring systems which enabled the coordinating committee to provide feedback about the market to their communities and partners. Mashi became a popular example for other community craft groups and outlets in Caprivi, such as Ngoma Craft Centre in Salambala Conservancy, and they shared the systems that worked well for them by hosting exchange trips with partners across Caprivi and over the national borders.

CASE STUDY 4 continued

In 2010, Mashi Craft Market earned N\$ 192 260, of which about N\$125 000 went directly to craft makers, with the remainder covering staff salaries, renovations and repairs; the cooperative ended the year with a surplus of more than N\$ 16 000. Mashi earnings thus amounted to more than 10% of the recorded national craft earnings of N\$1.233 million in 2009 (this is probably significantly less than the actual value, however, as data from countless informal craft outlets are not collected).



Important interventions that put Mashi firmly on its own feet:

Community resource monitors and monitoring tools

CRMs are paid by their conservancies to promote women's participation in CBNRM, help users monitor plant resources, and assist in enterprise development and HIV/AIDS mitigation. An important part of their job is to ensure that sustainable methods are used for the harvesting of resources such as palm leaves and dyes collected from the roots and bark of local trees that are used in craft making. Each conservancy has two CRMs; they are an integral part of the craft project, as they attend the craft meetings, assist in facilitating workshops, promote crafts at conservancy meetings, closely monitor craft production, and follow up on cash returns to ensure that the right amount

of money goes to each woman. They record all their findings in their "event books" – a system for monitoring and management – and these are regularly presented to committee meetings so that conservancies can also keep track of the craft business.

Workshops and master craftspeople

IRDNC helped to facilitate up to four workshops each year with the goal of improving the quality and range of products, increasing the numbers of makers, and building financial and environmental management skills. This focus was extended throughout the project areas of Caprivi, from those initial conservancies close to Mashi that specialise in open baskets, to the clay pot makers of Ngoma in Salambala, and the mat makers in the floodplains of Kasika and Impalila. Craftspeople in younger conservancies such as Sobbe, Balyerwa, Malengalenga, Mulisi and Sikunga all received training because conservancy committee managers were encouraged by their neighbours' example and could see the benefits these opportunities offered to their women, particularly those living in resource-rich areas.

Women of the Kyaramacan Residents' Association in Bwabata National Park make the unique and popular Khwe baskets, a product that by the early 1990s had nearly disappeared altogether because of plastic bags. Workshops helped revive basketry, even among young women, and sales from this product now provide one of the most stable and regular sources of income for San women in West Caprivi. A key aspect of these workshops has been the use of master craftspeople from local groups to conduct the training sessions. This not only ensures the best quality products, but also encourages strong leadership and gives due recognition to talent.

CASE STUDY 4 continued

Festivals

Each year festivals are held at the two main markets at Mashi and Ngoma for all the craftswomen to celebrate their roles as bread-winners, artists, businesswomen and public speakers. Special guests include representatives of TAs, teachers, school children and local lodge operators. These are opportunities to celebrate culture, announce craft earnings figures and award prizes for the best crafts. The programmes include dance, drama, music and role plays highlighting issues of local importance. After some years, the festivals evolved from being a celebration of crafts to events celebrating local culture in all its manifestations. These special occasions are now funded by the women themselves, and they have also become important for local marketing.

LESSONS LEARNT

1 *Local supplies of natural resources used for crafts are likely to become inadequate once a market develops. This needs to be anticipated; women should be empowered to depend on themselves, not the NGO, to find new sources and means of transport for the required materials.*

When local supply outstripped demand, Caprivian craftspeople put pressure on IRDNC to help them collect and transport palm leaves, for example. This was unsustainable, and in time, women found their own solutions. For example, Choyi women bartered the dye plants that grew in their areas for palm leaves with Lusese women



CASE STUDY 4 continued

170 kilometres away. Women in Impalila started working closely with their schools, and in return for lifts provided by the teachers to the palm sites, they taught the children to make baskets.

Where women made their own plans to acquire the resources they needed, other positive spin-offs followed. Women started working with each other and within their communities, doing business, keeping traditional skills alive and creating win-win situations.



2 Promote local ownership from the start.

Mashi and Ngoma craft markets now belong to the women, but first we needed to find innovative approaches to facilitate this ownership, particularly with Mashi. Initially, the business needed strong IRDNC support, and weaning the craftspeople off this support into collective ownership was not easy.

Innovative approaches to facilitate ownership are needed as soon as possible – before dependency sets in. A period of bad management of the business brought the crisis to a head. Members were given the options of decentralising their market back to the roadside outside their respective homes, bringing in the private sector and losing control of Mashi, or choosing their

own new management. They unanimously decided to go with the last option, and a new manager of their choice was installed. Once the women made this decision to save their market, they became much more proactive in looking after their money and planning how to spend profits. Productivity and sales increased, and the committee gained a new sense of energy and pride in their enterprise.

It is not realistic to expect uninterrupted progress when supporting community-level enterprises. Tough times often generate the most important learning opportunities, and rather than just bailing out an enterprise, NGOs should focus on careful facilitation to ensure that lessons are learnt from the difficult times.

3 The value of employing local master craftspeople to take the lead in the training workshops far outstripped all expectations.

Local master craft-makers provided the best role models and clearly understood the difficulties encountered by other local women. They could transfer their skills far more fluently than any outsider who had never made a pot or a basket. Furthermore, they became local champions in their own right, and gained the admiration and respect of their peers.



CASE STUDY 4 continued

4 Partners are essential. For several years following the rebellion and war in Caprivi, virtually no tourists came to the area, and Mashi could easily have shut down. However, the craft unit at our sister NGO, Rössing Foundation, helped keep Mashi afloat by securing sufficient orders for a variety of products in the capital. These included papyrus table mats and reed floor mats for lodges, as well as baskets for the Windhoek crafts outlet, Mud Hut Trading.

Crafts continue to generate cash for households. Two critical areas where this income is spent are school fees and clinic costs. Thanks to the money she earned through her crafts, one West Caprivian woman was able to move her son from his small local school to a larger and better school in East Caprivi. Ensuring that women have their own income thus goes a long way

toward helping to build strong foundations for future generations growing up in remote communities.

5 Crafts are a vehicle for capacity building. Women's roles in conservation have also been strengthened through their involvement in crafts and the monitoring of craft resources. Through training workshops, they have acquired additional knowledge and skills, such as financial management, public speaking and risk avoidance measures for HIV/AIDS. Women have discovered how much they have to offer their communities. A quiet transformation has been taking place: craftswomen and CRMs are increasingly becoming key players in their communities. By keeping traditional methods of producing crafts alive, the women also add cultural depth to their communities, keeping them vibrant and robust.



Women are the water that sinks into the sand.
- Himba / Herero proverb

CHAPTER

DIVERSITY AND GROWTH

Women as decision-makers

Target women for training

Triple bottom line

5

LESSONS LEARNT

1. Use special strategies to ensure that women, as major users and managers of the resources, are decision makers.
2. Embedding the enterprise within conservancies (or other representative social structures) ensures sustainable management of the resource and equitable benefit sharing; it also reduces dependency on the external facilitator of the enterprise.
3. Triple bottom line: Don't neglect the social component of the enterprise.
4. Make time to identify and engage with all stakeholders.

CASE STUDY:

Omumbiri perfume resin harvesting



CBNRM in Namibia is achieving its aim of diversifying local economies, with new and additional economic activities giving households and individuals access to benefits they did not previously enjoy. The initial focus was on wildlife not because wild animals are intrinsically more important than other resources, such as plants or fish, but because people had been dispossessed of the right to utilise wildlife resources during the colonial period, and because wildlife numbers had declined drastically during the 1980s. By the time the first conservancies were registered in 1998, wildlife numbers in Kunene Region, where CBNRM activities had started 15 years earlier, were well on the road to recovery, and could immediately start generating benefits for local communities through both tourism and harvesting.

IRDNC's experience

Conservancies are now becoming strong, representative local institutions which have staff and capacity dedicated to the management of wildlife



resources and the benefits generated from them. Because this capacity exists at community level, conservancy management committees and staff have also become involved in the management of other resources, notably plant resources.

While plant resources have long been recognised as making a contribution to livelihoods, and their use has been monitored in relation to craft making, it is only in the last few years that IRDNC has proactively addressed high-value plant resources. Although wildlife and plant resources are managed by different government ministries, our rural communities, represented by their conservancy committees and in some areas, community forest committees, see themselves as being the custodians of all the natural resources they use.

IRDNC and other partners have facilitated the harvesting of high-value plants for sale to overseas markets, the use of plant resources to manufacture crafts for sale to tourists, the collective and holistic management of grazing resources, and the management of vegetation for increased productivity and biodiversity enhancement by using fire as a management tool. We have also assisted communities to grow chilli to keep elephants out of crops, and have attempted to establish palm gardens for crafts in Caprivi.

The guidelines for the new international Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) legislation highlight several requirements for appropriate biotrade negotiations, including guidelines for the equitable use of indigenous knowledge. Many of these have already been applied by IRDNC in the development of plant products. An example of this is the requirement for "Prior Informed Consent", where the starting point of a development is with the community which holds the indigenous knowledge. IRDNC facilitated the negotiation of Namibia's first Access and Benefit-Sharing contract between the Himba communities and Afriplex, a South African flavours and fragrances company.

1 Use special strategies to ensure that women, as major users and managers of the resources, are decision makers.

Although conservancy committees are legally required to be representative, and women are elected onto the committees, their involvement in decision making is often limited. Since its early days, IRDNC has used targeted strategies to ensure that women are better equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills and capacity to fully participate in community-based NRM.

The recognition of the role of plant resources in CBNRM took root in Caprivi, where due to the higher rainfall, there are more opportunities for the collection of veld foods and the utilisation of plant resources for income, for example through sales of thatching grass and crafts.

This was the motivation, in the early 1990s, for Caprivi's CRM network, all of whom are local women, after we noted that community-based conservation meetings were attracting few women. The CRMs' main role was – and remains – to keep women

informed about CBNRM issues and monitor the use of plant resources for crafts. Today, as employees of their conservancies, these women also perform a variety of other important tasks.



Since women traditionally manage most plant resources, the development of activities involving high-value plants has provided additional motivation to ensure that women are involved in conservancies, and a variety of strategies have been employed to this end.

- **Provide basic training in public speaking.** A highly participatory two-day course helped to build the confidence of women to contribute to conservancy and committee meetings. Hundreds of women in both Kunene and Caprivi have participated in this course.
- **Ensure that women are the main recipients of training** relating to the plant resources which they manage.
- **Establish sub-committees of women.** Such sub-committees of the main conservancy management committee deal with plant issues and ensure that women are able to make meaningful inputs into management decisions.

- **Appoint CRMs.** In Caprivi conservancies, CRMs monitor the utilisation of plant resources and ensure that women in the conservancy are properly informed and involved in conservancy activities.
- **Adopt innovative and simple ways to enable women to participate in important tasks relating to plants.** For example, mostly illiterate Himba and Herero women successfully conducted a palm tree census in Puros Conservancy; similarly, Commiphora transects and counts were conducted by conservancy staff and harvesters, and Devil's Claw inventories involved the CRMs in West Caprivi.



2 *Embedding the enterprise within conservancies (or other representative social structures) ensures sustainable management of the resource and equitable benefit sharing; it also reduces dependency on the external facilitator of the enterprise.*

The success of a community-based enterprise depends on effective and representative local institutions being in place, and also on ownership by the local institution and its members. The starting point for the development of any enterprise should be the conservancy or community forest management committee. From the start of commercial harvesting of omumbiri (*Commiphora wildii*) resin and mopane seeds, steps were taken to establish close links between conservancy members, the conservancy management committees and their plant-based enterprises, thereby reducing reliance on IRDNC.

Early work in East Caprivi with palm tree gardens was linked to several local institutions such as schools, village structures or the homesteads of individuals. This was done because conservancies did not yet exist. Most of these gardens failed to thrive, partly due to environmental factors, but in no small measure because there were no appropriate local institutions – no one took ownership of the gardens after the first enthusiasm waned.



An early Hoodia nursery project also failed in the medium term because we focused on energetic individuals, and failed to sufficiently involve and develop the understanding and capacity of the local conservancy's weak management committee. Similarly, problems were experienced in one of the conservancies harvesting mopane seeds. An earlier university study conducted in the area appointed two

conservancy members to assist with data collection and trial harvesting for research purposes, without involving the conservancy management committee. This resulted in problems with regard to ownership when commercial harvesting was initiated.

Harvesting plant resources for overseas markets was an entirely new concept to many conservancies, most of which are very remote, with low levels of literacy. The processes involved in the development of these resources were new to both IRDNC and the conservancies being supported. From the start, time and resources were allocated to ensure that harvesters were informed and involved in each step of the process, including decision-making.

Since the early 1990s, IRDNC had wanted to find an international market for the valuable *Commiphora* resins as a potential source of income for Himba communities. However, in the absence of appropriate institutional arrangements in place for the sustainable management of this resource, the project had to be put on hold. Communal conservancies which started being registered from 1998 provided the structure and enabled the development of this enterprise. Questionnaire surveys indicated that most conservancy members acknowledged the role of conservancies in managing plant resources.

Although the conservancy is the acknowledged local institution, the conservancy legislation does not cover rights to utilise plant resources. For this reason, IRDNC also supports the registration of these conservancies as community forests, in order to ensure that conservancy members enjoy rights to plant resources.

- **The community must be defined.** The conservancy or community forest defines the community or holders of traditional knowledge. This is very important in the negotiation of Access and Benefit-Sharing contracts.
- **Resolve issues as soon as possible.** By facilitating pre-season planning meetings between harvesters and the relevant committee and staff members, a number of issues were resolved without IRDNC taking responsibility for finding solutions.

- **Management fees were channelled to conservancy management committees** (rather than individual harvesters). This was helpful, as money was earmarked for support to harvesters and better local management of the resource.
- **As far as possible, responsibility should be local.** The people responsible for the weighing and buying of the resin are all conservancy staff members identified by the conservancy management committee. IRDNC supports them with training and monitoring.



- **Respect traditional rights.** The rights to the resource were mapped and given effect through the conservancy, which was able to refuse to buy resin from non-members, thereby heading off the dangers of outsiders taking over.

3 **Triple bottom line: Don't neglect the social component of the enterprise.**

The social component of a CBNRM enterprise is as important as the financial (marketing, sales and income) and environmental (resource inventories) components. This triple bottom line approach is what has enabled the development of robust supply chains in which the industry has confidence.

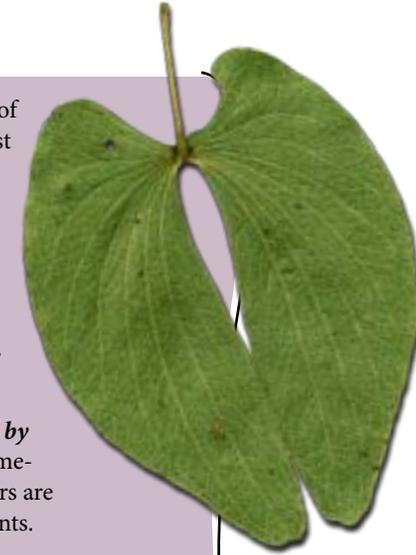
- **Conduct prior consultation.** Before plant-based enterprises are initiated, the management committees, staff and members are consulted and traditional knowledge is documented through village meetings, participatory rapid assessment mapping, questionnaire surveys and member's meetings.
- **Allow for regular feedback.** Time for feedback needs to be built into the planning for all community-based activities.

- **First share information with harvesters.** Information in the form of reports, pamphlets, DVDs etc. on all stages of the process must first be shared with harvesters before it is made available to partners and prospective buyers.
- **Research should be embedded in the community.** At least two conservancy members are employed as field assistants for each research activity undertaken in each conservancy. Appropriate field assistants should be identified by the conservancy committee, not the NGO.
- **Local management of the plant enterprises should be undertaken by the staff members of the conservancy.** Although it is sometimes time-consuming to set up, it is important that conservancy staff members are carrying out tasks such as weighing, recording and making payments.

4 **Make time to identify and engage with all stakeholders.**

With work expanding to other natural resources such as grazing and plants, IRDNC needed to engage with different management regimes and new groups of stakeholders. It is important to allow enough time for identifying who the groups and stakeholders are, and properly engaging and collaborating with them.

- **Management should be integrated.** In Caprivi Region, the establishment of conservancies and of community forests occurred independently. This resulted in the duplication of local institutions and different boundaries for conservancies and community forests, leading to disjointed management interventions. A different approach is being taken in Kunene Region, where already established and registered conservancies are applying for registration as community forests, using the same boundaries and management committees. It is hoped that this approach will ensure effective and integrated management of natural resources.
- **Recognise women as decision makers.** CBNRM activities have tended to work with men as wildlife monitors and managers. Where plant resources are managed by women, however, a concerted and consistent effort needs to be made to ensure that women take decisions regarding their management. This can be achieved by gender-focused training, promoting women's representation on management committees, employing women as research assistants, focusing questionnaire surveys on women, and targeting women when offering support to activities, e.g. by giving lifts to harvesters to enable them to access remote harvesting sites.
- **Be prepared to deal with new partners.** Whilst NACSO is the umbrella body for CBNRM support organisations, IRDNC has needed to engage with other coordinating bodies such as the Indigenous Plants Task Team. Whereas initially all contact with the government took place through the MET, the Directorate of Forestry in the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry and the Ministry of Trade and Industry are now also important partners.



CASE STUDY

Omumbiri perfume resin Harvesting

Commiphora species have long been used by Himba women in Kunene Region as the major ingredient of their perfumes. IRDNC started investigating these species as a potential source of community income in the 1990s, but was reluctant to move further till necessary institutional arrangements were in place for the sustainable management of this resource, should it be harvested. The registration of conservancies provided such management structures. Initially, conservancies derived their income from wildlife and wildlife-based tourism. However, there is a need to diversify income sources for the conservancy members, especially in areas with limited wildlife.



season. Resin was sold for US\$10/kg, which is almost double what is normally paid for raw myrrh resin. Only three tons were harvested in 2010 inter alia because a new Namibian processing plant was not yet functional. (The plant is being established in Kunene Region so that instead of the bulky resin, the essential oil can be exported.) We were able to command a high price because we could show the research and monitoring that underpins the sustainable harvesting methods and the ongoing management of the resource by the conservancies. Resin has been sold for use in the perfume, incense, scented candle and cosmetics markets.

Actions

Each conservancy determined its own rules for harvesters and identified which conservancy staff members would be responsible for the weighing and buying of the resin. The harvest period for the omumbiri resin is from October to the onset of the rains, usually in February. The trees produce the resin in response to the high temperatures experienced during the dry season. A trial harvest in Orupembe Conservancy indicated that it took about four hours for a woman to harvest one kilogram of resin. These results were confirmed during the first commercial harvest that took place in the 2007/8 season.

Further research into the perfume plants used by the Himba people was conducted in 2004. In Himba communities, the women are the managers of these plant resources and are responsible for the harvesting of the Commiphora resins; work consequently focused on women. Activities such as participatory rapid assessments, vegetation mapping, vegetation transects, a questionnaire survey and trial harvests showed that omumbiri (*Commiphora wildii*) was the most important resin-producing plant used for perfume. Traditionally, the resin is harvested sustainably, since only resin that is naturally exuded from the tree is collected. Our research indicates that about 50 tons of resin is produced every year in the five conservancies.

In April 2007, marketing was initiated and three materials transfer agreements were signed. Since then another five such agreements have been signed. A total of five tons was harvested during the 2007/8 season and six tons during the 2008/9

CASE STUDY continued

Omumbiri harvesters and income in Kunene conservancies

Conservancy	2007/2008 season		2008/2009 season	
	No. of harvesters	Total Income (N\$)	No. of harvesters	Total Income (N\$)
Marienfluss	104	47 500	37	77 000
Okondjombo	0	0	35	26 480
Orupembe	62	84 680	64	69 270
Puros	41	89 070	80	95 520
Sanitatas	28	29 270	59	36 000
Total	235	250 520	275	304 270

The months in which the resin is harvested coincide with the months when people are most affected by the arid conditions. People are using the few permanent water points, and as a result cattle may walk up to 20 km to water. Livestock are thin and little milk is produced, so an opportunity to earn some cash is eagerly taken. Harvesters are paid immediately upon delivery of their resin to the buying point. A card monitoring system tracks what people were spending their earnings on. As anticipated, at that time of the year, most of the money is spent on basic food items.

Expenditure (%) of income derived from omumbiri

	Puros	Orupembe	Sanitatas	Marienfluss
Food	18	36	53	53
Personal/household	10	12	7	23
Livestock	9	4	1	9
School fees	22	2	0	1
Savings	40	43	26	11
Other	1	3	13	3

During 2006, four permanent monitoring sites were established and a baseline was determined. As soon as the harvest is completed, these permanently marked sites are monitored again. In addition, a one kilometre transect is done at each of the sites where groups of harvesters were based.

CASE STUDY *continued*

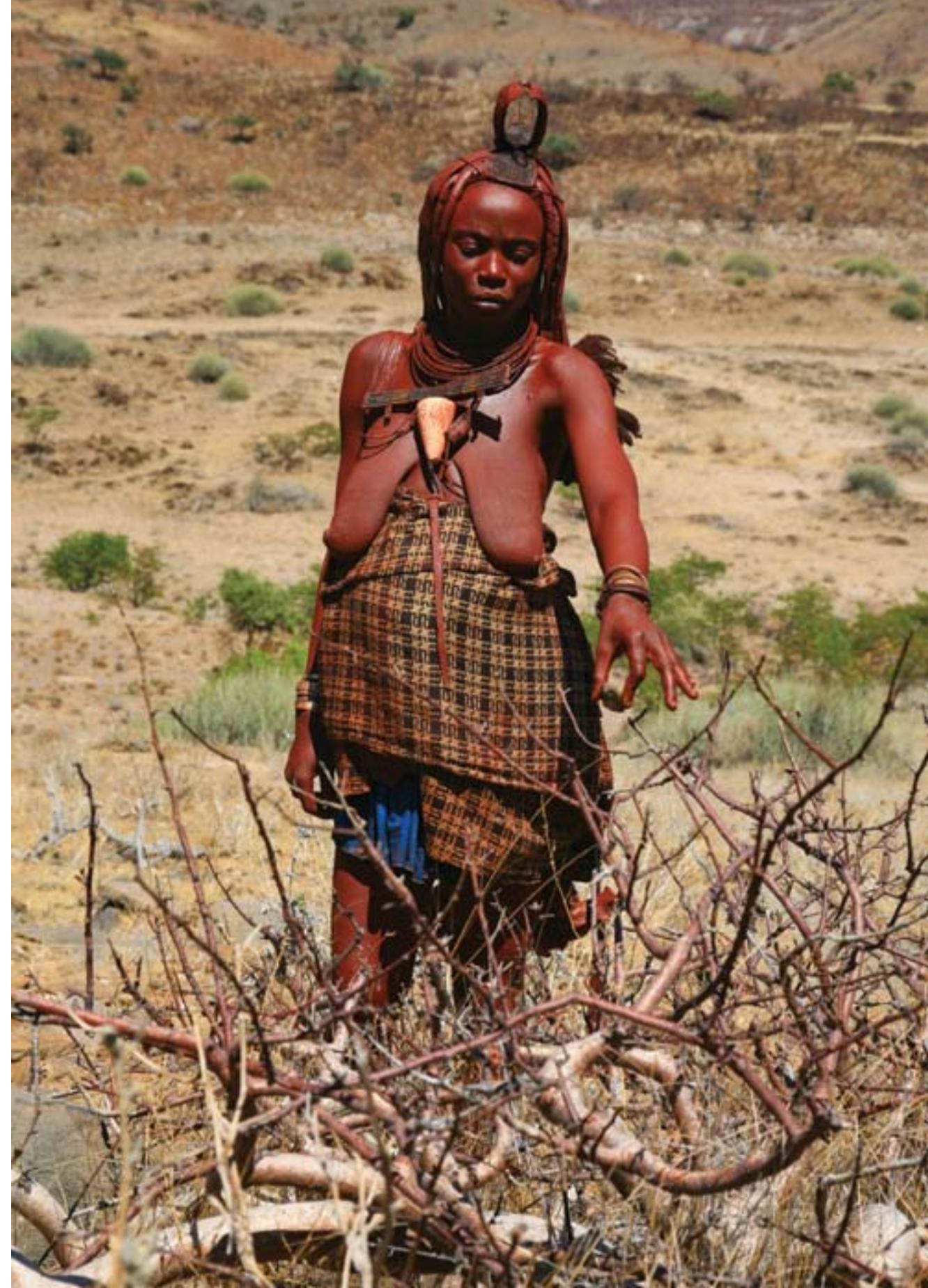
Monitoring of omumbiri harvesting sites

Conservancy	No. of sites monitored	Date monitored	No. of plants damaged by people	No. of undamaged plants
Orupembe	7	Feb 2008	0	1 115
Puros	6	Feb 2008	2	598
Sanitatas	4	Feb 2008	2	220
Orupembe	8	July 2009	4	866
Puros	8	May 2009	0	502
Sanitatas	5	June 2009	0	248
Okondjombo	5	May 2009	1	267
Marienfluss	5	June 2009	5	282

Damage to trees was caused by one or more of the branches being cut off with a panga. The motive for the removal of branches was not to enhance resin production but to suck or chew the material to quench thirst. Since cutting the trees does not immediately stimulate resin production (as it does with some other *Commiphora* species), it is unlikely that this damage was inflicted for any other purpose. Most recorded damage was as a result of porcupine chewing at the base of the trees, or destruction of the trees by elephants, who feed on *Commiphora* when the sap rises.

LESSONS LEARNT

- Much time and opportunity for discussion had to be dedicated to explaining benefit- and cost sharing. The conservancy provides an appropriate local level institution for the successful management of this resource, but since many conservancy benefits are realised at a community level, it was necessary to ensure that all harvesters understood that they would personally receive the payment for harvesting the resin.
- Training of conservancy staff tasked with purchasing and monitoring needs to be thorough, and ongoing support is essential. This is due to the low levels of literacy of most of the conservancy staff and the harvesters.
- It is essential to have money available to pre-purchase the resin. Harvesters must be paid as soon as the resin is brought to the buying point. Because of the nomadic nature of these communities and low literacy, it is important to pay upon receipt of the resin to ensure that no misunderstandings at a later stage. Also, the time when the resin is harvested is the time when people most need money to buy food. Paying for the resin several months later when payment is received from the purchaser will not have the required livelihood impact.
- It is essential to maintain regular monitoring of the resource. This is true in all contexts, but is all the more so in the case of omumbiri, since so much of the international interest in this product stems from the fact that harvesting is conducted using sustainable methods.



God is in the details and so is the devil
- Namibian proverb

CHAPTER

COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACHES FOR MANAGING BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM PRODUCTIVITY

Man-made problems

Embed knowledge and skills locally

Upscaling to regional level



LESSONS LEARNT

1. Conservancy structures serve as an excellent entry point to establish community-based projects simultaneously in many communities
2. Sustainability of community-based projects is dependent on achieving tangible livelihood benefits for individual community members.
3. Embed knowledge and skills locally within conservancies.
4. Don't put all your eggs in one basket.
5. Collaborative management is the most effective strategy to maximize natural resource management benefits with the least effort and resources.



Organized local community-based structures such as conservancies and community forests have proved their worth in wildlife conservation and enhanced management of high value plants and forestry products. However, they also offer an opportunity to proactively address fundamental environmental challenges such as the wide-scale veld degradation facing many millions of land-users, not just in Namibia, and indeed, not just in Africa.

Most of these problems are man-made – for example, poor livestock management practices cause the deep-rooted and nutritious perennial grasses to disappear from rangelands. This results in increasing soil moisture evaporation, reduced rainwater infiltration, greater runoff and loss of topsoil, thereby cutting rangeland productivity.

Rain run-off on bare ground in arid Kunene leads to ancient riparian vegetation in and along seasonal rivers being destroyed by massive flash flooding; elsewhere erosion gullies spread across formerly healthy grass plains.



Blanket bans on fires in a number of southern African countries including at one stage in north-eastern Namibia has also drastically reduced veld productivity through bush encroachment and loss of grasses. Taking fire out of the system results in fuel build-up, allowing dangerously hot wild fires to kill trees and destroy property.

Quite apart from the new challenges of climate change, impoverished landscapes unable to support crops, wildlife or domestic stock lie ahead in many parts of the world – unless we act decisively.

In 2002 IRDNC started piloting a community-based adaptation of sustainable rangeland management in Kunene, in which planned grazing of cattle by herding promotes perennial grass recovery. Similarly a community-based approach to using fire as a management tool was pioneered in Caprivi.

The grazing pilot in three conservancies in the Kunene Region has grown into a large project involving six regions of Namibia. This is the largest community-based planned grazing project in Africa and is the first time that such a project has been put into practice at this scale on land which is subject to common property management regimes.

The fire pilot resulted in the development and annual implementation in Caprivi of Namibia's first ever regional fire strategy. IRDNC's fire ecologist who collaborated closely with government, Caprivi conservancies and traditional authorities now works regionally, sharing the Namibian experience and practice with a number of southern African countries including Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

These two initiatives involving grazing and fire are nature conservation in its truest sense as both are aimed at restoring and maintaining bio-diversity and ecosystem productivity. A brief implementation background is followed by lessons learned from the fire pilot and from up-scaling it into a larger project.

Fire management in Caprivi

Fire is an emotional issue throughout the world with perceptions focusing on *Fire as a Disaster* with loss of life, property and environment. These perceptions have driven fire management to prevention and suppression strategies for decades. Namibia, like many other southern African nations, had implemented this approach since colonial administrations revoked local burning practices and control mechanisms



of traditional authorities. Managing fire with no-burn policies, firebreak construction and extinguishing fires was typically ineffective due to the remoteness, limited capacity and resources. In Caprivi, this scenario was maintained with the administrators - Directorate of Forestry (DoF) and Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) with community extension projects to facilitate compliance with the fire prevention and suppression policies.

Caprivi is a semi-arid tropical savanna ecosystem with very distinct wet and dry seasons and experiences fires every year. Lack of ownership of fire management has led to misunderstanding and uncoordinated use of fire as a tool. Slash and burn is common in September/October to prepare land for subsistence agriculture in time for ensuing rains. Electric storms also occur before the rains, and fires have always been ignited naturally by lightning. Inadequate control of these fires in the very hot, dry and windy conditions at this time of year enables fires to reach disastrous proportions in scale and intensity. The absence of prior controlled burning, that reduce and fragment fire fuel loads, render prevention and suppression strategies ineffective. More than 50% of Caprivi has been affected by uncontrolled wildfires annually for 20 – 30 years.

Uncontrolled fires have obvious immediate consequences, particularly as a hazard to life, property and natural resource availability. However, fire plays a more complex long term role in the ecology of the landscape that influences land use sustainability and community livelihoods such as cattle grazing, harvesting of natural products and habitat for wildlife. The communities have had little opportunity in the past to rectify the fire management scenario.

IRDNC experience

The Caprivi Integrated Fire Management Project focused on fire as a resource and not a disaster by using controlled burning as an effective tool in managing wildfires, land-use and the environment. Land managers are able to minimize the negative effects and maximize the benefits of fire without costly machinery or resources by controlling “when, where and how” fires occur.

The Fire Project commenced in March 2006 with an evaluation of the Caprivi fire situation through community consultation and review of IRDNC's West Caprivi fire monitoring points which were established in 1998. In partnership with DoF,

Community Forestry Namibia and MET, pilot fire management projects were implemented in several community forests and national parks. Based on the outcomes of these, a Caprivi Region Integrated Fire Management Strategy (2007 – 2011) was developed.

Property specific fire management projects were then established in approximately 10 770 km² (61%) of Caprivi in 2007 and 2008 to integrate fire management between communal, state and private/leasehold land. A “Permit to Burn” System to enable communities to acquire the rights and responsibilities of fire management in communal areas was institutionalized within DoF. The system is a process for communities to legally acquire the rights and responsibility of controlled burning that was previously inaccessible.

Fire management committees in communal areas (conservancies and community forests) and government staff fire controllers in state lands were elected, trained and equipped as functional groups to manage fire. Community liaison, contemporary land use, traditional burning practices and control combined with collaboration between neighboring groups form the foundation of the planning and implementation.

The Fire Project has influenced government policy to use controlled burning as an effective tool to manage wildfires, land use and the environment in Caprivi. Importantly, this extends beyond government implementation and recognizes the value of the community in managing fire in Caprivi where 70% of the land is communal.

The Fire Project has brought tangible benefits to the everyday life of the individual community members through enhanced livestock grazing, improved opportunities for natural product harvesting (thatching grass, timber) and reducing uncontrolled fires. The Fire Project has significantly changed the

timing, distribution and effects of fire on the Caprivi landscape. Reducing fire intensity by reducing and fragmenting fire fuel loads and diversifying fire regimes has increased spatial and temporal habitat variability. Habitat diversity equates to increased biodiversity and has the potential to achieve significant natural resource management benefits to the conservancies, community forests, government agencies and private sector.

Challenges

A major challenge to the Fire Project is the uncoordinated and competitive environment of the community-based projects and support organizations, both government and non-government. For example, Community Forests have been implemented with inadequate liaison with already existing and legally registered conservancies, sometimes overlapping boundaries. Two different government ministries are involved and different NGO implementers.

The fire project may thus be impeded by unrelated issues of conflicting project politics and jurisdiction. However, our mistake was not putting sufficient effort into ensuring that all the stakeholders support and understand the project which needed to be more deeply integrated into the NGO's other community work, rather than be allowed to stand semi-alone as a ‘technical’ project.

Slash and burn agricultural practices are widespread throughout Caprivi and crop fields are dispersed throughout the landscape. In September-October every year there are hundreds of independent ignition points from uncontrolled fires in preparing crop fields. To change the actions of every household and build capacity to control these fires within fields is a major challenge. Caprivians need to see that controlled burning makes a difference to the grass quality and is useful to them before they will take on – and pay for via their conservancy – the proactive burning.

1 *Conservancy structures serve as an excellent entry point to establish community-based projects simultaneously in many communities.*

- The conservancy institutional structure provided quick access to the Traditional Authority and wider community to propose and establish the fire pilot in Caprivi. In its first year the project involved nine conservancies, covering more than 6 000 km² of communal land.
- The geographical concentration of conservancies, many with contiguous boundaries, enhanced the effectiveness and rapid adoption of the project throughout the communities.
- Conservancies thus facilitate a scaling up of activities into ecological or other complexes but ensure effective implementation by directly involving different local communities within the conservancy. In the case of fire, we are working with multiple conservancies and communal forests as well as parks and state forests. But you cannot successfully scale-up unless there are working institutions at local level.

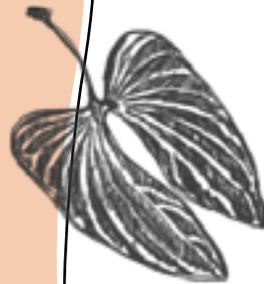
2 *Sustainability of community-based projects is dependent on achieving tangible livelihood benefits for individual community members.*

Individuals who experienced the benefits of the Fire Project through improved livestock grazing, natural product harvesting and reduced wildfire hazard within a year actively adopted and promoted the project to others in following years.

- Fire affects the majority of subsistence livelihoods in Caprivi and the success of the project has been its ability to directly benefit a wide variety of community members.
- Tangible livelihood benefits provide the motivation for individuals to actively seek the conservancy fire committees' skills and knowledge so that fire management practices can be done independently in the future.

3 *Embed knowledge and skills locally within conservancies.*

This was well achieved technically, in terms of local conservancy teams who did the burning but was not sufficiently well integrated into conservancy work-plans. IRDNC paid fire teams to burn in the conservancies up until 2010 but after this the conservancies are encouraged to take over paying their own fire teams. This has not happened in all conservancies. Encouragingly, government officials fulfilled their 2010 burning plan within the national parks without NGO assistance.





4 *Don't put all your eggs in one basket*

A local Caprivian was employed from the start to assist the consultant fire ecologist and to take over his position once the fire project was well established. However putting our eggs into one basket – providing one man with the technical training and skills – caused a setback to the fire project when the local fire facilitator had to be fired after the consultant specialist had already left. More than one person should have been trained as a potential counterpart but logistics and having to raise funding were allowed to over-rule best practice, as so often happens in reality.

5 *Collaborative management is the most effective strategy to maximize natural resource management benefits with the least effort and resources.*

Collaborative implementation, through building partnerships with neighbors, enabled the project to achieve the fire management objectives of each conservancy with significantly less time and resources.

- This dispensed with the need for establishing new or maintaining boundary firebreaks using costly machinery or manual labor.
- Equipment, resources and personnel could be pooled to implement extensive controlled burning in remote areas.
- Overall, the project is an example of what has been called nested common property NRM at different scales. The building blocks are the local level conservancies and community forests but these are not large enough to address management of fires that move across large areas. The fire project provides for the scaling up of decision-making from the local to the larger scale landscape level, such as the recently established conservancy complexes, while remaining accountable downwards to its constituent parts (the national parks and state forests, conservancies and community forests).

Conservancies facilitate scaling up activities into ecological or other complexes. Effective implementation is assured by directly involving local communities. You cannot successfully scale up unless there are working institutions at local level.

One finger cannot pick up even a grain of sand
- Namibian proverb

CHAPTER

ON A TIGHTROPE: SYNERGY OR CONFLICT?



Building multi-level partnerships

Managing conflict

Consultation is not enough

Working in a war zone

7



LESSONS LEARNT

1. Negotiate and maintain a common vision with new partners early in the relationship. This applies to all partnerships – with communities, other NGOs, donors, government officials, private sector and researchers.
2. To avoid conflict, be proactive in facilitating the involvement of stakeholders, existing and new, in a project area.
3. Be aware of and use the different strengths of partners.
4. Conflicts are inevitable in CBNRM because the stakes could hardly be higher – ownership over and benefits from valuable natural resources.
5. In community conflicts, the NGO's role is to retain the moral high ground.
6. Doing CBNRM in a war zone requires a change of methods, not of objectives.
7. See donors as equal partners.

*One finger cannot pick up even
a grain of sand*

This Namibian proverb succinctly makes the point that people need to work together to succeed in most human endeavours. Partnership and teamwork are central to CBNRM. So too, of course, is conflict. The real challenge facing CBNRM implementers, however, lies in managing multi-level partnerships and conflicts – from the grassroots to national decision-making levels, across boundaries both cultural and geographic, and internationally, including straddling the divide between south and north. This situation holds the potential for synergy or friction; for added value, or confusion.

As an African NGO, we engage daily with remote rural communities, local interest groups and traditional leaders, with regional and national government officials, with politicians, researchers,



consultants and international donors. And then there are other NGOs and partners, including private sector, with whom we collaborate or clash – or both, as the case may be.

We all know that conflict needs managing, but few of us, in IRDNC's early days, realised how much effort would also need to go into building and maintaining relations with partners. Before Namibia's Independence, IRDNC was regarded by orthodox nature conservation officials as the lunatic fringe, and as subversive SWAPO-supporters by most of central government. As difficult as those years were, relationships were easier to manage than would later be the case, simply because our partners were few and our conflicts seemed righteous, or at least unambiguous. We were mostly out there alone, pioneering the practical application of an emerging CBNRM philosophy that sought to link rights to responsibilities and empower rural communities.

As CBNRM grew into a national programme, the field – literally – became more and more crowded, and significant time and resources were needed to manage an ever increasing number of partnerships at a variety of levels. The numbers of communities in our two target regions wanting our assistance to form conservancies swelled beyond all expectations; from about 20 in the late 1990s, we now work with 56. Of these, 31 are registered CBOs and a further 30 are emerging. Each one of these partnerships with a young CBO requires careful managing and a consistent support approach that still meets specific local needs. But we are no longer the only agency, and our interventions need to be aligned.

Namibian NGO partners were able to organise themselves into NACSO, an umbrella organisation of which IRDNC was a founding member. Working groups such as those for Natural Resource Management, Business and Enterprise Development, and Institutional Support and Strategic Leadership were formed to coordinate our work with conservancies. Although some have worked better than others, these working

groups have proved to be useful forums for collaboration and sharing insights and information, as well as for engaging collectively with government agencies. Our experience is that such groups are ineffective in the absence of a two-way flow of ideas and information – from the field, as well as to the field. Synergy is achieved when the relevant field-based NGOs play a strong role, while also acting as conduits for interventions.

IRDNC's experience

Several team-building workshops were critical in the early years of NACSO to head off emerging conflicts between differentially resourced NGOs and to improve synergy. Well briefed, highly skilled facilitators who were not afraid to confront sensitive issues including, inevitably, differences in black and white NGO workers' perspectives, were contracted. However, team-building is an ongoing process.

One of our biggest challenges remains the lack of coordination between government ministries. This means that policy and practice as implemented by different government ministries – Lands and Resettlement; Agriculture, Water and Forestry; Regional and Local Government and Housing and Rural Development; and Environment and Tourism, for example – are sometimes contradictory, resulting in confusion and friction. A prison farm being set up next to a riverside community tourism enterprise is one of the more extreme examples. But countless other clashes occur when there are many agendas, most of them well intended, but showing few signs of joint planning.

CBNRM is misunderstood – or even regarded as threatening – by some decision makers, and although the situation is starting to change, NGOs engaged in conservation activities are not yet widely regarded as being particularly relevant. Functioning effectively as an NGO therefore requires strategic thinking and constant awareness of what is happening at several levels to ensure that at least some sections of the



government are supportive of their projects. As ministers, deputy ministers and permanent secretaries are regularly shuffled, with few remaining in one position for more than five years, this too is an ongoing process.

The potential for community and other interest groups, party politics and personal agendas of local elites to manipulate this complex implementation landscape is high. A somewhat idealistic solution is to build capacity within conservancies as democratically representative, accountable local bodies, so that they are themselves equipped to manage and coordinate such development interventions. Progress towards a strong rural civil society is slow, but satisfying.

The national programme's achievements and the emergence of the five-country plan for the world's largest transfrontier conservation area focusing on the regions around the Kavango and Zambezi rivers, as well as IRDNC's agricultural and high-value plants projects, has brought a new suite of partners with new challenges, opportunities and potential discord.

In recent years, some of the larger international NGOs have been attracted to work within the ambit of KAZA (the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area), some in Namibian frontier conservancies, and different approaches and priorities are evident. IRDNC is also now

working across Namibia's borders in western Zambia. Managing these new partnerships, sometimes with reluctant partners who have their own agendas (and who are accountable to their own donors) is proving arduous, but is essential if the national programme is not to lose its momentum and cohesiveness.

Big money from major donors rarely results in partnerships, and often causes conflict. Most recently, for example, the USA's Millennium Challenge Account has required time-consuming inputs to avoid the real risk of Namibians losing control of their CBNRM programme.

At the local level, money, as always, has led to some of our worst conflicts. As conservancies have started to earn their own income, so too has



interest in these institutions grown, locally as well as beyond conservancy borders. Some of this has been positive, with conservancy members playing increasingly strong roles in holding conservancy committees and staff accountable for earnings. However, swelling conservancy bank balances have also attracted less desirable interest.

IRDNC walks a tightrope, as on the one hand it needs a community mandate to accept its technical support (as well as to raise funds for this work), but on the other, communities are often divided and never homogenous. Exposing or confronting community members or factions who have shown themselves to be less than honest ensures that the NGO always has enemies. Often such a group believes the NGO is all that stands between it and large amounts of conservancy or even donor money, and attempts are made to discredit the role the NGO plays. Cost recovery is currently a buzz phrase, regarded as a way to make NGOs sustainable. However, being paid for our services by conservancies could put NGOs in an even more difficult and less neutral situation.

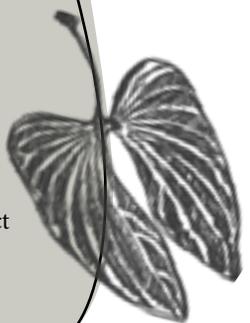
Thus far, conservancies have not been prepared to lay charges against a powerful, politically well connected chairman or treasurer, for example, although they may well eventually manage to oust the thieves from their posts. The NGO is in the middle of these conflictual relationships. Sadly, there is a dearth of positive role models and precedents in Africa to guide people, and the cases from abroad exposed following the world-wide banking crisis of 2009 of corruption of biblical proportions have also not engendered an ethos of individual integrity.

On a few notable occasions, a community conflict has escalated to the point that the community needed assistance in engaging in legal action. The Legal Assistance Centre, a Namibian NGO, helped resolve all these cases in favour of the group being supported by IRDNC.

1 *Negotiate and maintain a common vision with new partners early in the relationship. This applies to all partnerships – with communities, other NGOs, donors, government officials, private sector and researchers.*

Where we have applied this lesson – starting with the community leaders who appointed Namibia's first community game guards in the 1980s – we have achieved our aims. In effect, this is also exactly what the new Namibian Government did at Independence in 1990, when our first Minister of Environment and Tourism, the late Dr Nico Bessinger, authorised a series of socio-ecological surveys within communities who still lived with wildlife. IRDNC's role was to lead the social component of these surveys. Although in those days we called the process consultation, we went far beyond obtaining information on which to base planned legislative changes. Hearing people's views and problems, and discussing options to address their needs and aspirations for the future was the beginning of the common vision which still underlies the national communal conservancy programme.

- **The operative word is negotiation, not consultation.** Consultation means taking your plan or vision to your partner for his/her input; negotiation means working from a position of openness and equality and being prepared to be convinced to change your stance. We did not take a plan to communities – the idea was to develop one with them, MET and other stakeholders. The 1996 communal conservancy legislation was the outcome of this process.
- **Often partners know what needs to be done – but not how and who.** Nevertheless, it is the “how” and “who” which determines success or failure. IRDNC is part of a consortium implementing a CBNRM project in western Zambia. Our first step in the field, in 2009, was a two-week visioning process, even though a detailed Integrated Development Plan (IDP) had been drawn up by others two years earlier. Our visioning process aimed to go below this IDP, to confirm community priorities given the time lapse in implementation, and to develop an action plan (the “how”), with consensus on who would do what. Our teams, each having representatives from the Zambian Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) and indunas from the Barotse Royal Court, held meetings in all villages, tourism enterprises, saw mills and missions. Delegates from all these groups, including Peace Parks Foundation (who had formulated the IDP with ZAWA), were then hosted at an action planning workshop. Although the logistics and resources needed to carry out this exercise in a remote part of Zambia were challenging, the result is that all players – communities, ZAWA, the TA and the multiple NGO partners – share a common vision and have contributed to the implementation plan.
- **Communities will be neither responsible nor accountable** unless they “own” a project from its inception. This includes the planning that takes place before implementation. The Zambian process aimed to instil a sense of ownership within target communities, and their representatives helped develop the first annual work plan.



- **Level the playing field.** Given the reality of the situation – differing world views, political realities and technical knowledge – special strategies may have to be deployed to level the playing field for communities who are engaging with more experienced partners such as private sector. These include facilitating focused study tours, training in negotiating skills with role-playing exercises, and generally ensuring that representatives have the knowledge they need.

- **Good partnerships** are built upon trust and respect – informal engagement is as important as formal meetings. There is no substitute for personal contact to build up goodwill and mutual understanding. Soccer games at conservancy planning meetings have enhanced partnerships and helped ease conflict and suspicion. Eating and travelling together, and attending weddings and funerals often achieve more understanding than a meeting. Don't only engage with partners when there is a problem.



- **Keep the big picture in mind.** A partner may not have all the required skills, but sometimes tradeoffs between short-term delivery and strategic reasons for working together need to be taken into account. For example, a new NGO may be inexperienced and not fully effective in its young days, frustrating our field staff, but in the long run the programme may need such an organisation for sustainability and strategic reasons. We therefore need to be supportive of such partners and help them develop.
- **Foster a culture of inclusion.** Even though it is sometimes easier said than done, especially when a partner is standing on your toes, sharing information and including partners wherever possible is more productive than defensiveness. Ensure that all staff understand that this approach is central to the NGO's activities.

What would we have done differently? We started off with good engagement with the private sector in the early days so that they understood and at least partially shared our developing vision. The MET also held workshops for their input in the early 1990s. However, as the tourism industry boomed and many more companies became involved, time and capacity constraints resulted in our not engaging sufficiently. The Namibian CBNRM programme still struggles today with this situation.

2 **To avoid conflict, be proactive in facilitating the involvement of stakeholders, existing and new, in a project area.**

This is particularly relevant where consumptive and non-consumptive tourism partners operate within one conservancy. The number of conservancies acquiring hunting concessions have grown faster than expected over the last few years, catching the programme without enough staff to work with the MET and conservancies on zonation for different types of tourism. Some conservancy hunting contracts were negotiated without the knowledge of existing lodges. The results are predictable when a hunter, with firearm-toting clients, meets another vehicle filled with camera-bedecked tourists. Incidents like these contribute to some in the tourism industry making the blanket claim that “conservancies don't work”. The programme subsequently hired staff to strengthen technical capacity in support of all aspects of conservancy hunting processes.

- **Political champions are essential.** The national programme needs various government ministries to lead it and be its political champions. Yet the key ministries with which IRDNC works, the MET and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, are often under-resourced, and those officials who are effective at their jobs are usually overstretched. We therefore have to be prepared, for example, to assist an official with transport to attend a key meeting in the field so as to keep the champion engaged.
- **Proactive input.** For several generations of new lodge managers and new conservancy committee members, IRDNC staff held induction training on the intent, contents and history of the Torra Conservancy – private sector joint venture contract for Damaraland Camp. This was important to ensure that the spirit of the venture be nurtured and maintained. The proliferation of lodges and camps in conservancies has seen this strategy fall by the wayside, but it should be revived to improve understanding and synergy between the programme, the private sector and conservancies.

3 **Be aware of and use the different strengths of partners.**

Managing partnerships at different levels is challenging, but one of the biggest advantages is the wide range of skills, influence and resources that become available to the programme.

- **There are horses for courses.** While IRDNC's strength includes field-based implementation – making things happen on the ground – another NGO may be better placed to apply strategic political pressure at the right time to break a logjam. For example, the Namibia Nature Foundation's former director pushed the right buttons to convince the MET to share its trophy hunting concession fees with the Kyaramacan Residents' Association, the equivalent of a conservancy inside the Bwabata National Park. The programme could not have developed without the array of skills NACSO partners offer: legal inputs; specialist environmental economic knowledge and modelling; the ability to coordinate data for and produce the annual State of Conservancy reports; high-level marketing for some plant

products; elevating conservancy campsites to levels of excellence; the production of posters and training material; and so on.

- **Communication and cost-sharing engender synergy and prevent conflict.** IRDNC has been able to play a useful role in NACSO working groups by bringing practical perspectives and experience from the field. These range from technical inputs to logistics know-how and assistance. At times, the logistics associated with offering assistance has been a source of conflict, e.g. when a capital-based organisation takes it for granted that the field NGO will inform, mobilise and transport people to attend training or other events, without realising the implications of this commitment – several drivers and vehicles with travelling time (up to two days) added on either side of the meeting. Communication and cost-sharing can resolve such issues.

4 **Conflicts are inevitable in CBNRM because the stakes could hardly be higher – ownership over and benefits from valuable natural resources.**

CBNRM confronts the status quo; a despotic traditional leader and his followers will feel threatened because a democratically elected conservancy committee could challenge his power and patronage – payoffs from investors, job allocations etc. Conversely, most confident TAs see the conservancy as a vehicle for development and improved local organisation.



- **CBNRM may expose rifts between different TAs and ethnic or interest groups.** Through its focus on local rights and responsibilities over natural resources, CBNRM can ignite simmering land and political disputes and delay development and income streams. Ongongo waterfall, a prime site in Kunene, is an example of how an old community rift has meant that the real potential of the site to earn income and employ people has never been realised.
- **Party politics can disrupt communities and conservancy management.** Particularly in election years, otherwise peaceful communities can become hotbeds of discord and self interest. Controversial issues may need to be shelved till after the election.
- **CBNRM has also taken tourism into new and uncharted territory.** The complex issue of common property management in communal conservancies vs. an individual's or company's right to benefit from those common resources remains

contentious. Some private sector operators still cannot see why they should share profits via an occupancy levy or some other arrangement with the conservancy in which they are situated, even though their business is based on the wildlife which the conservancy manages and conserves. This is so despite the fact that tourism rights are legally vested in a registered conservancy.

- **Local entrepreneurs can also cause community disputes.** Discord results when a local entrepreneur takes over a common resource such as a spring or prime tourism area without being prepared to enter into any agreement with the conservancy. In one such case, a community/conservancy campsite whose construction was funded by IRDNC was later claimed by its manager as his own, and the matter had to be resolved in the high court. Puros Conservancy's rights were recognised and the judge ordered the manager to hand over the camp. An acrimonious struggle was thus finally resolved, but the scars remain, at least among the older generation.
- **A national process to develop and entrench clear policies is needed.** Such policies should combine the best of free enterprise with conservancy common property management rights, as both are fundamental to the long-term sustainability of CBNRM.
- **Conflict is not always bad.** Conflict may, in fact, create the momentum and energy to take relationships to another level. Conflicts also offer creative opportunities to explore new ways for common property management and free enterprise to work together so that collective community upliftment takes place in rural Africa, rather than the enrichment of just a few individuals.
- **All parties should be expected to abide by agreements.** Conservancies do not always stick to their side of agreements with the private sector, and the same applies to private sector vis-à-vis their obligations. The support NGO should not hold one party in a partnership more accountable than another.

5 **In community conflicts, the NGO's role is to retain the moral high ground.**

An NGO should provide forums or resources for conflict resolution, but it is important not to take sides in community conflicts (though this is often easier said than done when staff members come from the conflicting groups).

- **Doing the right thing can be the more difficult course to follow.** Laying criminal charges for theft of donor money can trigger conflict. In one notable case when a small but powerful faction was resisting the power-sharing implicit in the emergence of a conservancy in Sesfontein in Kunene Region, such an arrest was the spark that lit the powder keg. Although the theft of money left other community workers without Christmas salaries, one small group held demonstrations against the NGO. As soon as he was out on bail, the accused joined the fray. Political party and tribal interests further escalated the conflict till national

TV and the President of Namibia were paying attention. The criminal act – the theft of N\$ 20 000 – appeared forgotten as the situation played itself out over two years. However, IRDNC did eventually get a conviction in court and some of the stolen money back. In time, it even got an apology from the chief who had initially opposed the conservancy.

What would we have done differently? Would IRDNC have pursued the legal route if we had known the consequences? Yes, but we should have been more proactive in dealing with the root causes of this conflict. For example, Damara (vs. Herero) representation on an early version of a conservancy committee was inadequate and should have alerted us to the fact that trouble was brewing. However, hindsight is easy, and over-stretched field staff faced a very complicated situation, with deep-seated problems between all five TAs in the area.

- **Boundary disputes can be a major component of early conservancy development.** Some such disputes between TAs or neighbouring communities took so long and became so intense that critics of CBNRM believed conservancies would be derailed before they got going. Because this was such a fundamental issue for the future operation of conservancies, we hung in, playing a neutral but supportive role. By the second year of some such disputes, we – and our donors – were wondering if the critics might not be right. Nevertheless, all disputes were eventually settled, and conservancy after conservancy applied for registration.
- **Much can be achieved by providing a forum for conflicts to be discussed, without being actively involved.** Through IRDNC's quarterly planning meetings with representatives from conservancies, government officials and other players, we witnessed community leaders themselves taking responsibility for resolving some of the worst disputes. After the MET, NGOs, the Regional Governor and other senior government figures had failed to resolve an intractable conflict between two communities that was delaying conservancy progress, a traditional councillor, who usually left the floor to younger, more literate representatives, proposed a way forward. A group representing a number of TAs and different conservancies formed what came to be called the DRC – the Dispute Resolution Committee. These respected and influential local leaders went on over the two next years to resolve boundary and other community disputes, working quietly, in their own time, and wanted nothing from us except some transport or small amounts of money for fuel and food in the field.
- **There are neither winners nor losers in community conflicts.** Even if you are right and your opponent is demonstrably wrong, and is found guilty of theft or fraud, he returns to his community after he has served his sentence. You may still have to engage with him, as he could be regarded as a leader by the local community.
- **In small communities, the consequences of western-style accountability are directly personal.** This is one of the reasons why conservancies are so slow to confront wrongdoers. City dwellers are unlikely to have to have future dealings with a colleague or worker who is dismissed for dishonesty – he or she is likely to disappear from their lives. But if a conservancy fires someone, they will have to

continue engaging with him and his family, sometimes on a daily basis. As one local IRDNC worker put it about her own community: "You'll see his furniture



being repossessed as without a salary, he fails to pay his monthly hire purchase instalments; you'll know, and be blamed for it, when his family is short of food ... " For these and other reasons, people are not easily fired from jobs within conservancies, and if they are, community politics may play a larger role than the worker's poor performance.

- **Strong local value structures enable firm conservancy management.** Interestingly, remote Himba societies with strong, descent-based leadership and local value structures find it relatively easy to hire and fire staff on merit, and generally to exercise authority. Other apparently more "modern" conservancies may require years of capacity building to reach this position.

6 **Doing CBNRM in a war zone requires a change of methods, not of objectives.**

The civil war in Angola spread into West Caprivi in 2000 when the Namibian Government allowed Angolan Government forces to base themselves there. UNITA rebels retaliated by killing tourists and planting landmines in both West Caprivi and Kavango Region. The Namibian Defence Force moved in as well, and West Caprivi became a closed military zone, occupied by three armies. Civilians, apart from those residents who did not flee, were only allowed through the area with armed convoys. The main donor for West Caprivi at that time, USAID, has strict rules prohibiting project activities in a war-zone. Nevertheless, IRDNC decided not to close the project and found alternative donors to continue supporting our beleaguered staff, albeit in some cases at reduced salaries. For more than two years, no-one was able to move freely, and more than 50 people died, including a community game guard who was shot dead by an Angolan soldier; fourteen people disappeared. A number of our staff were arrested when they were found in legal possession of one of two vehicles still stationed there, or of our two shortwave radios (used for communication with the Katima Mulilo office in those pre-cell phone days). The Legal Assistance Centre was invaluable in helping us to obtain their release.

- **Deploy staff strategically.** IRDNC transferred a Kunene staff member who was a former SWAPO PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) military officer to Caprivi to become our liaison with the Namibian Defence Force, many of them also former PLAN fighters. This improved the situation considerably.

- **Maintain a project presence.** We continued to visit West Caprivi, albeit with military escorts, and gave HIV/AIDS awareness and mitigation lectures to bored NDF men and their officers at the main base at Omega. At the same time, we discussed the CBNRM project, stressing that it was led by the government, and pointed out the illegality of poaching. Eventually CGGs were allowed to patrol again in a secure area, sometimes with NDF soldiers. Although there was inevitably some illegal hunting by the military, there was no large-scale slaughter, as could have happened if there had been no project presence.



- **Maintain income streams.** Income from crafts was critical for West Caprivi families at this time, as people did not have safe access to bush food and were afraid to work in remote fields. Although inputs were reduced over this period, income from crafts continued in the absence of tourists, as baskets were sold outside the project area. Getting bulky baskets to the capital more than 1 100 kilometres away required ingenuity, but earned vital cash for local women when it was most needed.

7 See donors as equal partners.

A last word should focus on some of the most important partners with whom we engage – our donors. IRDNC has been fortunate to have several long-term funding partners. Good communication, a common vision and delivering what we say we will, thereby helping donors to reach their goals, have underpinned these productive relationships. All the partnership lessons discussed in this chapter apply to the partnership with donors; it is important for the NGO to see itself as an equal partner with its donors.

- **Donor relations must be handled sensitively, but with confidence.** Donor partners sometimes have priorities that do not coincide with ours, in which case the NGO

needs to strike a balance and be responsive to donor requirements, without being donor-driven. Obviously, as the recipients of large amounts of funding, we take it as read that all financial and technical report requirements will be met on time, and that contracted outputs will be achieved. Some donor requests may consume field time and resources. We do everything in our power to assist, but we have also developed the confidence to know when to refuse, or to ask for additional resources to be able to meet a request.

- **Stick to principles.** Conflicts with donors have been rare, but where there has been real disagreement, the NGO has held its ground and stuck to its guiding principles. IRDNC has turned down much-needed funding because of philosophical clashes with the donor, and was a member of a consortium of NGOs who with the MET faced down a very large and bureaucratic bilateral donor – and won. We were prepared to lose the funding – millions of US dollars – rather than compromise on a fundamental principle, namely Namibian ownership of Namibia's CBNRM programme. It is to be hoped that the regional programme remains strong enough to hold its course and retain its African identity.



He who has people will not perish
- Himba-Herero proverb

CHAPTER

RUNNING AN AFRICAN NGO

It starts with a vision

Diversity brings strength

Take chances

8

LESSONS LEARNT

1. Three- to five-year funding cycles may be convenient for the donor, but work that requires people to change attitudes and behaviour needs more time.
2. Practice what you preach.
3. Maintain goals while keeping flexible, giving the organisation the space to make and take opportunities.
4. Effective teams need diversity; different skills and a variety of outlooks and cultural values bring strength and creativity to an organisation.
5. Be open to changing the NGO's focus and role as needs change; take enough time each year to reflect on how and why activities are being done.
6. Ideas are just five per cent; the remainder is in the actual implementation.
7. As your energy goes where your attention is, focus on the solution, not the problem. Don't waste energy being against something – work towards an alternative, or find a way around the obstacle.

He who has people will not perish is another wise Himba-Herero proverb. Undoubtedly, IRDNC's passionate and committed staff are the reason why the NGO remains at the cutting edge of implementing CBNRM in southern Africa.

IRDNC today has a team of 77 people spread over two remote regions, which themselves are more than 1 000 kilometres apart: Kunene, in the vast, arid, rugged north-west corner of Namibia; and flood-prone Caprivi, in the north-east. Trans-boundary work in Zambia adds to logistical challenges, as does agricultural work in six of Namibia's regions.



Three offices – in Namibia's capital Windhoek, and the regional capitals Katima Mulilo (Caprivi) and Opuwo (Kunene) – and three remote field stations provide facilities for staff, most of whom work from their homes in dispersed rural villages. Cell-phone coverage is spreading fast, but there are still areas where a short-wave radio call to Walvis Bay's "ships at sea" radio station is the only means of communicating with the outside world.

Like all NGOs, IRDNC needs to plan and effectively implement its community-based work in conservation, development and agriculture.

Staff must co-ordinate with multiple partners, including government, while at the same time managing resources efficiently. These include office and communication equipment that may rely on solar and wind energy, plus a fleet of 4x4 vehicles, most of which operate hundreds of kilometres from the nearest garage. The NGO needs to account for and document every dollar it spends to pass annual audits, and monitor and report on progress towards targets to ensure that a range of donors, each with their own priorities, know how their funding has been spent and what impact it has made.

IRDNC's experience

During the early years, without phones, faxes and emails, we were at least able to give our undivided attention to fieldwork. Today, of course, IRDNC has of necessity joined the modern world of instantaneous communication. While most of our work still takes place in the field, with funding coming from more than 15 donors, instead of only two or three, the proportion of time that must be spent on administration and grant management has swelled accordingly.

Running and managing an organisation in these circumstances presents some unique challenges and requires dedicated staff of the highest calibre.

Most of today's organisational issues are different from those faced in the late 1980s, when the NGO grew out of a small community-based project and comprised just four people. However, as some readers are likely to be facing the challenges of running a small, under-resourced NGO or project in a developing country, the most important lessons learned from those tough, early days are recorded here, together with the key lessons learnt as IRDNC grew rapidly to its current size. This growth was often unplanned – in response to a need or opportunity – and more than once, capacity was stretched close to breaking point. This was stressful, but it provided fertile ground for learning hard lessons.

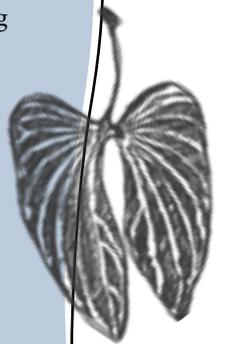
1 *Three- to five-year funding cycles may be convenient for the donor, but work that requires people to change attitudes and behaviour needs more time.*

Being a Namibian NGO with a long-term perspective – not just a project with a cycle of one to five years – has contributed to IRDNC's achievements. Sticking with it till the job is done has also earned credibility as well as trust and respect of communities and partners, and has contributed to real sustainability.

2 *Practice what you preach.*

An NGO should set a strong example of values-driven good governance at local and national levels. From its inception, IRDNC has also tried to model a participatory people-centred approach within the organisation. Some of the governance issues faced by support-NGOs in Namibia and elsewhere mirror those encountered at CBO level – working with donor or public funds, employing local staff and making and implementing decisions within an agreed upon mandate and framework. Joint decision making by senior staff forums can be hard, but it has been shown beyond doubt that this democratic leadership structure is effective, even though there are times when it may be less "efficient" than a more hierarchical structure.

- **The vision comes first.** All staff should share the vision, and no-one should be regarded as being too junior to be given the opportunity to understand our CBNRM goal, and to contribute towards its achievement.
- **Leadership should be strong and collaborative.** IRDNC has always had more than one leader; founded by two co-directors, it now, as an expanded organisation, has three. This culture of joint leadership extends through the senior management forums to team leaders, who plan with their staff. All are encouraged to take responsibility and to be accountable. Nevertheless, the more participatory and bottom-up the organisation or process, the stronger its leadership needs to be. Staff also work best within a clear structure.
- **Staff should take initiative and ownership.** With the freedom to show initiative and be proactive, staff develop a sense of ownership over their work. Obviously, there have been instances of abuse of this flexibility. However, the distances between project areas makes it impossible not to give staff a higher level of freedom in managing their time than is typical in more conventional organisational settings.
- **Leadership should be accessible.** The leadership – from team heads to directors – need to be accessible and to spend time in the field with staff to keep in touch with the grassroots. This is essential to avoid having leaders who are out of touch and disconnected from the field programme.
- **Avoid setting up to fail.** Delegation is a process – handing over a task without monitoring performance and providing back-up support only sets someone up to fail. This has proved particularly true when inexperienced staff have taken



LESSONS LEARNT

over grant management, for example. Emailing in areas where connectivity is insecure and power failures are regular requires back-up phone calls to ensure that information has been received.

- **As a matter of principle, crime must be prosecuted.** In two cases where donor funds were stolen by individuals, IRDNC took legal action, even though this meant years of delays, and staff time and resources being wasted by engagement with the overworked and inefficient courts. However, the example set for CBOs was more important than the amount stolen or the costs of securing a conviction.

3 **Maintain goals while keeping flexible, giving the organisation the space to make and take opportunities.**

At Namibia's Independence, IRDNC was asked to work alongside the new MET in a series of socio-ecological surveys to consult communities still living with wildlife. This meant abandoning parts of the contracted work plan. Our donor/partner WWF International grasped the significance of this opportunity to make an input into new conservation policy and supported our decision to change tack in mid-stream. Since then, IRDNC has continued to guard its flexibility.

- **Build up discretionary funds.** NGO leaders need to build up some funding that is not contractually bound. This allows the flexibility and rapid response that is integral to what makes an NGO successful. Unallocated funds earned through consultancies and obtained by occasional non-prescriptive donations have enabled IRDNC to seize or make opportunities, and also to sustain the “not-so-sexy” work which could not attract donors, but that was believed to be important for the long-term success of the programme.
- **Don't succumb to pressure to deliver quick roll-outs.** A mix of consistency in approach and adaptability with respect to methods so as to accommodate changing situations has worked well. For example, IRDNC has worked to balance the trend towards short interventions by specialists and workshops for training. Instead, in addition to providing more formal training, we have continued with the (expensive, time-consuming and resource-heavy) approach of having a field-based staff presence supporting CBOs. The reward has been improved local capacity



and the steady growth of a strong civil society within some of Namibia's remotest communities. However, it requires skilled facilitators to judge when to increase and when to decrease levels of involvement. IRDNC has also avoided the “develop and roll out” approach after seeing it fail due to CBOs' lack of ownership over tools that were developed by outside specialists.

- **Effective planning includes long-term and short-term components – and requires adaptability.** IRDNC's approach to planning has evolved over the years, but underpinning the process is the belief that we need strong goals – and a vision as the keystone – to aim for over the long term (one to five years); and that short-term (quarterly) planning should be given close attention, with each action point being well considered. While annual work plans provide necessary targets, detailed medium term planning (six months to a year) often turns out to be a waste of time. This is because the situation almost always changes on the ground, which requires that plans be revisited.

- **Quarterly planning workshops are key events.** Initiated originally because there were too few tangible results even though staff were putting in long hours, the simple process of quarterly planning requires teams to commit to a maximum of five priorities each quarter (in addition to routine tasks). The actions which lead to the required output are listed. At the next meeting, teams report back. This system enhanced productivity and job satisfaction, as results were demonstrably achieved. Later, as conservancies emerged, their representatives were brought into this process, with up to three people from each conservancy attending the workshops that grew to be two or three days long. Their plans then formed the basis for IRDNC's own work plan.



- **Attain synergy through planning.** The quarterly planning workshops quickly became forums for other stakeholders – government officials, researchers, private sector, NGO partners – to engage with conservancy representatives and with each other. Synergy was thus promoted at different levels.
- **Accommodate staff's changing needs.** Most of IRDNC's senior staff are long-term employees. The NGO is sensitive to staff's evolving needs and interests, and tries to accommodate these. Encouraging staff members to reinvent themselves keeps them stimulated, and the organisation benefits from new skills that staff members

acquire, and from reduced staff turnover. Growing into a large, multi-funded organisation has required written policies, standard operating procedures and inevitably, a degree of bureaucracy. Nevertheless, the culture of the organisation remains people-centred.

4 *Effective teams need diversity; different skills and a variety of outlooks and cultural values bring strength and creativity to an organisation.*

While talented individuals are often catalysts for change or new ideas, it is people working together who change the world. IRDNC speaks 11 languages and brings a spectrum of skills, personalities and cultural perspectives into play. These contrasting assets provide resilience and strength. Local knowledge, experience and skills are valued as much as – and at times more than – formal education. Someone with a PhD may be less effective in certain circumstances than a local person who did not finish or even go to school. Some top staff are “under-educated” in conventional terms, yet they have been promoted to very senior posts, based on experience, a particular range of appropriate skills, and commitment. Other senior people hold advanced, internationally recognised qualifications and have years of field experience. Together, these groups make an outstanding team, with complementary sets of skills.

- Tensions, as well as synergy, can be created by this interdependence. An efficient grant manager, necessarily having strong formal education, facing tight donor deadlines and his or her own field commitments, will take strain when a colleague who is skilled at networking, while handling a number of important strategic issues, misses a deadline because of differing priorities. The grants manager fears that the NGO could lose its funding if it becomes unreliable; the networker argues that there would be nothing to spend funding on if crucial strategic engagement in support of field activities did not take place. Such clashes are inevitable, but can be resolved if there is regular contact and communication, mutual understanding and a strong team spirit.
- Our unconventional approach requires careful management. By not just valuing local skills in the field, but giving them equivalent status to external western skills and qualifications, we have challenged our teams to optimise teamwork and interdependence. When it works, we have unbeatable teams with a remarkable skills base, insights and commitment. However, without an explicit focus on team building and mutual understanding of each other’s roles, discord can develop. For example, a member of staff who is highly literate and numerate – who has what we call the “sharp-edged skills” – may feel overburdened with administration and financial management. One solution is to pay well for these responsibilities, but then other staff with different “soft-edged” but no less important skills could feel discriminated against. Thus both categories need to be remunerated fairly.
- Seek out leaders who can interface. Leaders with the ability to interface between both worlds are critical to ensure this approach works.

Lessons learnt

- Coaching and mentoring can help close proficiency gaps. Dedicated coaching and one-on-one mentoring have been invaluable to help local senior staff close some proficiency gaps and acquire essential skills such as prioritising and time management.
- Having field-based senior staff living in or near target areas accelerates progress. A successful strategy has also been to employ local people to work in their own areas. This has built up committed rural teams with local insights and inside knowledge. However, “outsiders” are sometimes needed to bring a broader perspective to difficult issues, as local staff can be drawn too deep into their own community dynamics. This again highlights the value of diversity within a team.



- Two-way cultural translation is essential. Particularly in the early days of a programme with an inexperienced target community, the ability to translate values and goals based in a donor culture to something meaningful on the ground, and community needs to a proposal that is meaningful to a donor, is another essential skill.
- Too much responsibility disempowers. There is a real danger in our unconventional approach of giving local staff too much responsibility too fast with respect to programme management, thereby taking them away from what they are good at. Special arrangements may need to be made – outsourcing report writing; extra time from a book-keeper or accountant – so as not to isolate staff from their core competencies.
- Disciplinary procedures need to be learnt. Just as conservancy committees find it difficult to discipline or fire a worker who may be a relative or a neighbour’s relative, so some of our local senior staff have needed to learn how to negotiate

Lessons learnt

this uncomfortable situation with their own staff who usually come from their own communities. Providing an outside mediator, or ensuring that disciplinary hearings include outsiders has made it easier. It is easy to focus on the problem – if s/he wants the senior post s/he must be able to handle it – but there is really no good reason for not using alternative routes to the western linear approach, if doing so achieves the same objective.

- Rural women in leadership positions face special challenges. These women have needed to work harder than most of our men at demonstrating their competence to their own local staff. And just as early feminists in senior posts discovered, they cannot necessarily rely on the support of other women on their teams. Nevertheless, with perseverance, our senior local women have become strong role models for women and girls.
- Witchcraft and accusations of setting spells are a reality in rural Africa, and even though a staff member may not believe in this, his family or members of his community may well. Understanding and cultural interpretation are thus needed as in-house skills.

5 *Be open to changing the NGO's focus and role as needs change; take enough time each year to reflect on how and why activities are being done.*

IRDNC has changed its role and expanded target areas several times without changing its community-based vision. It has evolved from a small NGO doing conservation and development projects to a support structure for more than 56 Namibian CBOs to link improved management of natural resources to development and the growth of civil society. This is still our key focus in Namibia and Zambia, but we are now also facilitating community-based action to address some fundamental challenges posed by degraded and damaged environments that threaten both farmlands and wildlife habitat.



- Build self-assessment into budgets and work-plans. As a “learning organisation”, IRDNC has promoted a culture of self-assessment and self-critique – about programmatic focus, but also about the way the organisation is managed. Taking sufficient time to reflect on how we do things is challenging when staff are struggling to cope with workloads and are dispersed across the most remote corners of a very large country. Nevertheless, each such strategic workshop has been worth the time and resources. Building such meetings into the budgets and work plans in advance and ensuring that they have a champion is a successful strategy.



- Be prepared to take chances. IRDNC is constantly testing and implementing new initiatives which could grow into major projects or could be taken over by either conservancies themselves or government. For example, IRDNC facilitated and implemented the country's first regional fire strategy in Caprivi. Subsequently, the government has started working on a national fire strategy.

- Focus on visibility is necessary. Low profile with high productivity was a key approach for many years at IRDNC, and one that contributed to considerable achievements. We left the glossy brochures to others and kept our heads down, working in the field, so much so that at one point, the NGO was better known outside the country – because of international awards and fund-raising efforts – than in Namibia itself. Because of its focus on implementation, IRDNC did not publish enough about its work over the years. The upshot was that our own story was told by others, and sometimes misrepresented by researchers. But there came a time when the NGO needed to be more visible nationally to fulfil an expanding strategic role. A concerted effort had to be made to gain a higher profile in political circles. Today, senior staff members serve on various high-level government committees and are in regular contact with top decision makers.
- Make sure that you reach decision makers. It cannot be taken for granted that field achievements are reaching or being understood by senior level decision-makers in government, even though reports are widely circulated. For example, in recent years, after a shaky start, good progress was made by conservancies in financial accountability, thanks to major efforts by NGOs, but senior MET officials were not aware of these improvements and retained out-of-date perceptions. Being proactive and when necessary switching resources to, for example, advocacy and the use of special strategies to reach key people is important.
- Always think ahead. The team needs to include some people with strong fund-raising skills, for example, to ensure resilience and a solid funding base. Constant planning is important.

6 *Ideas are just five per cent; the remainder is in the actual implementation.*

Tensions seem inevitable between field-based practitioners and theoreticians, with the latter often having more power than responsibility. So-called “action research” can be the most disruptive, with inexperienced western graduate students making short-term project interventions and assuming that because they have hired a research assistant or two and held a few meetings, they now understand community dynamics. It usually takes several months or longer to understand the real social geography and political context. Some researchers also have a remarkable tendency to assume that their view is somehow less biased than those of local scholar-practitioners. On the other hand, good researchers can bring fresh perspectives.

- Relationships between NGOs and researchers can be either beneficial or damaging. A good idea may come from researchers and consultants, but unless there is a local champion to implement it – and stay with it over time – the idea is likely to remain on a computer screen. As most researchers have to move on in a few months or at most a year or two, those who are serious about giving something back in exchange for their masters or doctorate will forge a good relationship with local NGOs. This is a route to ensure that insights are shared and ideas debated, and perhaps even tested.

7 *As your energy goes where your attention is, focus on the solution, not the problem. Don't waste energy being against something – work towards an alternative, or find a way around the obstacle.*

This “lesson” may seem trite, but given how much time is spent on discussing problems, it is remarkable how people struggle with implementing solutions. The media and the academic world exacerbate this tendency to dwell on what is wrong. An example discussed in Chapter 2 makes the point: Catching poachers is a losing and endless battle; it is better to focus on finding ways to stop poaching. It's much harder and less exciting, and will take a long time to get the majority of the community on board, but rather than merely applying a bandage, it implements a cure. Of course, crisis situations may arise in which both approaches are necessary.

- Think “out of the box”. The point of a “positive” mindset is that it forces us to develop a vision of where we want to be in the future; it focuses us on what will help us to get there, and what currently hinders us, and encourages creative, out-of-the-box thinking. An example is the NGO's gender policy. Rather than focusing on the problem – women's unequal access to and representation on decision-making bodies in conservancies – and trying to promote a quota system for committees, we identified what is hindering women, and put time into what will help women achieve a more equitable distribution of power. This led to building up the skills of women, for example through public speaking courses. A rule is that if a staff member brings a problem to their supervisor, they should also bring one or more solutions. The proposed solutions may not be the best ones, but at least they shift attention from the problem to potential solutions.



ACRONYMS

AGM	Annual General Meeting
CBNRM	Community-based natural resource management
CBO	Community-based organization
CGG	Community game guard
CRM	Community resource monitor
DEA	Directorate of Environmental Affairs
DRC	Dispute Resolution Committee
HACCSIS	Human – Animal Conflict Conservancy Self-Insurance Scheme
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IRDNC	Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
JV	joint venture
LIFE	Living in a Finite Environment
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACSO	Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations
NDF	Namibian Defence Force
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRM	natural resource management
PLAN	Peoples' Liberation Army of Namibia
SWAPO	South West African Peoples' Organisation
TA	traditional authority
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
ZAWA	Zambian Wildlife Authority

