



# INVESTIGATION

## THE EFFICACY OF NAMIBIA'S WILDLIFE CONSERVATION MODEL AS IT RELATES TO AFRICAN ELEPHANTS

(*LOXODONTA AFRICANA*)

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# 1 / About the Authors

Adam Cruise is an award-winning investigative environmental journalist, academic and author. He has contributed to a number of international publications, including *National Geographic* and *The Guardian* covering diverse topics from the plight of wildlife in Africa to coral reef rejuvenation in Indonesia. He has a PhD in Philosophy specialising in environmental ethics from Stellenbosch University in South Africa and is the editor of the online *Journal of African Elephants*.

Izzy Sasada is a journalist whose areas of interest include human-wildlife conflict, environmental issues, and indigenous rights. She graduated from the University of Durham, United Kingdom, where she studied Anthropology. During her studies, she was awarded a grant to spend six weeks in rural Zambia, investigating the changing practices of traditional medicine during childbirth. Since graduating, she has worked as a production manager on documentaries about human-wildlife conflict.

# 2 / Introduction

Namibia has often been presented as the exemplification of successful elephant and wildlife conservation, with rural communities living among and alongside Namibia's elephants and other wildlife reportedly benefitting socially and economically.<sup>1</sup>

Namibia was the first African country to incorporate the protection of the natural environment into its constitution. The government ostensibly allowed rural communities the opportunity to manage their natural resources through the creation of communal conservancies through a process known as Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). These conservancies – together with central and regional government, non-profit organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and other entities – have purportedly restored and, in many cases, increased populations of elephants and other wildlife species in the country.<sup>2</sup> Through sustainable utilisation initiatives such as trophy hunting, trade in wildlife and wildlife products, and ecotourism, this wildlife restoration has, it is claimed, generated meaningful economic income for rural communities and indigenous peoples previously disadvantaged through decades of South African apartheid rule prior to independence in 1990.

The Namibian conservation model is an important example of an increasingly 'neoliberal' global policy framework as applied to biodiversity conservation, which operates a market-based approach with attendant socio-ecological effects.<sup>3</sup> The model has received in-depth engagement and critique, which generally declares it successful in terms of conserving wildlife as well

as providing economic upliftment for impoverished rural communities. Yet, as a recent analysis shows, 'there remains a lack of detailed research concerning how these programs and their value frames are operationalised in practice.'<sup>4</sup> Namibia has an annual GDP of about USD 10,7 billion with an average per capita income of around USD 5,300 per annum. These average figures, however, are skewed by 3,300 USD millionaires in the country. This inequality tends to hide the fact that about 18% of Namibia's population live below the poverty line in spite of claims that its wildlife economy has been a successful means of reducing impoverishment.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, despite the general perception of having a favourable outcome for wildlife and rural communities, there has been little notable analysis on the *actual* success of Namibia's conservation model at a functional grass-roots level.

With this last consideration in mind, a comprehensive two-month field-investigation, complemented by literary research, was undertaken to assess the efficacy of Namibia's wildlife conservation management policies and programs, particularly as they relate to African savanna elephants (*Loxodonta africana*). Elephants are central to this analysis since they are a keystone species – both in an ecological sense and in a policy and management sense pertaining to Namibia's concept of community-based conservation. The field investigation and analysis concludes that the perceived success of wildlife conservation and concomitant economic benefits for previously disadvantaged rural communities in Namibia is found to be predominantly a fabrication rather than a fact.

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1 <https://www.worldwildlife.org/places/namibia>

2 <https://www.worldwildlife.org/projects/conserving-wildlife-and-enabling-communities-in-namibia>

3 Hewitson, L & Sullivan, S. (2020)

4 Ibid.

5 <https://tradingeconomics.com/namibia/gdp-per-capita>

# 3/ Methodology

The eight-week field investigation was conducted separately and, at times, together by Adam Cruise and Izzy Sasada.

The investigation covered the entire northern range of naturally free-roaming elephants from the Kunene Region in the north-west, to the Otjozondjupa, Kavango and Zambezi Regions in the north-east of the country. Twenty-one Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) conservancies were visited. Community members, management and traditional authorities, trophy hunters and others were interviewed.

Cruise's investigation centred on African savanna elephants (*Loxodonta africana*). The choice of elephants is an important point of reference in measuring the efficacy of Namibia's conservation model. Biologists often refer to African elephants as keystone species or ecosystem 'architects' and 'gardeners'. Their presence in the natural landscape increases and helps support the overall biodiversity and well-being of other wild species. Their presence, or lack thereof, also serves as a gauge with which to measure the overall health of an environment. African elephants are also an 'umbrella species' in that they require large areas of suitable habitat. They require vast ranges to roam and large, intact natural areas to maintain their populations. By protecting such vast areas in which they are, themselves, secure, many other species that share habitat with elephants are ultimately protected too.

Elephants are likewise central to Namibia's wildlife management policies and programs in that they are seen as a principal species both as a high value income source and as a significant 'problem' animal. The former is considered in the form of money generated from tourism, trophy and own-use hunting as well as the sale of live individuals, while the latter as a primary cause of property, crop and livestock destruction.

Cruise conducted in-person interviews with stakeholders involved in elephant management and conflict incidents – cattle farmers, CBNRM constituents, wildlife officials and elephant researchers – as well as on-site assessment of elephant habitat, population movements and numbers, destruction of water and fence installations, and trophy hunting operations.

The much-publicised tender of 170 live elephants, as advertised by the Namibian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) in the state-owned New Era newspaper in December 2020, from four commercial cattle ranching areas and subsequent sale of 57 of those elephants in August 2021 was investigated through in-person interviews and on-site visitations.

The domestic trade in ivory jewellery, known as ekipas, was

also assessed and documented. Markets and retail jewellery stores in Windhoek and Okahandja were visited, and store and stall owners and keepers interviewed.

Cruise conducted detailed literary research and assessment of elephant population surveys, elephant movement and behaviour studies, reports and documents as a comparison with and in support of his in-field findings. The latest annual audits for the CBNRM conservancies were analysed. For trophy hunting, the 2019 audit reports rather than the 2020 audit reports were analysed. This was due to the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, which all but halted all trophy hunting activities in Namibia. The 2019 audit reports were therefore deemed the most accurate when analysing the impact of trophy hunting on elephant numbers and community-based livelihoods. The most current elephant population surveys were analysed. These came in two formats – aerial surveys conducted by Craig & Gibson, two biologists who have conducted such surveys for the Namibian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) for the past decade; and the annual game counts conducted by the CBNRMs as part of their mandate to monitor wildlife populations for utilisation purposes.

Sasada's investigation centred on the rural communities and indigenous peoples living within the conservancies and surrounding areas. The focus of her investigation was to gauge the perceived success of Namibia's conservation model with local community members and indigenous peoples both in terms of economic benefits and wildlife/elephant conservation.

Sasada assessed community views and perceptions of the conservation model in terms of economic benefits derived from elephants and human-elephant conflict in CBNRM conservancies; the role of women in wildlife/elephant management in the CBNRMs; and the role of local government, traditional and conservancy management authorities in the CBNRM areas in facilitating conservation policies and resultant benefits and detriments to communities at a grass-roots level.

Sasada compared the benefits received by various ethnic communities throughout the program from the Himba and Damara in the north-west to the Herero, Ju/'hoansi and !Kung San in the north-east. This was achieved through in-person interviews and visitations with community members, stakeholders and local government officials.

Sasada conducted detailed literary research using former and recent studies into Namibia's CBNRMs as a comparison with and in support of her in-field findings.

Cruise and Sasada also conducted in-field investigations into Recon Africa's two test oil drill sites in the Kavango-East Region, specifically as they relate to the possible effects on elephant movements as a result of seismic drilling and other disturbances, as well as the effects on human communities surrounding the sites. The investigation included on-site visits and in-person interviews with local community members and other stakeholders.

# 4 / Historical Background

The Republic of Namibia is a country of 823,988 km<sup>2</sup> bordering Angola, Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa. It is the driest country in sub-Saharan Africa. The large, arid Namib Desert, from which the country derived its name, as well as the dry areas of the Kalahari to the east and southeast, and the skeleton coast and much of the western Kunene Region, has resulted in Namibia being one of the least densely populated countries in the world. The human population of approximately 2,500,000<sup>6</sup> is half urban. In 2020, 52.03 % live in the 33 largest towns and cities.<sup>7</sup> The rural land is split into private farms, communal and ancestral lands, and protected natural areas. Despite much of the country being arid, wildlife populations are said to be thriving.

Namibia has been inhabited since early times by the San, Damara and Nama peoples. Around the 14th century, immigrating Bantu peoples arrived and have since dominated the population of the country, the largest being the Ovambo, who today constitute the majority.

In 1884, the German Empire established rule over most of the territory. Between 1904 and 1908 the Germans perpetrated a genocide against the Herero and Nama ethnic groups. German rule ended in 1915 with a defeat by South African forces during the First World War. In 1920, the league of Nations mandated administration of the territory to South Africa. As Mandatory ruler, the South African government imposed its racial laws, especially after 1948 when the policies of apartheid were implemented. In the later 20th century, uprisings and demands for political representation by native political activists seeking independence resulted in the United Nations assuming direct responsibility over the territory in 1966, but South Africa maintained its *de facto* rule. In 1973, the United Nations recognised the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) as the official representative of the Namibian people. The party was, and still is, dominated by the Ovambo. Following continued guerrilla warfare, South Africa installed an interim administration in Namibia in 1985. Namibia obtained full independence from South Africa in 1990. SWAPO has been the only ruling party since independence.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/namibia-population/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/455894/urbanization-in-namibia/>

# 5/ The Namibian Conservation Model

## A. Tourism

Namibia is renowned for its extensive wildlife, which provides substantial tourism income for its economy. Tourism is a significant contributor to Namibia's GDP bringing in an estimated total of NAD 26,4-billion (USD 1,77-billion) or 11,7% of the total GDP for 2020. The sector directly or indirectly supports 123,000 jobs (16.4% of all employment) and servicing over a million tourists per year.<sup>8</sup> Namibia has nine National Parks with the 22,935 km<sup>2</sup> Etosha National Park (the size of Israel) being the flagship, hosting 200,000 visitors per annum.<sup>9</sup> National Parks are on state land, and are administered by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT).

Tourism concessions are areas of state land where concessions are granted by MEFT to tourism enterprises or to conservancies, to run for the benefit of wildlife or conservation-based tourism.

## B. Trade in wildlife and wildlife products

Namibia has been a Party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) since 1991. CITES is a treaty between 183 nations or 'Parties' that regulates the international trade in endangered species, with the aim of ensuring that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.

Under its conservation model, the Namibian government fully supports international commercial trade in wild animals and parts or products derived from them, including from threatened species such as elephants. African elephants in Namibia are listed on CITES Appendix II. This means that CITES Parties have agreed that although the species is 'not necessarily now threatened with extinction' in Namibia, it may become so unless international trade in specimens is strictly regulated in order to 'avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival.'<sup>10</sup>

Namibia has regularly proposed a lifting of the ban on commercial sales of ivory at an international level. On two previous occasions (1999 and 2008), Namibia has been granted permission by CITES to sell its national ivory stockpile (to Japan, and China and Japan respectively).<sup>11</sup>

Namibia has also traded internationally in live African elephants. In 2012 and 2013, the country exported 24 live wild-caught elephants under CITES regulations to Mexico (18 elephants) and Cuba (6 elephants).<sup>12</sup> In 2021, a possible 42 elephants will be exported out of Namibia.

Namibia also has been granted permission by CITES to sell carved ivory jewellery known as *ekipas* at a local and an international level.

8 [https://namibatourism.com.na/uploads/file\\_uploads/TSA%20fifth%20Edition%20\(5\).pdf](https://namibatourism.com.na/uploads/file_uploads/TSA%20fifth%20Edition%20(5).pdf)

9 <https://www.namibiahc.org.uk/perch/resources/pdf/etosha-national-park-fact-sheet-etosha.pdf>

10 [https://cites.org/eng/news/statement/international\\_trade\\_in\\_live\\_elephants](https://cites.org/eng/news/statement/international_trade_in_live_elephants)

11 <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/31/Docs/E-AC31-18-02.pdf>

12 *Ibid.*

## C. Community-based conservancies

Since its independence, Namibia has introduced a variety of strategies aiming at engaging rural communities in the conservation and utilisation of their natural resources and wildlife populations. In 1996, the government granted communities the right to create ‘conservancies’ – areas with defined borders and governance and management structures outside of State-owned parks. These rights include the ‘consumptive and non-consumptive use and sustainable management of game [...] in order to enable the members to derive benefits’ and mitigate or ‘offset’ the costs of living alongside populations of large-bodied mammals such as elephants which have a tendency to raid the crops of conservancy residents.<sup>13</sup>

These ‘conservancies’ are called Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) areas. CBNRM areas are designed to give communities the right to manage and benefit from their natural resources and wildlife. The aim is to increase the income of impoverished rural Namibians, while leading to a recovery in wildlife populations in Namibia that were decimated in the decades prior to independence.<sup>14</sup> As with CBNRM programs elsewhere in the world, the ethos of Namibia’s program is that appropriate incentives to use natural resources sustainably will arise if these resources have sufficient economic value to local people, conferred through rights of use, benefit and management.<sup>15</sup>

## D. Traditional Authorities

Traditional Authorities are a governing structure in Namibia based on the ethnicity of the indigenous people of the territory. Acceptance of a Traditional Authority is vested in the Government of Namibia. There are 51 recognised Traditional Authorities and a further 40 pending applications.<sup>16</sup>

Traditional authorities cover the entire Namibian territory. Their leaders are entrusted with the allocation of communal land and the formulation of the traditional group’s customary laws. They also take over minor judicial work. Leaders and their administrative staff are not paid by the state. Instead the traditional group’s members are expected to sustain their leadership. Government did, however, give one car each to the recognised authorities, and awards allowances for fuel and administrative work. The parallel existence of traditional authorities and the Namibian government in Namibia is controversial.<sup>17</sup>

The traditional rulers and leaders are represented through the Council of Traditional Leaders, established by Act 13 of 1997 (GG 1706) and amended by Act 31 of 2000 (GG 2462).<sup>18</sup>

## E. Trophy Hunting

Traditional hunting is also regarded as a significant and growing component of the Namibian conservation policy and economy, accounting for 0,3% of total GDP, or NAD 383-million (USD 25-million) in 2019, with Namibia boasting numerous species sought after by international sport hunters.<sup>19</sup> However, compared to the revenue brought in by photographic tourism (NAD 26,4-billion (USD 1,77-billion) ) this actually amounts to an insignificant amount of revenue generated, especially since most of the revenue generated by trophy hunting remains in the hands of the hunting outfitters, various travel entities (lodges, airlines etc), the Professional Hunter and government permits. Benefits from trophy hunting for impoverished local communities amount to just NAD 2,45 (USD 0.16) per hectare.<sup>20</sup>

Trophy hunts are not permitted in national parks, but permits to shoot large mammals such as elephants, lions, leopards, rhinoceroses and giraffe are provided for hunts on private land and community-based conservancies (CBNRMs).

13 Drake et al. (2021)

14 <https://www.mercatus.org/system/files/wp1064-community-conservation-in-namibia.pdf>

15 Naidoo et al., (2016)

16 Tjitemis, K. (18th November 2016)

17 Ibid.

18 Government of Namibia (2000)

19 Hewitson, & Sullivan, S. (2019)

20 Economists at Large (2013)

## F. Other Land Uses

There are other land uses when it comes to Namibia's conservation management, which together make up 46.8% of Namibia's land area:

- Community forests are similar to conservancies, and very often overlap them. They are meant to control grazing and natural resource extraction rights in forest areas.
- Freehold conservancies are aggregations of private farms where landowners have come together to include conservation management in their land-use planning. Many of these farms concentrate on wildlife, with trophy hunting and tourism described as being important income streams.

The Namibian example of large landscape planning has been adopted by the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA), comprising land in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and centred around the Zambezi Region of Namibia, enabling wildlife to move more freely across national borders. This vast expanse, roughly the size of Germany and Austria combined, includes a large diversity of ecosystems and landscapes. These range from the tropical, dry-forest of north-western Zambia, through a mosaic of woodlands in Namibia's north-west, and Zimbabwe's Victoria falls to grasslands, the dry vastness of Makgadikgadi salt pans, and wetlands of the Okavango Delta and Chobe-Zambezi, Kwando, Linyanti river-systems. Namibia makes up 7.15-million ha or 14% of the total area of KAZA.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.kavangozambezi.org/en/>

# 6/ The Community-Based Nature Resource Management (CBNRM) Program

## A. Overview

Namibia is one of few countries in the world to specifically address matters relating to human rights and wildlife conservation and the protection of natural resources in its constitution.<sup>22</sup> Article 95 of the constitution states:

*The State shall actively promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting international policies aimed at the following: maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity of Namibia, and utilisation of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future.*<sup>23</sup>

In 1993, the government of Namibia received funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Project.<sup>24</sup> The Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism or MET (now Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism or MEFT), with financial support from organisations such as Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), the Canadian Ambassador's Fund, World Bank and others together form the CBNRM support structure. This support structure is known as the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO). NACSO assists conservancies and other rural associations in the management of their natural resources for their own benefit, and aims to enhance conservation through CBNRM activities.

The NACSO Secretariat is a small unit based in Windhoek. It coordinates three working groups which are served by NACSO members and other specialist groups and individuals.<sup>25</sup>

Ultimately, the CBNRM project's main goal is to promote sustainable natural resource management by giving local communities rights to wildlife management and tourism.<sup>26</sup> CBNRMs are described as 'self-governing, democratic entities, run by their members, with fixed boundaries that are agreed with adjacent conservancies, communities or landowners.' Conservancies are managed by committee members, and are obliged to have wildlife management plans, conduct Annual General Meetings and prepare financial reports.<sup>27</sup> The CBNRM program claims to empower communities while managing wildlife on conservancy land.<sup>28</sup>

Since 1998, Namibia has created 86 CBNRMs, covering more than 20% of the country (166,045 km<sup>2</sup>) and encompassing approximately 227,941 community members (9% of Namibia's population).<sup>29</sup> The conservancies generate more than NAD 150 million (USD 10 million) a year in the form of cash income and in-kind benefits for local communities. The money is supposed to go directly back to communities either as income or to support anti-poaching operations, wildlife management, education and health initiatives and other community-related issues.

22 Stevenova, K (August 2005)

23 Ibid.

24 USAID.gov

25 <http://www.nacso.org.na/structure>

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.



### *a. Trophy Hunting*

Trophy hunting has recently been rebranded ‘conservation hunting’ by the Namibian government and CBNRM stakeholders, most likely to counter the global stigma against ‘trophy hunting’ or the perceived glorification of the killing of wild animals for pleasure. The hunting of big game animals, including elephants, is central to the conservancy model.<sup>34</sup> Recent research for the Zambezi Region, as well as information gathered during the course of this investigation, has found that some 20% of value generated by the tourism and hunting sectors is captured at conservancy community level, ostensibly in the form of staff salaries or investments in local infrastructure projects. It is claimed that much of this income derives from the hunting of elephants, said to contribute over 50% of all conservancy hunting revenue on a national scale, and almost 70% in the Zambezi Region’s conservancies.<sup>35</sup>

According to the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO) ‘people living in southern Africa have always hunted for food, and some hunter-gatherer communities still hunt in the traditional way.’<sup>36</sup> In Namibia, around 80% of the population depend upon subsistence-level farming for at least part of their living, especially in the communal areas of Namibia where wildlife roams freely.<sup>37</sup> The concept behind the Namibian conservation model of sustainable utilisation, is to continue to hunt for wildlife, which includes the harvesting of meat for consumption and the sale of trophy hunting rights.

Furthermore, for many rural communities, wildlife can be a constant problem. Elephants can destroy crops and livestock, while predators such as lions, hyaenas and wild dogs may prey on livestock. These incidents of human-wildlife conflict can lead to the retaliatory persecution and killing of wild animals, which can negatively impact wildlife populations, as well as having adverse consequences on the financial and food needs of the human communities affected.

Therefore, the theory behind the promotion of trophy hunting and other consumptive use of wildlife is that wildlife becomes a benefit rather than a detriment to community members. Trophy hunters in the CBNRM areas must pay for the right

to hunt selected animals, a process that then ought to provide benefits to their members. In addition, this should provide the resources for many conservancies and government to pay direct compensation to farmers who have suffered crop and livestock losses.

The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) and conservancies work together to monitor wildlife, with the Natural Resources Working Group of NACSO providing technical assistance.<sup>38</sup> Wildlife populations are assessed annually by means of the game counts, aerial surveys, water hole surveys and information from game guard Event Books, which is then collated nationally. The MEFT issues quotas for the sustainable use of wildlife based upon these population estimates and other factors, such as drought. Quotas are established for trophy hunting, meat harvesting, and the live capture of ‘surplus’ game for sale.<sup>39</sup>

Conservancies that derive an income from trophy hunting contract professional hunters as partners who, in turn, bring clients to conservancies to hunt. Typically, a registered and licensed Professional Hunter, or PH, will be contracted to hunt a fixed quota of animals, which must be paid for whether they are hunted or not. Above that, payments are made for specific hunts of high-value species. The Natural Resources Working Group of NACSO then provides assistance to conservancies to negotiate contracts that are fair and legally-binding. Trophy hunting in Namibia is organised by NAPHA, the Namibia Professional Hunting Association, and all professional hunters on conservancy land are members of the organisation.<sup>40</sup>

Hunts on conservancy land are monitored by game guards who accompany the hunters and use a ticket system to identify the hunted animals. Training is provided to conservancy game guards by NACSO’s Natural Resources Working Group to ensure their competency to monitor hunting operations. It is argued that many Namibian conservancies do not have strong non-consumptive tourism potential, and can only derive an income from wildlife through trophy hunting, without which they would be unable to pay for community game guards to deter poaching and wildlife crime.<sup>41</sup>

34 Naidoo et al. (2016); Drake et al. (2021)

35 Naidoo et al. (2016)

36 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservation-and-hunting>

37 Ibid.

38 <http://www.nacso.org.na/working-groups/natural-resources-working-group>

39 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservation-and-hunting>

40 Ibid.

41 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservation-and-hunting>

### ***b. Eco-Tourism***

The concept of eco-tourism in CBNRM areas is that of a joint venture partnership between conservancies and private sector investors. When CBNRM areas were given rights over wildlife, they were also granted the right to run tourism operations.<sup>42</sup> A typical joint-venture partner is a lodge. An investor – individual or corporate – agrees to build a lodge within a conservancy. In return, the conservancy provides eco-services, such as game guards, which ensures the security of wildlife. The conservancy receives a negotiated percentage of the profits (typically 20%), and conservancy members are supposed to be employed at the lodge.<sup>43</sup>

At the other end of the scale are lodges owned exclusively by the conservancy but in agreement with a private sector tour operator, which has the expertise to run and market the lodge. In between are models where the conservancy acquires a stake in the lodge over a period of time and may come to own the infrastructure upon expiry of the agreement after a certain period, sometimes 20 years.<sup>44</sup>

### ***c. Community Conservation Fund***

Despite claims for the success of Namibia's community-based conservation, and the global recognition that has ensued as a result, after 25 years the program has not adequately been able to sustain itself financially. For the past two decades, only 17 out of the current 86 conservancies have been able to cover their own running costs. More than half the current conservancies still require substantial external financial support.<sup>45</sup>

The Community Conservation Fund of Namibia was therefore created 'to ensure the sustainability of the programme by funding critical conservation services provided by conservancies and community forests and supporting the development of their management.'<sup>46</sup> In other words, most CBNRM areas in Namibia are unable to support themselves and therefore require funding through NACSO partners such as USAID, WWF and World Bank etc. to maintain their existence.

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42 <http://www.nacso.org.na/tourism>

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sustainability>

46 Ibid.







Community members say they occasionally see elephants but ‘not many’. A pair of goat herders stated that elephants were ‘not a problem’ and that elephants tended to avoid humans and their livestock. According to the annual audit for 2019, just 14 elephants were reported for that year in the conservancy but the official annual game count only listed 3 elephants. The population status for elephants is listed as ‘uncommon’.<sup>54</sup> Other wildlife population trends show an annual decline with most species listed as ‘rare’ or ‘uncommon’, kudu are listed as ‘extinct’. Ostrich and springbok are the only two species listed as ‘abundant’.<sup>55</sup>

The low number of elephants, as evidenced during this investigation and the 2019 annual game count, is further corroborated by the 2020 NACSO game count for the entire Kunene Region. It states that there are indeed few elephants in the entire 6,9 million sq. hectare CBNRM area of the Kunene Region (from the Ugab River in the south to the Kunene River in the north). Only 30 individuals were counted in 2020. Other wildlife species also recorded steep declines in the past five years.<sup>56</sup>

The conservancy currently has an elephant trophy hunting quota of one individual. The quota was utilised in 2019, although the amount earned was not logged in the #Khoadi //Hôas annual audit for 2019.<sup>57</sup> Proceeds from trophy hunting other animals were minimal for 2019. Only three animals were trophy-hunted – a giraffe, a leopard and a springbok. The total financial proceeds from trophy hunting in that year amounted to NAD

45,000 (USD 3,000).<sup>58</sup> If all the proceeds of trophy hunting were distributed evenly among all residents of #Khoadi //Hôas, each individual would receive an annual amount of around NAD 9 (USD 0.60).

The Conservancy Manager stated in an in-person interview that #Khoadi //Hôas management will not actively pursue trophy hunting as a resource benefit since the financial proceeds from trophy hunting are negligible. #Khoadi //Hôas management will instead focus almost entirely on tourism-based income which is by far the main resource benefit for the conservancy, according to the manager.

However, for 2021, it appears that trophy hunting is once again being promoted (COVID-19 prevented trophy hunts in 2020). Four animals – cheetah, giraffe and lion – have been selected for trophy hunting (not yet utilised at the time of investigation in May 2021). Clients, apparently, will all come from Europe.

#Khoadi //Hôas added its name to the Urgent Appeal Letter (21/07/2020) “to enable conservation and uphold human rights in Africa”, which was sent on behalf of 20 Namibian CBNRM areas, along with similar entities in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Angola and Tanzania, to both houses of the United States Congress. It called on the US Government to support trophy hunting of elephants and other wildlife as a basic human right and as a means of community income.<sup>59</sup>

54 [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi\\_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf)

55 [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi\\_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf)

56 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/North%20West%20Game%20Count-Regional%202020.pdf>

57 [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi\\_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf)

58 Ibid.

59 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Urgent%20letter%20to%20US%20Congress%20Voices%20from%20Africa.pdf>

The letter stated:

*'As representatives of millions of rural Africans, the majority of whom live below the poverty line, we are urgently appealing to you to assist us by preventing the undermining of our globally recognized conservation efforts and our basic human right to sustainably use the natural resources on which our communities' livelihoods depend.'*<sup>60</sup>

Benefit distribution for the overall community as per the annual audit poster for 2019 appears to be negligible given the human population size of more than 5,000 individuals. Most of the income generated in 2019 went to:

- Bread-making training for 8 people
- Business training for 16 people
- Assistance for 2 fire victims
- Food for community meetings of 150 people
- Food for senior citizens
- Scholarships for 2 students
- Meat for 350 community members<sup>61</sup>

At the time of investigation, TOSCA Trust (Tourism Supporting Conservation Trust) and one of the NACSO organisations, were conducting a rubbish clean-up initiative and training members (mostly elderly women and young children) how to separate their rubbish.

Some community members interviewed complained that most people in the conservancy are unemployed and employment opportunities is virtually non-existent. Only 126 members of

the ≠Khoadi //Hôas community were employed in 2019 (18 conservancy staff and 11 game guards by the Conservancy Management and 97 lodge staff by Journeys Africa).<sup>62</sup> A 2018 study of the ≠Khoadi //Hôas Conservancy entitled *Subsidized elephants: Community-based resource governance and environmental (in)justice in Namibia* stated: "While the conservancy provided jobs and training to some (lodge and conservancy management staff), only 6.4% of the revenues is spent on community benefits and 1.3% on income-generating projects from which a larger number of people profit directly".<sup>63</sup> These figures show that this conservancy delivers minimal direct economic benefits to those few people employed directly by conservancy management and at the Grootfontein Lodge. Benefits are typically non-existent for the majority of conservancy members.

Nonetheless, ≠Khoadi //Hôas Conservancy has been rated among the top six most successful conservancies of the 86 CBNRM areas in Namibia, according to NACSO audit figures<sup>64</sup> and a TOSCA member during this investigation. According to one conservancy management source, it has previously won an award as the best.

Conclusion: While the ≠Khoadi //Hôas Conservancy is rated as one of the best CBNRM areas in Namibia, it nevertheless is experiencing a steady year-on-year decline in wildlife populations of most species, including elephants. As a result, trophy hunting quotas are low and tourism game drives are not offered to lodge guests. For the majority of residents in the ≠Khoadi //Hôas Conservancy unemployment is high, and resource-based income virtually non-existent.

60 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Urgent%20letter%20to%20US%20Congress%20Voices%20from%20Africa.pdf>

61 [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi\\_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf)

62 [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi\\_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf)

63 Schnegg, M & Kiaka, R.D. (2018)

64 [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi\\_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf)



Furthermore, previous fieldwork in 2014 indicated that these private tourism operators often deny the conservancy access to benefits and have a negative relationship with the community.<sup>69</sup> This includes denying free movement of people within the conservancy. In the same study, unresolved lease holdings in the conservancy were blamed as a large factor obstructing benefit-sharing amongst the community. Issues of governance and ownership of commercial activities was also shown to be a factor obstructing the alleviation of poverty in another study (2011), which involved 58 community members and 9 stakeholders. Members had a lack of control over the conservancy's resources, as the private sector tourism operators 'failed to create measures that can develop the skills of the locals and enable them to become entrepreneurs who can spearhead tourism development at Twyfelfontein'.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, far from providing employment opportunities to the local community (a factor which is often hailed as one of the successes of the conservancy program), the private lodges create 'further divisions', according to the conservancy manager. The private lodges tend to employ outsiders, notably from the Ovambo ethnic group, rather than employing local Damara community members. This has created social discord. The only Damara-prioritised job roles are in the Damara living museum. This too is privately-owned and does not share any profits with the conservancy.

The onset of COVID-19 has created additional problems for Uibasen-Twyfelfontein. Lodges are working at a vastly reduced staff capacity, leading to further local unemployment. During the initial onset of COVID-19, the Red Cross charity supported inhabitants by providing NAD 750 (USD 50) per household for 3 months, but this has since stopped.

According to the conservancy's 2019 audit, the financial management was classed as 'weak'. In-person interviews with conservancy management, local people and lodge staff found an overall lack of benefits to the conservancy residents. Although there were some benefits, such as a cash distribution at the beginning of the year and food packages to the elderly, others were less satisfied with conservancy support. One villager explained that "we have not received anything in the last three years" and said that that money promised for projects (such as for schooling) had even been revoked. Children were missing pre-school as a result. She was unsure as to where the money had been directed.

Those suffering the most from a lack of conservancy support are those living in the township of Louw Inn. The Louw Inn settlement is the closest community to the Uibasen-Twyfelfontein World Heritage Site. The name 'Louw Inn' originated from a small shop and bar established in 1990s by a man named 'Louw' who worked with the Traditional Authority and still owns the land. The settlement originally came into being as people moved to the area in search of employment. Since the settlement is technically on private land, it is not recognised as part of the conservancy, and therefore is exempt from paying any profits over to the conservancy.

The inhabitants of Louw Inn do not have access to basic necessities such as water, healthcare and education, despite living within one of Namibia's most popular tourist destinations. There have been ongoing differences regarding whether a borehole should be provided. The inhabitants have lived without access to water for over 20 years. The only time Louw Inn was provided with water was during the lead up to elections in 2019, when SWAPO filled up the water tanks every day. This stopped after the elections. Neither do the inhabitants have access to a local school, clinic or supermarket. For schooling, medical and food-related supplies, the residents must travel to the town of Khorixas, a 100km journey which costs NAD 120 (USD 8) per person by bus each way. This imposes financial difficulties on the majority of the inhabitants, many of whom are unemployed and do not receive any benefits from the conservancy.

There may be no water but there is a lucrative *shebeen* (bar or pub). Louw and his son are the only ones with a licence to sell liquor and apparently it's a thriving business.

Interviewees from the conservancy management, lodge staff and inhabitants also cited corruption as a factor leading to the lack of benefits received by those in Louw Inn. When asked 'where does the money go?' one of the community lodge staff members explained "someone pockets it... there's a guy.. driving around with a brand new Cruiser [4x4] with all the extras... and these other guys [community members] are living here without water." Another interviewee said "only those on top benefit. Those who are lower get nothing... the reason people come to Louw Inn is to get a job and provide for their families.... It makes us so angry. The money is meant for all the people, for kids... the money has fallen in the hands of the wrong people."

69 Ndjiharine, S. (2014)

70 Ndlovu, J. et al (2011)

Other lodge staff replied “definitely” when asked whether there was corruption within the conservancy, and said “there needs to be an investigation into where the money goes”, adding “we hear lots of stories but we can’t do anything.” During the same interview it was inferred that nepotism within conservancy management is rife.

Conclusion: In theory, considering its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Uibasen-Twyfelfontein Conservancy has the potential to deliver NACSO’s goal to ‘provide quality services to rural communities seeking to manage and utilise their natural resources in a sustainable manner.’<sup>71</sup> The conservancy has the potential to generate a large income, considering it houses numerous luxury lodges, campsites and tourism endeavours and in a non-Covid year draws about 40,000 visitors. In reality, however, there is a large discrepancy between the ‘potential’ benefit distribution and ‘reality’ received by those living in the township of Louw Inn. The privatisation of lodges hinders the financial contribution from tourists to communities, while it was speculated by numerous stakeholders that the money from the two lease-paying lodges does not adequately filter through to the inhabitants due to corruption. The overall lack of transparency tends to make matters worse.

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71 <http://www.nacso.org.na/about-nacso>



(community campsites), trophy hunting, shoot-and-sell hunting and own-use hunting.

It lists its major wildlife resources as elephant, leopard, lion, black rhino, cheetah, mountain zebra, giraffe, kudu, gemsbok, springbok, duiker, steenbok, klipspringer, ostrich.

In the 2020 annual audit report, one elephant was sighted during the annual game count compared with six in 2019.<sup>77</sup> Resident herds of desert elephant occupy the Palmwag Concession to the west of Sesfontein down the ephemeral Hoanib River. A family herd of five elephants (four females and one young male) was sighted in the Palmwag Concession on the Hoanib River during this investigation. These elephants were seen approximately 100kms from Sesfontein, well-within the protected area of the concession. The Craig/Gibson survey in 2016 revealed 38 visual sightings (extrapolated to 581) for the expanded Palmwag Concession/Sesfontein/Puros area (HL1). Of concern, these figures were of family herds only, and not a single bull elephant was sighted.

The Sesfontein Conservancy manager stated that elephants had not been a conflict problem as very few had been seen outside the Palmwag Concession in recent years. This is backed up by the 2020 annual audit report, which shows no elephant-related issues since 2011.<sup>78</sup> The manager also mentioned that wildlife numbers in general had been drastically reduced since there had been a drought during the past five years. This is backed up by the annual game count report for 2021, which states: ‘...the situation remains precarious for many game species...’<sup>79</sup>

Desert elephants are also evident in the Torra Conservancy immediately to the south of the Sesfontein Conservancy. A family herd of fifteen desert elephants was sighted during this investigation. They were seen in the Torra Conservancy 25 kilometres south of the settlement of Palmwag on the C43 road. This was the first of only two small herds of elephants to have been sighted in the entire Kunene Region for this investigation. According to the Torra Conservancy annual audit report of 2019, elephants are also listed as ‘very rare’, with only three counted during that year’s game count<sup>80</sup> while only two were counted in 2020.<sup>81</sup>

In terms of community benefits for Sesfontein, interviewees stated that they did receive some benefits from the conservancy. Benefits included food from lodges during the initial stages of

COVID-19, a pay-out if someone dies and the use of a car to bring them home if they pass away outside of the conservancy (although some said that they still had to cover fuel costs), human-wildlife conflict compensation, a small amount of meat from trophy hunted animals, and a food benefit at the end of the year. The end-of-year food pay-out was previously given in cash but it appears to be no longer be the case. A total of 60 (3%) of the 1,835 members received benefits of some kind.

Interviews with community members affected by wildlife conflict (livestock loss) demonstrated that the conservancy’s human-wildlife conflict compensation scheme was considered ineffective. Numerous interviewees had not received adequate compensation for their loss of livestock. These include:

- A group of eight men waiting outside the conservancy who had all lost livestock. None had received compensation. Reported reasons included not reporting it within the 24-hour window, the game guard not being there at the right time/arriving too late and being too far from the office to report what had happened.
- A group of Herero women lost their animals to predators but never received compensation. They believed the game guards to be corrupt.
- A Herero farmer who lost 100 goats to predators but was only given NAD 5,000 (USD 350) for the 100 goats – enough for three or four goats. He could no longer send his children to school.
- A Herero farmer lost all his cattle and some goats to drought. They were given compensation, but it was not enough to replace them all.
- A Herero family lost 40 cattle in 2018. They were not given compensation.

Compensation either was non-existent, slow, or insufficient. For example, NAD 250 (USD 18) is typically given as compensation for a lost goat or sheep and NAD 1,500 (USD 105) for a cow. The market value, however, for a goat or sheep is NAD 1500 (USD 105) and NAD 6000 (USD 420) for cattle, meaning the compensation is insufficient to replace the lost animals. The 24-hour reporting and verification deadline is near-impossible for rural farmers to meet due to the distances required to travel; or

77 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Sesfontein%20Audit%20Report%202020.pdf>

78 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Sesfontein%20Audit%20Report%202020.pdf>

79 [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/North%20West%20Game%20Count-Regional%202021\\_0.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/North%20West%20Game%20Count-Regional%202021_0.pdf)

80 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Torra%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf>

81 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Torra%20Audit%20Report%202020.pdf>

a lack of data/reception rendering communication impossible, and often the game guards will not be there on time. It was also suggested by some interviewees that game guards were sometimes corrupt themselves. Compensation is also often slow; according to one of the game guards it can take up to 3 years for compensation to be handed out. In a region where 40% of inhabitants live on less than one US dollar per day, the loss of cattle has serious negative consequences for the livelihoods of communities with their day-to-day needs being severely compromised. Furthermore, cattle also play an important cultural role within Herero/Himba identity.

Due to the widespread loss of livestock, people are increasingly relying on outside employment or small handouts from the conservancy. Thus, far from being empowering and fostering independent livelihoods, the conservancy's poor response to livestock loss is leading to increased dependence on handouts from the conservancy and therefore disempowering rural communities, forcing them into a position of reliance and subordination.

Another failing of the conservancy was the perceived corruption and favouritism within the management. It was commonly-felt that those with family members working for the conservancy benefitted disproportionately, and the benefits did not reach those without ties to the management. According to one 72-year-old man "the conservancy either saves you or kills you". He considered himself one that the conservancy is "killing" as they took away his private land, made it a communally-owned campsite and appointed a conservancy member to run it.

Another conservancy constituent was upset that there had been no consultation with regards to stopping cash pay-outs. A couple of years ago, the conservancy management changed the end-of-year cash pay-outs to food parcels. He said: "what they decide, we have to accept". There were numerous accusations about the conservancy chairperson's corrupt behaviour. The chairperson had apparently taken NAD 100,000 (USD 7,000) of conservancy funding for himself, and that his house was far larger than most.

**Conclusion:** While the Sesfontein Conservancy does provide a tiny number of its constituents with benefits such as food handouts, these benefits are minimal. The conservancy is currently not adequately supporting those who have lost livestock, and this is leading to a worsening lifestyle for those who rely on cattle and goats for their survival. Rather than

empowering people to live independently, the lack of adequate, fair and transparent compensation is increasing the population's dependence on handouts, which are virtually non-existent. As the prolonged drought continues, this is becoming more of an issue and this problem is likely to be compounded.

### *e. Opuwo and surrounding Himba conservancies*

Opuwo is the capital of the Kunene Region with a population of about 20,000 people and lies immediately to east of the Himba traditional heartland. The town has, in recent years, attracted many Himba from their pastoral land in search of employment.

Informal interviews were conducted in Opuwo and Ongongo (the closest conservancy to Opuwo) with a focus on the perception of traditional Himba in relation to their conservancies and their socio-political situation in Namibia.

Many Himba cited the following reasons for their move to Opuwo:

- Drought or predators had killed their animals, came to Opuwo to find work.
- Drought or predators had killed their animals, came to Opuwo to grow maize gardens.
- A relative was sick or pregnant and Opuwo was the closest hospital (the whole family will move to go with the relative).
- To send children to school.
- To pick up supplies.

Most of the twenty-six Himba interviewed had moved from the conservancies of Ongongo, Okondjombo, Orupembe and Ombujokanguindi to the west of Opuwo. Not a single interviewee expressed positive sentiments towards their conservancies. They felt the conservancies existed on paper and served no practical value. Some were unsure as to whether they were even living in a conservancy, and had to confirm with others that it was indeed the case.

Regarding conservancy compensation for human-wildlife conflict, many were aware of the scheme and explained they were on a list, but none had ever received any compensation. Most Himba homesteads are too remote to meet the 24-hour deadline of reporting a lost animal. Many live several hours walk from the conservancy management and do not have reliable

phones with data to call in any incidents. Traditional Himba people expressed that life had become more difficult because of drought, which destroyed their livestock. Again, there was no compensation. They did not enjoy moving to Opuwo as most prefer their traditional way of life in their homesteads.

Regarding employment opportunities within the conservancies, it was expressed that although some conservancies created occasional jobs in lodges or in management, these went to educated or ‘modern’ Himba. At a wider level, most Himba interviewees felt discriminated against by central government. They expressed that even if a traditional Himba person has a full education, he or she will still struggle to find employment “because of their heritage”.

The government (not the conservancies) apparently does provide some level of support through a food program as well as through pension and child benefits. However, these are not regarded as enough. Occasionally, a whole family will be supported by the pension benefits of a single individual in the household, while child benefits are not adequate due to the perceived difficulty of registering children.

During the interviews, hundreds of people were on the streets, most drinking beer, and many women admitted they were forced to turn to prostitution in order to survive. There were at least fifteen bars in Opuwo. Empty bottles were strewn everywhere. Alcoholism and prostitution are well-known to be rife in Opuwo. According to USAID, HIV/AIDS affects about 13% of Namibia’s population and is particularly rife in the northeast, north and central parts of the country.<sup>82</sup>

Two villages outside of Opuwo – one inside the Ongongo conservancy and one just outside – were visited. There were no differences between the two villages regarding support, and attitudes of the twenty people interviewed to the efficacy of the conservancy were similar to those expressed in Opuwo.

### ***f. Ugab River conservancies***

Interviews with ex-CBNRM management staff and NACSO support NGO members revealed that there is considerable animosity among four conservancies along the Ugab River in the far south of the Kunene Region. Ohungu and Otjimboyo conservancies are frustrated that Tsiseb and Sorris Sorris

conservancies are benefiting more from wildlife resources, such as trophy hunting and lodge visitors, while they do not. The former two do not offer trophy hunting while the latter two offer trophy and have tourism lodges on their land.

Both Tsiseb and Sorris Sorris added their names to the Urgent Appeal Letter to the US government calling on its support for trophy hunting of elephants and other wildlife as a means of generating community income. All four conservancies list elephants as ‘very rare’ in their annual audit reports with three out of the four not recording any sightings of elephants during their annual game counts for the past decade.<sup>83 84 85 86</sup>

One support NACSO NGO member explained that recently a ‘problem elephant’ was shot by the MEFT in one of the conservancies but it turned out to be the wrong elephant. This is the same area that the elephant Voortrekker was shot for being a ‘problem’ – an incident that garnered much global controversy and has left unanswered questions as to its nature and necessity.<sup>87</sup>

When asked if he thought the CBNRM areas were working, the NACSO NGO support member stated that “in theory perhaps but in practice it is a failure.” His reasoning is that communities do not benefit at all and will never benefit unless there is a major overhaul of the model. Income generated by the conservancies is either minuscule or is redirected away from community members. He cited corruption at management level as the most fundamental problem.

### ***g. Overall Conclusion***

It seems that the entire elephant population in the Kunene could be on the verge of collapse. Of major concern are the extremely low numbers of breeding bulls. Elephants are not the only species in trouble in this region. Most other species are showing similar downward trends. In terms of CBNRM areas providing a sound model for preserving wildlife, this seems to have failed.

In terms of economic and social benefits for human communities within the CBNRM areas investigated, this too appears to have failed. Water supply, medical and education provisions and employment opportunities are minuscule. Corruption and poverty are rampant.

82 <https://www.usaid.gov/namibia/global-health>

83 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Ohungu%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf>

84 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Otjimboyo%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf>

85 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Sorris%20Sorris%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf>

86 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Tsiseb%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf>

87 Grobler, J. (1st July 2019)

## C. Otjozondjupa Region

This 105,000km<sup>2</sup> commercial cattle farming and grain agricultural region centred around the town of Grootfontein contains eight CBNRM areas, most of which lie in the more arid section to the east of the region. Two of Namibia's largest CBNRMs by area are in this region. The Nyae-Nyae and Nꞛa Jaqna conservancies, both situated among the broad-leaved forests on the western rim of the Kalahari Desert, are also the only two conservancies set up specifically for the San People of Namibia.

The San are the oldest inhabitants of southern Africa where they have lived for at least 20,000 years. Their home now is the Kalahari Desert, which is divided between Botswana, Namibia, Angola and South Africa. The term 'San' literally means 'foragers', and is often used in a derogatory sense (as in 'primitive') by other ethnic groups in Namibia and elsewhere.

The Nyae-Nyae Conservancy, the first of Namibia's CBNRM areas to be gazetted, was set up specifically for those San living in the area who speak the Ju/'hoansi dialect. The Nꞛa Jaqna Conservancy constituents are predominantly speakers of !Kung, which is the broader San dialect, spoken by eight different San groupings within the conservancy. Nꞛa Jaqna is also the largest by area of all Namibia's CBNRM areas.

Overall, elephants in the Otjozondjupa region are far more abundant than in the Kunene Region. The populations of elephants, however, are found almost exclusively to the east, especially in the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy, which borders Botswana to its east and the unfenced Khaudum National Park immediately to its north. According to the 2019 aerial survey by Craig & Gibson, Nyae-Nyae is home to 3,678 elephants. Khaudum has 4,208 elephants and together with neighbouring areas this area makes up a total population of just under 8,000 elephants.<sup>88</sup> Yet, in spite of such large populations of elephants, the Nyae-Nyae and Nꞛa Jaqna conservancies have recorded few human-elephant conflict incidents. This is possibly due to the San preference for a hunter-gather lifestyle rather than livestock ranchers or crop growers who have to contend with elephants destroying water installations and crops. The San, who have hunted and gathered bush food ('veldkos') among herds of elephants for centuries, seem the most adept at co-existing with them.

Trophy hunting features strongly in this region. Nyae-Nyae, along with some other conservancies in the Zambezi Region, has one of the largest annual quotas – five elephants may be trophy hunted.<sup>89</sup> While this may not have an impact on the overall elephant population in the region, trophy hunting, as will be demonstrated subsequently in this report, has had considerable negative effects on the San communities living nearby. It is worth noting that trophy hunting in a region such as this cannot be recognised as a method of elephant population control. Given that the conservancy has a registered population of around 3,600 elephants, an off-take of five will have virtually no population-control impact at all.

In recent years, Herero, Ovambo and Kavango cattle herders and businesses have begun to settle permanently in these conservancies, threatening to disrupt, if not, destroy the fabric of the ancient San societies, as will be shown.

### a. Nyae-Nyae Conservancy

Gazetted in 1998, Nyae-Nyae is the oldest conservancy in Namibia. It borders the Khaudum National Park to its north, and is located on the western rim of the Kalahari Basin. It is the second largest conservancy, covering an area of 8,992 km<sup>2</sup> and it has an approximate human population of 3,156 people.

An area of 30 km<sup>2</sup> around the small town of Tsumkwe (circa 9,000 inhabitants) is excluded from the conservancy. Tsumkwe hosts the conservancy office and is the only place to buy goods. It also provides access to a school, a clinic and other government facilities and services. Tsumkwe is mixed, ethnically and socially, and many people from outside the area have relocated to the settlement, attracted by the cash benefit afforded to Nyae-Nyae constituents (a small cash handout at the end of the year). Despite not being part of the conservancy, it is felt by the outlying settlements within the conservancy that most of the decision-making takes place in Tsumkwe.

The Conservancy Board comprises of six women and thirteen men, Management Committee of six members, staff of ten community rangers, a CBNRM field officer, a project manager, a public relations manager, four members of the water team, four junior teachers, a pre-school teacher and an education coordinator; wildlife monitoring is conducted using annual full moon count and Event Book monitoring system.<sup>90</sup>

88 Craig, G.C. & Gibson, D. St. C. (2019)

89 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Nyae%20Nyae%20Audit%20Report%202020.pdf>

90 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservancies/nyae-nyae>

Nyae-Nyae lists its major wildlife resources as: Lion, reedbuck, buffalo, elephant, leopard, roan, cheetah, wild dog, hartebeest, kudu, duiker, warthog, steenbok, gemsbok, springbok, blue wildebeest, eland, giraffe. It lists its enterprises as: Joint-venture tourism agreements with Nyae-Nyae Fly-In Camp and Nyae-Nyae Safari Camp, Nyae-Nyae Campsites (community campsites), craft centre and various crafts, trophy hunting, Devil's Claw harvesting.<sup>91</sup> Devil's Claw is used in the health industry and the harvesting of it provides income to around 300-400 harvesters.<sup>92</sup> There are also over 300 craft producers in the conservancy, producing bows, arrows, and ostrich egg shell jewellery which is sold in the G!hunku Crafts shop, located next to the conservancy office.

Tsumkwe also hosts a guesthouse called Tsumkwe Country Lodge, which is the only fixed tourism accommodation. Since the town is not considered part of the conservancy, the lodge does not have a joint-venture with the conservancy (and therefore does not need to pay a percentage of profits to the conservancy). Lodge activities include village visits to the living museums at Mountain Pos and Dou Pos, with income going directly to the villages. Although the lodge markets itself around San livelihoods (even symbolised in their logo in whereby a figure walks with bow and arrow), the relationship between the lodge and the local San communities was damaged after the change of management in 2007. Many staff quit as they were dissatisfied with the new management.<sup>93</sup>

There is also a Little Hunter's Museum, which is located at //Xa/oba village along the track to Khaudum and includes a campsite. Wilderness campsites are also located at Makuri, Djxokwe and Kremetartkop and, although underutilised, provide nearby villages with some income.

Interviews were conducted with Ju/'hoansi San villagers, conservancy staff and the Professional Hunter at SMJ Safaris, the hunting concession in the conservancy.

Listed benefits include water development, cash benefit, funeral support, meat, human-wildlife conflict offsets and Traditional Authority support.<sup>94</sup> The benefits expressed by the Ju/'hoansi San communities include meat distribution, a small cash pay-out at the end of the year, water provision, gardening equipment and training, the permission to harvest Devil's Claw, and transport to a clinic when sick.

This investigation found that benefits are distributed unequally throughout the conservancy. Each villager interviewed expressed grievances regarding this. For example, three separate villagers complained they did not have easy access to water since the village borehole had been awaiting repair for several years. This undermined the conservancy manager's claims that every village in the conservancy had water provided to them by the conservancy. Elsewhere, families complained that they had not received a cash pay-out in several years. Other families thought benefits such as meat distribution and gardening equipment were not distributed fairly.

The only family interviewed who did not express any kind of unfairness or inequality were the family members of the conservancy head or chief. Favouritism and nepotism was cited numerous times to be an issue with conservancy management.

Trophy Hunting has taken place in Nyae-Nyae since 1986 when the revenues went to the South African government rather than the Ju/'hoansi.<sup>95</sup> Since 1998, the conservancy has signed various contracts with trophy hunting operators, and it currently has a contract with SMJ Safaris. Nyae-Nyae, along with a few others in the Zambezi Region, has one of the largest annual elephant trophy hunting quotas in the country – five elephants in 2020 – and four elephants to be shot as 'own-use'. Own-use hunting of elephants is the same as trophy hunting but where the trophy is not exported by the trophy hunter.<sup>96</sup> According to the annual audit report for 2019, all five quotas for trophy hunting, and all four quotas for own-use were utilised. The potential income generated for the conservancy from trophy and own-use hunting of elephants in 2019 was NAD 339,800 (USD 23,000) and NAD 360,000 (USD 24,000) respectively.<sup>97</sup>

Although trophy hunting undoubtedly brings in cash for the conservancy, this investigation aimed not only to assess economic factors but to analyse and evaluate the impact trophy hunting has on the power dynamics and social relations with the community, rather than just measuring 'success' of the overall income from the hunting operator. Often the so-called economic 'success' of trophy hunting is reproduced by NGOs and governmental officials while ignoring critiques and concerns from local people. Previous fieldwork supports this investigation's findings that although trophy hunting may generate a variable financial contribution to the conservancy, it also enhances social inequalities and has negative impacts on the lived experience of the already marginalised Ju/'hoansi San.<sup>98</sup>

91 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservancies/nyae-nyae>

92 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Brochure%20Nyae%20Nyae%20FPis.pdf>

93 Koot, S. (2019)

94 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Brochure%20Nyae%20Nyae%20FPis.pdf>

95 Koot, S. (2019)

96 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Nyae%20Nyae%20Audit%20Report%202020.pdf>

97 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Nyae%20Nyae%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf>

98 Koot, S. (2019)

Few Ju/'hoansi San interviewed objected to trophy hunting, perhaps because of a small pay-out of cash (a couple of hundred Namibian dollars per person) at the end of the year and the occasional distribution of meat. However, there were significant and concerning objections expressed by conservancy members regarding the wider impact of trophy hunting, supporting the importance of considering the social relations of trophy hunting with the community.

Due to the presence of trophy hunters and the noise of guns, it was claimed by many interviewees that wildlife was more skittish and largely absent, meaning that traditional community hunting with bows and arrows (the only form of hunting permitted to locals in the conservancy) has become more difficult.

There is also significant friction between the Professional Hunter/owner at SMJ Safaris and the community. Stories about the PH/owner of SMJ Hunting Safaris, misconduct were expressed by numerous interviewees. These reports include:

- He fired gunshots at villagers, or had them forcibly removed, for trespassing on his hunting concession when they retrieved their donkeys, hunted or harvested food.
- He shot and killed a community member's dog.
- When one of his staff was sick and missed a few days while in hospital, he fired him for his absence.
- When one of his staff hit his head after falling from a vehicle, he refused to take him to hospital and told him he was fine, despite him being severely concussed.
- He does not allow San people to obtain water from his waterholes, as they are meant only for the elephants, and he is concerned the smell of people will discourage the elephants from coming.
- His staff work overtime (ie. waking up at 4am for hunting) without overtime pay.
- He does not distribute the tips paid by his clients amongst the staff.
- He intimidated San individuals who were gathering fruit from the baobab tree. He accused them of hunting illegally.
- Two separate community-member interviewees compared his heavy-handedness to colonial domination.

Many Ju/'hoansi San expressed that they no longer feel safe hunting or gathering on the conservancy concession due to fear of reprisals from the PH/owner of SMJ Safaris.

Findings of this study corroborated previous fieldwork; a 2019 study in Nyae-Nyae by Stasja Koot, found that the Ju/'hoansi San labourers complained about the hunting operator's behaviour and their own working conditions. The work was regarded as unnecessarily heavy and the salaries far too low. They feared and distrusted him with their salaries and other financial matters'. In the same study, interviewees also accused the Professional Hunter of keeping their tips.<sup>99</sup>

In an interview conducted by Sasada during this investigation, the Professional Hunter maintained that he frequently has to chase people off "his land" as he objected to singing and dancing on the ranch, explaining "this is a hunting camp. We want it quiet and discreet". There have been several complaints about his misconduct to the conservancy management, but apparently without recourse. His hunting contract has been in place for the past 10 years. In corroboration, Koot's study maintained that the hunter 'was chosen by the authorities, the Conservancy, and World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) simply because he paid the highest amount for the concession, which in turn is necessary as a financial stimulation for the CBNRM project.'<sup>100</sup>

As mentioned, although the interviewees perceive the elephant meat distribution as a 'benefit', such distribution is regarded as unequal – some received meat once annually, others had not received any since 2016 or earlier. It was expressed that the elephant meat provided by SMJ was not enough to substantially provide for villagers, and is only supplementary to the meat they farm, buy or hunt.

When asked how the meat is distributed fairly, the PH explained it is "difficult to weigh and distribute it equally". He stressed the logistical difficulties of distributing meat equally among communities, especially given the necessity of delivering the meat as quickly as possible in hot conditions. However, the interviews with San villagers indicated that this 'laissez-faire' attitude is contributing further to inequality amongst the San people who do not have a constant meat supply. Thus, as well as diminishing their access to meat by intimidating potential hunters, the Professional Hunter's failure to fairly distribute trophy meat has increased inequality within the ethnic group.

Overall, while trophy hunting undeniably makes a financial contribution to the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy, it also has negative consequences for social relations and power dynamics. Rather than uplifting rural populations, as NACSO claims, this study indicates that trophy hunting enables a system of oppression which further marginalises the Ju/'hoansi San residents.

99 Koot, S. (2019)

100 Ibid.

While the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy is a ‘San’ conservancy, supposedly managed and run by a Ju/’hoansi San management team, it is evident that Ju/’hoansi San are being side-lined and exploited, both at a local and national level.

Within the conservancy, there is significant discord with encroaching Herero, Kavango and Ovambo people. The Herero, in particular, have moved in with their cattle. The San are not pastoralists but hunter-gatherers, and the feeling among them is the Herero cattle are displacing the wildlife. Furthermore, the Herero have been accused of over-grazing in the areas in which the San hunt and gather. The overgrazing destroys the fruit (such as ground melons), which is usually harvested by the San. This not only limits their food source but also prevents them from passing down indigenous knowledge to their children. The conservancy and Traditional Authority’s attempts to remove cattle is often ignored. In 2018, the issue was taken to the national government and a court order was obtained by the conservancy to evict seven cattle herders.<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately, it appears this too went unheeded. As well as illegal cattle-grazing, the Herero have also been accused of poaching. This further depletes food resources of the San and undermines the viability of the conservancy.

According to multiple San interviewees, the Ovambo residents exploit San communities as they own the market supply of their remaining food sources. There is no large food store or supermarket in Tsumkwe, and many San live too far away from the town to reach it by foot. Several interviewees reported that the Ovambo traders will sell food to them in their villages at a high cost ‘in advance’. This must later be paid off with interest. As most Ju/’hoansi San are unemployed, this money usually comes from child or pension benefits from the government. If the Ju/’hoansi San are unable to pay up, they are reportedly beaten or are forced to pay with goats, if they have any.

The Ovambo and Kavango also run multiple *shebeens* (bars or pubs) in the area, in which alcohol is also sold ‘in advance’ to the San. This system creates a cycle of indebtedness, and the influence and long-term effects of alcohol is further disrupting the fabric of the San communities. As one San elder explained “there is a large drinking problem here. The traditional alcohol is very strong... these Ovambo and Kavango are making a lot of money”.

At a national level, the San do not feel that they have sufficient representation in government, or that Namibia’s independence has resulted in any meaningful, positive change in their lives. When asked if life had changed after independence in 1990, one Ju/’hoansi San elder said “maybe for them, but not for us”. Elsewhere, a young Ju/’hoansi man explained “the government does not recognise us as human beings. Oshakati [a town in the Ovambo territory] for example, look how developed it is. Then look at Tsumkwe. Most tribes work in government but not us”. Often expressed was the difficulty to find meaningful employment, and that jobs instead go to the Ovambo ruling class, even if a Ju/’hoansi San is equally educated.

Many interviewees described themselves as ‘slaves’ to their conservancy.

Due to the factors described above, most Ju/’hoansi San interviewed were concerned that their indigenous knowledge and way of life will not be passed on. The conservancy faces a balancing act of facilitating the San’s move into the modern world, in ways they feel to be appropriate, while maintaining their ability to continue their cultural traditions. Two ways the conservancy claims to preserve culture is through ‘living museums’, and through employment opportunities which utilise traditional San knowledge. Both options are problematic in terms of generating meaningful income and appear unlikely to genuinely facilitate the continuation of the Ju/’hoansi San’s traditional way of life.

The Ju/’hoansi San interviewed for this study were supportive and appreciative of the employment provided by living museums. For example, one elder explained: “the living museum is a good thing. People can learn about our life and participate. Often now our youth go to school and don’t know how to do things. It is a chance to learn”. It was explained that 90% of the living museum’s profit went to the actors, while 10% went to the conservancy; the actors were satisfied with this ratio. Another interviewee explained: “the knowledge is dying out so it’s a way to learn”, likewise indicating a perception that the living museums facilitate the continuation of traditional knowledge.

However, although the living museum is credited as a way of keeping traditions alive, one could question the presentation of San in such an exotic-ised and outdated manner. For example, when ‘acting’ they remove their Western clothes for traditional

101 <https://www.namibian.com.na/180545/archive-read/San-get-eviction-order-against-Tsumkwe-farmers>

attire and create fire using sticks and stones. In reality, the San wear modern clothes in their day-to-day lives and have modern equipment such as lighters and matchsticks. Considering the Ju/'hoansi's frequent position of symbolising what a 'real hunter-gatherer' should be, and having received disproportionate attention from writers, film-makers and photographers,<sup>102</sup> who have frequently exaggerated their 'primitive' ways, such living museums pose the dilemma of whether the San culture should be 'performed' for the sake of tourist entertainment. The San interviewed understood the foreign preference to see them perform outdated traditions, as indicated when they offered to remove their clothes when on a hunt to find honey with the investigator.

It is ironic that the conservancy supports a 'living museum' which celebrates San culture while simultaneously failing to facilitate the continuation of San culture outside the parameters of the living museum.

Another way the conservancy claims to maintain San culture is through employment opportunities that require San traditional knowledge for hunting. For example, as guided tours for tourists or employment as trackers at hunting lodges. According to NACSO, hunting forms an 'integral part of the San culture. Trophy hunting can play a vital role, providing significant income

to the conservancy through concession fees, as well as creating employment that utilises traditional San hunting skills'.<sup>103</sup> Likewise, in a previous interview, the conservancy's Professional Hunter at SMJ Safaris maintained that "by employing local trackers on the hunts we conduct, we try to keep the San culture alive. Practicing their tradition, they gain employment".<sup>104</sup>

However, the act of tracking while employed at a trophy hunting enterprise should not necessarily be perceived as replicating traditional customs, and thus 'keeping their tradition alive'. The skillset required is different, and non-traditional technologies such as the use of sophisticated hunting rifles and 4x4 vehicles are an integral aspect of trophy hunting. Clearly, such practices are not part of San traditional hunting. Furthermore, trophy meat and wages from employment may satisfy the consumptive practices of traditional hunting, yet other customs will not be satisfied through the utilisation of their tracking knowledge. Subsistence hunting is often practiced alongside stories, songs and jokes, which have cultural importance and build bonds within a group. Furthermore, employment decisions relating to hunting are made by 'outsiders' and 'bosses' while San employees hold subservient rather than their traditionally egalitarian positions.



102 Koot, S. (2019)

103 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservation-and-conservancies>

104 <https://www.swarovskioptik.com/int/en/hunting/stories/namibia>

Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) is an issue throughout Namibia but not necessarily a troubling one in the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy since the San hunter-gatherer lifestyle is one of coexistence and not resource competition. This is potentially a different scenario for the invasive Herero cattle ranchers moving into a traditionally cattle-free zone. Cattle are accused of displacing wildlife through over-grazing.

**Conclusion:** Trophy hunting of elephants is a major factor in this conservancy in terms of the quota size and impact on the community. The negative aspect of the trophy hunting concessionaires far outweighs the fairly insignificant benefits it brings to members of this conservancy. Misconduct, mistreatment and exploitation of San community members is rife. The San believe they are treated as ‘slaves’ by the white-owned hunting safari outfit as well by the other tribes, namely the Herero and Ovambo.

The findings of this investigation seem to confirm that the Nyae-Nyae CBNRM is perceived by community members as continuing past negative practices, whereby external powers dominate the Ju/’hoansi. Although external stakeholders claim to ‘support’ the Ju/’hoansi San, these almost always come from a dominant, exploitative position. Even though the San are formally represented as a community in a legal representative body, namely the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy, this has been critiqued for only improving the agency of a chosen few, but not the overall community.

For most Ju/’hoansi, the CBNRM model is associated with exclusion and discrimination, with marginalised groups having fewer chances of participating in the broader Namibian political-economic society. With their traditional ways of hunting and gathering declining, a lack of modern employment opportunities, and marginalisation from other ethnic groups, most San survive on hand-outs and benefits such as pension and child benefit schemes. Attempts to ‘keep the culture alive’ through living museums and related ‘traditional’ employment opportunities fall short of empowering the Ju/’hoansi San in a meaningful way.

### ***b. The Nꞛa Jaqna Conservancy***

The Nꞛa Jaqna Conservancy is immediately to the west of the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy. It is the largest conservancy in

Namibia, covering an area of 9,120 km<sup>2</sup>. It holds a human population of 3,894, the majority of whom are !Kung San.<sup>105</sup> The discussion to establish a conservancy started in the late 1990s, but Nꞛa Jaqna was not formally registered until July 2003.<sup>106</sup> With the formation of the conservancy, the area was split into zones. Village boundaries were agreed, and zones for farming, grazing, wildlife, trophy hunting, breeding game and tourism were established. These areas would exclude settlements, but conservancy members could gather ‘veldkos’ (bush food) and medicinal plants.

Today, the !Kung San community predominantly reside in the small town of Mangetti Dune, but most of the inhabitants are scattered around in approximately 20 settlements.<sup>107</sup> Most of Nꞛa Jaqna’s residents are poor and lack employment opportunities. Few own cattle, and while most have abandoned traditional hunting (due to a ban on hunting) and gathering, some partake in small-scale agricultural activities such as small livestock (goats) and crop growing. Many survive on drought relief pay-outs and government schemes.

The conservancy management consists of a committee of eight men and four women, additional members from the Traditional Authority, game guards, and wildlife is monitored using data collection techniques and the wildlife Event Book monitoring system.<sup>108</sup> All staff salaries are paid by through income generated by the conservancy.

Nꞛa Jaqna lists its major wildlife resources as: elephant, leopard, eland, duiker, steenbok, gemsbok, kudu, giraffe, black-backed jackal, cheetah, warthog, spotted hyaena, and its enterprises as Omatako Valley Rest Camp (community rest camp), Grashoek Cultural Village, crafts, trophy hunting, own-use hunting, dry wood harvesting project and devil’s claw harvesting. The community benefits recorded in the 2019 annual audit are food supplies to schools, funeral benefits to affected members, and meat to members.<sup>109</sup> Money is generated predominantly through tourism, Devil’s Claw harvesting and trophy hunting.

Interviews were conducted with !Kung San communities, Ovambo farmers, ex-poachers, game-guards, conservancy staff and Traditional Authority staff.

Elephants are nowhere near as numerous in Nꞛa Jaqna Conservancy as in the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy. Little evidence of elephants was seen during this investigation, and not a single

105 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservancies/na-jaqna>

106 *Ibid.*

107 Odendaal, W.

108 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservancies/na-jaqna>

109 *Ibid.*

resident made any mention of issues with elephants. The last recorded human-elephant conflict incident occurred in 2014.<sup>110</sup> Despite few elephant sightings and extremely low conflict incidents, the annual trophy hunting quota for elephants was increased from two to three in 2020 while the own-use hunting quota remained at two from the previous year. In both 2019 and 2020, both the trophy and own-use hunting quotas were utilised. Revenue generated from trophy hunting elephants in 2020 was NAD 339,800 (USD 23,000) while own-use was NAD 90,000 (USD 6,050).<sup>111</sup>

Although the !Kung San interviewed did express an understanding that trophy hunting benefitted the community by providing a financial contribution and meat, there were complaints regarding the meat distribution. Such complaints included:

- Meat from the trophy hunter is not distributed equally between villages.
- Trophy hunting meat is not given frequently enough to meaningfully accommodate the requirements of the villagers.
- San residents are given inedible portions of meat, such as the trunk which is tough, or the intestines.
- Villagers complained the amount of meat given was too small.
- It was claimed that an elephant had been shot and eaten only by the traditional authority staff and the remaining carcass was left to rot.

Perceived benefits were identified by few San villages (usually the ones with links to the conservancy management). Such benefits included school food, meat distribution, money if someone dies, transport in an emergency, or human-animal conflict compensation. The Nyae-Nyae Conservancy is widely regarded as more developed than Nꞛa Jaqna, as it has more wildlife resources and therefore a higher income from tourism and trophy hunting.

Unlike, Nyae-Nyae, the Nꞛa Jaqna Conservancy does not offer an annual cash pay-out to its residents. This was resented in numerous interviews. Whether or not to distribute a pay-out is a decision for conservancy management in all Namibia's CBNRM areas, as indicated in an interview with an employee of the Nyae-Nyae Development Foundation:

*“It [the cash pay-out] is not straightforward. A lot of conservancies try to take on projects but they fail because there is no proper planning. I don't believe cash pay-out is the best way, but I understand why Nyae-Nyae is doing it... the money is for the community. Some use it in a good way but some do not... but then the concept of the community is empowering them to use it how they like... In Nꞛa Jaqna though they invest it in community things like a litter clean-up and school food”.*

Despite the benefits being experienced at some level by all those interviewed, there were numerous allegations that the benefit distribution was insufficient and unequal. These include:

- One family thought that the management took an unfair proportion of trophy hunting meat. When they complained, they were told: “It is coming, don't complain”.
- The conservancy do not adequately respond to other ethnic groups erecting illegal fences and bringing in cattle.
- A family was given seeds by the conservancy, but the conservancy management allegedly took them back and sold them for alcohol.
- In 2013, water taps were taken away from a village by the conservancy management who said they would be returned when their dispute with a neighbouring village was resolved. They have had to fetch water from 1km away. The taps have not been returned.
- Transport to the bush for Devil's Claw harvesting has been refused.
- Transport to help bring drought relief food to the villages was refused, meaning the food provided to them by the government is not reaching them. As a result, one family said they were “dying of hunger”.
- Empty promises of a cash pay-out.
- Accusations of a member of the conservancy management stealing money.
- The compensation for human-wildlife conflict is unreliable and slow.

Unlike in Nyae-Nyae Conservancy, traditional hunting is banned in Nꞛa Jaqna. As well as denying conservancy members an important food source and creating reliance on a cash-economy and hand-outs from the conservancy/trophy hunters, this prevents the passing on of indigenous knowledge.

110 [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Na\\_jaqna%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Na_jaqna%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf)

111 Ibid.

The !Kung San interviewed as part of this investigation resented that traditional hunting was not included in the constitution. As one villager attested: “It’s like the conservancy doesn’t consider our knowledge. In the future, traditional life will be no more. We made bows and arrows before, but they were confiscated”. The conservancy coordinator explained that traditional hunting is banned because wild population numbers are too small. Another justification is that the !Kung use large arrows compared to Ju/’hoansi San in Nyae-Nyae who use smaller ones with poison.

Poaching has been an issue in the past, but the conservancy has recently increased their game guard staff from eight to twelve. A !Kung ‘poacher’, who was jailed for three months for hunting a blue wildebeest, was interviewed. He claimed he only hunted the animal for consumptive purposes as he and his family were hungry. The ‘poacher’ questioned why a white person could come in and shoot an animal “for fun” while he was not allowed hunt “for the pot”.

The conservancy also supports a ‘living museum’, which aims to celebrate and preserve San culture. The conservancy takes a 20% cut of the profit, the private owner another 20%, while ‘the actors’ share the remaining 60%. The living museum celebrates the traditional hunting of the San, which, ironically, is banned. This irony is not lost on the San people. One elder said in an interview: “Why are they funding a living museum which celebrates us while at the same time killing the culture?”

Among the largest issues facing the constituents of the Nǀa Jaqna Conservancy is illegal fencing and land encroachment. Although the conservancy was set up for the San people, Ovambo, Herero and Kavango non-residents have been settling in the area. It is thought that the first non-San settlers moved in as early as 2002, but the influx intensified from 2012 onwards. Recent research indicates there were over sixty-five illegal settlers in February 2021, although it is difficult to monitor illegal settling due to the vast area and rugged terrain.<sup>112</sup>

Illegal fencing and grazing is having a detrimental impact on the livelihoods of the San. There are few employment opportunities in the Nǀa Jaqna Conservancy. About a quarter of the households own small livestock,<sup>113</sup> some have small crop fields, and wild-food (*veldkos*) harvesting is an important aspect of livelihood. Cash income is generated through sale of Devil’s Claw, pensions and crafts, as well as a small tourist

camp at Omatako.<sup>114</sup> Illegal fencing and cattle grazing is severely impacting these livelihood activities. Other negative factors impacting the San’s livelihoods, as expressed by the interviewees, included:

- Cattle destroy crop fields and homes. One San elder described having “sleepless nights” as cattle raided his crops. There were reports of the cattle eating clothes, and the cattle-herder became aggressive when the incident was reported.
- The cattle destroy bush fruit (melons) by trampling or eating them. One desperate family reported they have resorted to eating Mangetti nuts after they are regurgitated by the cattle.
- The illegal fences put up by the non-San settlers obstruct members from accessing bushfood *veldkos* (bush food) and firewood.
- The fences stop them collecting and harvesting Devil’s Claw. The cattle compact the land, making it harder to trace Devil’s Claw, and their grazing is detrimental to the growth of tubers.
- Non-San settlers monopolise resources such as water. There were numerous reports of non-San settlers stealing water for their cattle.
- The increased levels of illegal settlement has also led to an increase in human-wildlife conflict, and the MEFT’s refusal to pay out compensation (since the settlers are illegal) has led to frustrations amongst farmers.
- The San cannot afford to protect their homes with fences.

The fencing off of land, which belongs to the indigenous San people who collectively manage the land, violates the Communal Land Reform Act of 2002. There has been an ongoing lawsuit, with support from the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), that was started in August 2013 by the conservancy seeking the removal of the fences.<sup>115</sup> After a process of about three years, the High Court of Namibia in August 2016 ruled in favour of the conservancy that 22 out of the 32 illegal herders must vacate the land they fenced and remove the fences. However, the fences have not been removed, and many more illegal settlers have arrived since.<sup>116</sup>

Overall, land grabbing privatises communal land and undermines the conservancy’s constitution which is designed to protect the members’ land rights.<sup>117</sup>

112 Van Der Wulp, C. & Hebinck, P. (2021)

113 Hitchcock, R. K. (2012)

114 Dieckmann et al (2014)

115 Van Der Wulp, C. & Hebinck, P. (2021)

116 Van Der Wulp, C. & Hebinck, P. (2021)

117 NJC, Constitution of the Nǀa Jaqna conservancy (2005)

Rather than coming together to protect their residents, there has been an ongoing dispute between the conservancy based in Mangetti Dune, and the Traditional Authority, based in Omatako. It was alleged in numerous interviews that although the conservancy management opposes illegal fencing, nevertheless the Traditional Authority has allowed the non-San livestock farmers to settle. There is an obvious clustering of fenced areas located around and close to the Traditional Authority's Office in Omatako while there were few around the area of Mangetti Dune. Furthermore, several interviews with San villagers, conservancy staff, guides and game guards attested that individuals from the Traditional Authority were giving permission to non-San settlers to graze their livestock in return for bribes.

The admission of non-San settlers goes against the Nǀa Jaqna constitution, which states that to become a conservancy member, one had to either show ancestral rights to the land or permanently reside in the area for at least five years.<sup>118</sup> The dominant ethnic groups settle wherever and whenever they please. The !Kung San are marginalised and their situation was compared to the South African apartheid rule pre-independence by one of the secretaries in the conservancy office. The conservancy co-ordinator explained how the non-San settlers are abusing Namibia's 'One Nation, One Namibia' policy for their advancement: "They understand that Namibia is free and everyone should settle everywhere but that is not how it works... The San can't settle in Ovamboland. They won't give them the right".

When questioned about the influx of Ovambo, a member of the Traditional Authority explained that 'One Nation, One Namibia' was the thought-process of allowing Ovambo and Herero farmers into the conservancy. He denied that cattle grazing is negatively impacting San ability to gather '*veldkos*' (bush food). He pointed, instead, to bushfires as the source of difficulty. This was undermined by several interviewees who explained that cows were the issue. This was backed up by visual observations of cattle attempting to enter San homes.

There were also multiple complaints about the head of the Traditional Authority. These include:

- Her succession in 2015 caused widespread dissatisfaction as she is the daughter of the previous chief, and the San did not elect her.
- She does not attend AGMs.

- She is accused of receiving bribes from non-San settlers.
- There were allegations of nepotism on behalf of the Traditional Authority head.
- She works for the Namibian Airforce and lives in Grootfontein (a town outside of the conservancy) and is always unavailable for meetings

Those within the conservancy were especially upset the Traditional Authority's behaviour, with the conservancy co-ordinator attesting: "The Traditional Authority should be an example... If they are selling land, what will the others think and do?" Findings from a previous study in 2016 supports the findings of this study with regard to bribery, with a member stating: "The outsiders come here not only for the abundant resources, but because they heard that our Traditional Authority is willing to accept money in exchange for land".<sup>119</sup>

When interviewing an Ovambo herder, he alleged he had just ten cattle and had lived there for 20 years before the conservancy had been established. Further investigation indicated he actually had over 50 cattle and had lived there for just five years. He had also been fined for not paying San for their labour. His failure to disclose the facts implies he knew his presence in the conservancy should not have been authorised. When asked how he ensures his cows don't graze on someone else's land, he responded: "For me it's not a problem". Due to his close ties with the Traditional Authority, he received human-wildlife conflict compensation on time. His lack of interest about the damage his cows were having on !Kung San livelihoods is indicative of the power relationship between Ovambo and !Kung San in the area.

Conclusion: Few elephants, and elephant-conflict incidents have been recorded in this conservancy even though there is a trophy hunting quota of three elephants and an own-use quota of two elephants, which were all utilised in 2020. Traditional hunting for local residents is banned.

Ultimately, the influx of non-San settlers contributes to the marginalisation for the !Kung San in Nǀa Jaqna. There were numerous reports that landowners were aggressive towards San if they attempted to access water within their fenced areas, or other items such as wood or Devil's Claw. Due to their aggression and their positions of power (often being politically well-connected), the San inhabitants of Nǀa Jaqna are afraid to report illegal fencing.

<sup>118</sup> NJC, Constitution of the Nǀa Jaqna conservancy (2005)

<sup>119</sup> Van der Wulp, C. (2016)



the national parks seems to be sporadic and non-residential.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>125</sup> The elephant population in the Zambezi Region is also transboundary. There are no fences between the borders in this region. Borders are demarcated by the deepest channel along the Zambezi, Chobe, Kwando and Linyanti River systems. Most elephants will frequently cross over from Botswana, and to a lesser degree from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola. Accurate population counts are therefore problematic. The investigator witnessed elephant groups regularly moving back and forth across the Kwando, Linyanti and Chobe Rivers between Botswana and Namibia.

According to the 2019 annual audits published on the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO) website for the Zambezi Region annual, *all* fifteen conservancies offer elephant trophy hunting and quotas for own-use of elephants. ‘Own-Use’ means that elephants may be killed but the trophy is not exported. This does not include the killing of ‘problem’ elephants but may include the live sales of elephants.<sup>126</sup> The potential income for trophy hunting an elephant (depending on tusk size and other variables) for the conservancies is approximately NAD 220,800 (USD 15,000) per elephant. ‘Own-Use’ potential income is based on the average live sale value of an elephant that, according to all CBNRM reports, is set at NAD 180,000 (USD 12,000) per elephant.<sup>127</sup> The inconsistencies in the revenues from various CBNRM areas in different regions throughout Namibia are puzzling.

Between the fifteen CBNRM areas in the Zambezi Region, there are 47 annual elephant trophy hunting quotas at an average of three elephants that could be trophy hunted per conservancy. This total of 47 is just over half the national export quota of 90 elephant trophies. Of the 47 elephants on the trophy hunting quota, 21 were ‘utilised’ in 2019. There are additional 57 own-use elephant quotas between the fifteen conservancies at an average of four per conservancy. Of the 57 elephants on quota, 34 were utilised in 2019. A total of 55 elephants were utilised in the Zambezi Region conservancies in 2019.<sup>128</sup> According to the dry-season CBNRM annual game count of all the conservancies for this region, there were approximately 1,120 live sightings of elephants, almost the same as the year previously of 1,118 elephants.<sup>129</sup> This means trophy hunters shot about 5% of the total elephant population in 2019.

It is worth noting that while there is a national export quota limit (as per CITES recommendations) of 90 elephants, there does not seem to be an official national quota limit for own-use hunting.

The Zambezi Region used to be known as the eastern sector of the Caprivi Region or Caprivi Strip. The region is a geographical anomaly formed by the German colonists in an attempt to link their southwest colony with their east African one (now Tanzania). The strip divided a number of ethnic groups that now also reside in parts of Botswana, Zambia, Angola and Zimbabwe. There are approximately seven different ethnic groups in the Zambezi Region, – Subia, Yeyi, Mafwe, Totela, Mbukushu, Mbalangwe and Khwe – each with their own language but most speak siLozi as the *lingua franca*. The Lozi, or Barotse group, are primarily from Zambia but are a Tswana-Sotho language-based grouping of around 50 ethnic groups that occupy the four different countries of the region.

Historically, geographically, linguistically, and politically the groups within the Zambezi Region in Namibia (who still refer to themselves as Caprivians) feel alienated from central government in Windhoek, and there is a strong feeling of political separation and segregation. There have been a few attempts at secession from Namibia, most notably in 1999 when the Caprivi Liberation Front conducted a failed armed coup. In the latest general elections, about half the constituencies voted against the governing party of SWAPO.

Most interviewees revealed a general mistrust of central government and the ruling Ovambo ethnic group. Many also did not believe that the CBNRM areas were providing any benefit, some did not even know they lived in one.

An interview with a local Caprivian who is also employed as a national park official at Bwabwata corroborated the sense of alienation of the people in the Zambezi Region. He maintained that local people in the Zambezi Region are side-lined in terms of employment opportunities and other benefits. He confirmed that very few constituents received any benefits from the conservancies or from wildlife use. His opinion was that the Ovambo benefit from all resources in the region at the expense of the locals. “We have been colonised by the Ovambo,” he said. He maintained that life under South African apartheid rule was better than it is now: “At least we had health care and education back then”. He stated there is still a strong secession movement in the Zambezi Region. “An independent Caprivi for Caprivians is growing,” he said. “We have natural borders, we are bordered on all side by rivers, this is our country, not theirs.”

124 Craig, G.C. & Gibson, D. St.C. (September/October 2019)

125 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Zambezi%20Game%20Count%20-%20East%202020.pdf>

126 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservancies>

127 Ibid.

128 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservancies>

129 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Zambezi%20Game%20Count%20-%20East%202020.pdf>

### **a. Kwandu Conservancy**

Kwandu Conservancy is on the east bank of the Kwando River between the town of Kongola and Sioma-Ngwezi National Park in Zambia. Kwandu and surrounding areas has one of the largest populations of elephants in the region – 3,455 out of an estimated total of 12,008.<sup>130</sup> With over 100 incidents annually, Kwandu Conservancy often has the highest human-elephant conflict figures in Namibia.<sup>131</sup> Unfenced and unprotected crop fields were observed. Few crops are currently being grown. Local farmers all say elephants are a major problem for them as they frequently destroy crops, fences and water installations.

The CBNRM program specifically for Kwandu functions by identifying ‘surplus’ elephants that may then be trophy hunted by international clients as a means of mitigating this conflict and recovering financial losses from destroyed crops. In order to justify the number of these ‘surplus’ elephants, conservancy staff rangers conduct daily foot patrols to count elephants within the conservancy as well as record crop-raiding incidents in an Event Book and on claim forms. With the assistance of CBNRM support organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), this information is then collated and, in collaboration with government, is used to set elephant trophy hunting and own-use quotas.

The Kwandu Conservancy has tended to receive a maximum of five elephants for its annual quota from its 250 ‘resident’ elephants.<sup>132</sup> The use of the term ‘resident’ is controversial since the 190 km<sup>2</sup> Kwandu Conservancy shares an unfenced border with the national parks of two countries – Iona in Angola and Sioma Ngwezi in Zambia – as well as the Bwabwata National Park on its western boundary, a State Forest to the east and Mayuni and Mashi Conservancies to the south, which in turn, share a border with Mudumu National Park and Chobe National Park in Botswana. Elephants are known to roam throughout these areas and therefore cannot be strictly referred to as ‘resident’ but rather as transboundary.

Recent figures indicate that the hunting operator, Jamy Traut Hunting Safaris, currently holding the rights to hunt in Kwandu’s concession, pays the conservancy NAD 180,000 (USD 12,000) for each trophy elephant hunted carrying a tusk weight above 40lbs (18.1kg), or NAD 115,000 (USD 8,500) for those with tusks weighing less than that. International clients

wishing to hunt trophy elephants in Kwandu pay Jamy Traut a NAD 441,600 (USD 24,000) trophy fee, as well as a minimum of NAD 360,000 (USD 26,000) in daily rates for fourteen days spent on the elephant trail.<sup>133</sup>

As a recent study reveals, however, relatively small amounts of money from Kwandu’s hunted elephants reach the farmers in order to ‘offset’ losses caused by elephants. The bulk of the money goes towards conservancy running costs, including the work done by rangers and other staff to count and record elephant numbers. If, after these outgoings, the conservancy can afford to pay its farmers for crop losses, this money is invariably used to plant more crops, attracting elephants which can then be counted, commodified (i.e. given a market price), and perhaps killed.<sup>134</sup> And so the cycle continues.

Compensation for crop damage amounts to a small portion of the income those crops would otherwise generate. Farmers are paid a fixed rate of USD 73 per ha of crop damage, which is significantly less than the estimated USD 545 that can be generated from a hectare of maize.<sup>135</sup> Many farmers have to undertake extra piecework in order to feed their families after losing crops. The aforementioned study found that ‘these economic, psychological, and hidden opportunity costs are generally borne by the most vulnerable in society, such as female-headed households, and often cannot be financially compensated.’ Importantly, those households that suffer the greatest economic and emotional burden of living alongside elephants do not necessarily benefit significantly from CBNRM’s economic opportunities.<sup>136</sup>

### **b. Sobbe, Mashi, Muyani, Balyerwa and Wuparo conservancies**

The croplands in all these conservancies immediately to the south of Kwandu Conservancy, in the crook of the Kwando/Linyanti River confluence, appeared to be in better shape, more commercial and better protected than in the Kwandu Conservancy. Many crop fields were ringed by a single wire at around 1,5m off the ground. The wires are threaded at regular intervals with discarded cans. These cans cause a loud rattle when the wire is moved. This appears to be an effective elephant deterrent, according to local farmers.

130 Craig, G.C. & Gibson, D. St.C. (September/October 2019)

131 Hewitson, L.J. & Sullivan, S. (2021)

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 Hewitson, L.J. & Sullivan, S. (2021)

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid



Water tanks are all placed on 4m+ high platforms and ringed by 2m high razor wire fences. Water pumps are encased in sturdy metal cages. All these conservancies border the national parks of either Mudumu National Park (Sobbe, Mashi, Balyerwa) or Nkasa Rupara National Park (Wuparo).



### *c. Trophy hunts witnessed*

In June 2021, the investigator observed a trophy hunt in progress in the Kwando Core Area of the Bwabwata National Park, about 10kms north of the B8 national road along the Kwando River. The hunting safari operator was Ndumo Hunting Safaris. Clients were either European or American. They appeared to be following the tracks of a single bull elephant. The kill itself was not observed, possibly because the investigator may have disturbed the quarry.

The investigator also briefly met the owner of Ndumo Hunting Safaris. He has the hunting concession for Bwabwata Kwando Concession as well as the Balyerwa, Sobbe and Sikunga conservancies, and offers trophy hunts and fishing safaris elsewhere in Namibia. Excluding the Bwabwata Kwando Core Concession, the three conservancies that Ndumo Hunting Safaris operates in, together represent an annual 'offtake' of 20 elephants (9 trophy elephants and 11 own-use elephants).

The investigator heard gunshots one evening in June 2021 along the Chobe River in the Salambala Conservancy. This was just across the river from Botswana's Chobe National Park. The presence of elephants and lions was recorded nearby at the time. No actual hunt could be verified the following morning. The investigator was told by his guide that trophy hunting was not permitted if it is directly opposite the Chobe National Park in Botswana, and that the gunshots could possibly have been indicative of poaching activity.

#### ***d. Salambala Conservancy***

Salambala has the highest human population of all fifteen conservancies in the Zambezi Region – 8,923 compared to 3,872 of Kwandu, the next most-populated conservancy.

It lists its major wildlife resources as: Lion, elephant, leopard, buffalo, waterbuck, tsessebe, kudu, duiker, reedbuck, common impala, blue wildebeest, lechwe, hippo, crocodile, plains zebra, warthog, steenbok, interesting bird life, various fish species. It lists its enterprises as: Salambala Campsite (community campsite); Ngoma Craft Centre; trophy hunting.

Salambala has Management Committee of 14 women and 26 men. Executive Committee of nine members; staff of nine Community Game Guards, two Community Resource Monitors, three campsite workers and an Environmental Awareness Officer; wildlife monitoring uses an annual count on foot and Event Book monitoring system.

Salambala has the largest trophy hunting and own-use quota in Namibia – with six elephants to be trophy hunted and a quota of four own-use, making for ten elephants in total. All six elephant trophy hunting quotas were utilised in 2020 and two own-use utilised.<sup>137</sup>

Salambala (along with Balyerwa, Bamunu and Sikunga) added its name to the Urgent Appeal Letter to the US government calling on its support for trophy hunting of elephants and other wildlife as a means of community income.<sup>138</sup>

Movement trends along the Chobe River indicate that the elephants prefer the protection of the national parks on the Botswana side of the river. Herds tend to cross to the Namibian side only at night and will return to the national park by daybreak.

This was observed in person and was corroborated by field guides, rangers and staff workers at the various lodges along the river. This behaviour is also indicated in the various game counts in other nearby national parks, namely Mudumu and Nkasa Rupara. These surveys, as mentioned, show the majority of elephants reside within the national parks. They occasionally move out at night or sporadically during the day; or to migrate to another country. The dominant theory for their preference to reside within the national parks is that the elephants are actively avoiding trophy hunters, poachers and persecution from local farmers. The elephants seem to know that the national parks will provide full protection by day, while the lack of hunting and other human activities under the cover of night allow them to move beyond the national parks.

Conclusion: The small area of Namibia's Zambezi Region contains the country's largest elephant population (although they are mostly transboundary). The region also represents the highest concentration of conservancies and the highest elephant quotas, both as trophy and own-use hunting, which represents around 15% of the total population.

All hunting safari operators assessed in this investigation are owned and managed by white Namibians or white foreigners. There does not appear to be any hunting operation owned and managed by local members of conservancies anywhere in Namibia.

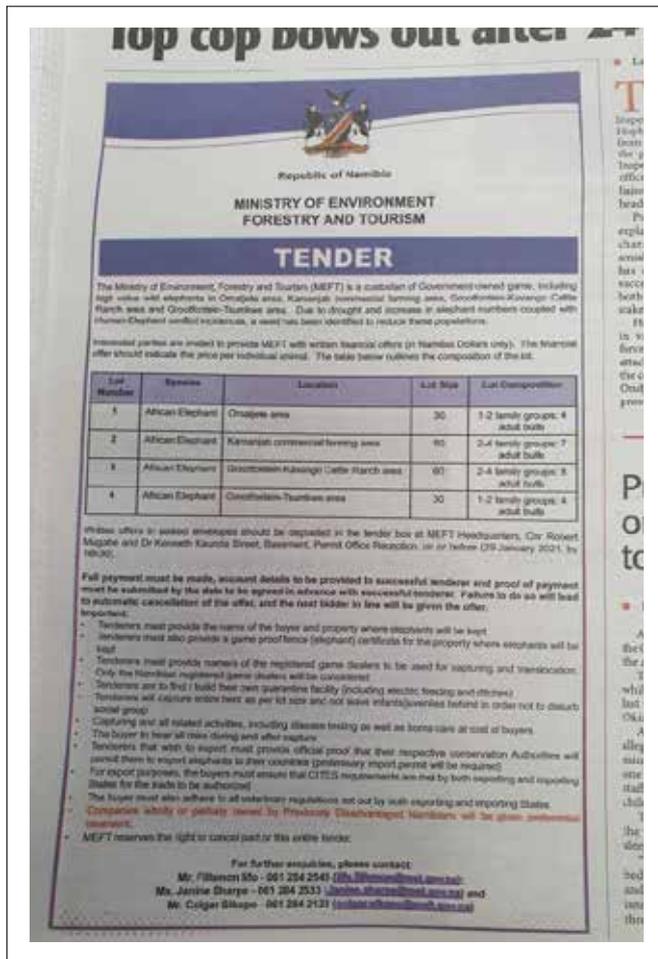
As with the ethnic minorities in the Kunene Region and the San of the Nyae-Nyae and N̄a Jaqna Conservancies, the communities in the Zambezi Region feel that the Ovambo-dominated government is exploiting them and preventing them from having equal representation, both at a political and economic level. In this region, there appears to be a strong desire to secede from Namibia and form an independent country.

137 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Salambala%20Audit%20Report%202020.pdf>

138 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Urgent%20letter%20to%20US%20Congress%20Voices%20from%20Africa.pdf>

# 7 / Live Elephant Sales

On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020, the Namibian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), in a printed advertisement for tender in the New Era Newspaper, a State-owned publication, announced the sale by auction of 170 ‘high-value’ free-roaming elephants from four commercial farming areas in the northern part of the country. Their reasoning that due to ‘drought, the increase of elephant numbers and human-elephant conflict incidents’ the sale was required ‘to reduce their population numbers.’



The four areas identified were:

- Omatjete area: 30 elephants (1-2 family groups; 4 adult bulls)
- Kamanjab commercial farming area: 50 elephants (2-4 family groups; 7 adult bulls)
- Grootfontein-Kavango Cattle Ranch area: 60 elephants (2-4 family groups; 8 adult bulls)
- Grootfontein-Tsumkwe area: 30 elephants (1-2 family groups; 4 adult bulls)

The advertisement stipulated that:

- Tenderers must supply the name of the buyer and property where the elephants will be kept
- Tenderers must also provide game-proof fence (elephant) certificate for the property where the elephants will be kept
- Tenderers must provide name/s of the registered game dealers to be used for capturing and translocation. Only Namibian registered game dealers will be considered
- Tenderers are to find/build their own quarantine facility (including electric fencing and ditches)
- Tenderers will capture entire herd as per lot size and not leave juveniles/infants behind in order not to disturb social group
- Capturing and all related activities, including disease testing as well as boma care at cost of buyers
- The buyer to bear all risks during and after capture
- Tenderers that wish to export must provide official proof that their respective conservation Authorities will permit them to export elephants to their countries (preliminary import permit will be required)
- For export purposes, the buyers must ensure that CITES requirements are met by both exporting and importing States for the trade to be authorised
- The buyer must also adhere to all veterinary regulations set out by both exporting and importing States
- Companies wholly or partially owned by Previously Disadvantaged Namibians will be given preferential treatment
- MEFT reserves the right to cancel part or this entire tender

Some of these stipulations explicitly mention the possibility of an international export of elephants, although it makes no mention as to whether the elephants will be exported to *in situ* (within their natural range) or *ex situ* (outside their natural range) States. The stipulations for export does say ‘buyers must ensure that CITES requirements are met by both exporting and importing States for the trade to be authorised’.

On 11 August 2021 the MEFT issued a press release stating that ‘the Ministry has successfully sold 57 of the 170 elephants’ while 42 will be exported out of Namibia. They claimed to have successfully accepted three of five bidders for the elephants and would generate NAD 5.9 million (USD 400,000). The money generated is to be ‘reinvested in the conservation of Namibia’s wild animals, including in community conservancies.’



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**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**Press Release**  
**(For Immediate Release)**

11 August 2021

Editors and Journalists

**Ministerial update on the Elephant Auction.**

The Ministry has successfully sold 57 out of the 170 elephants which were put on tender in December 2020. The sale of these elephants will raise a total 5.9 million Namibian dollars and attracted five bidders of which only three were successful.

A total of 15 elephants will be captured and remain in Namibia while 42 will be exported out of Namibia. The capturing will start this month to be conducted by Namibian Registered Game Capture Operators and supervised by the Ministry’s officials.

The Elephant tender for 170 elephants was advertised on the 3rd December 2020 and closed on the 29th January 2021. The elephants that were put on auction includes 30 from Omatjete area, 50 from Kamanjab-commercial farming area, 60 from Grootfontein-Kavango cattle ranch area and 30 Grootfontein-Tsumkwe area.

With this auction, we intend to reduce elephant numbers in specified areas to minimize human elephant conflicts which has become persistent leading to extensive damages to properties, life losses and a disruption of people’s livelihoods.

The allocation of where the elephants will be captured from is still to be done, the Ministry will consider the social behavior of elephants and how severe the situation is in the listed areas to inform the allocation.

The funds generated through this auction will be transferred into the Game Product Trust Fund to be reinvested in the conservation of Namibia’s wild animals, including in community conservancies. Particularly the funds will be used for human wildlife conflict management, wildlife management among others.

Issued By:

**Romeo Muyunda**  
**MEFT SPOKESPERSON 1 AUG 2021**



The MEFT have not released any further details as to who buyers are, or whether they intend to permit the export beyond *in situ* States, the legality of which under international rules has been questioned, and is to be considered at the next meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).<sup>139</sup>

In September 2021, the 42 elephants to be exported was revised to 35, making 22 to be relocated within Namibia. The 35 are reportedly being exported *ex situ* to the UAE and USA.

## A. Background

Namibia has traded internationally in live elephants to *ex situ* (outside natural range) countries in the past. In 2012 and 2013, the country exported 24 live wild-caught elephants under CITES regulations to Mexico (18 elephants) and Cuba (6 elephants).<sup>140</sup> In both these instances, Namibia exported elephants under a CITES Appendix I listing, despite the fact that elephants in Namibia are listed in Appendix II. The annotation for the Appendix II listing specifies that trade in live elephants from Namibia is strictly for ‘*in situ* conservation programmes only’, i.e. no live elephants may be exported beyond their natural range. Since neither Cuba nor Mexico are African elephant range states, the exports were not in accordance with the CITES Appendix II annotation relevant for Namibia.

However, an addendum to Namibia’s Appendix II annotation that elephants may only be destined for *in situ* conservation programmes also states: “If this condition is not complied with, then the specimen is treated in the same way as ‘African elephants from other African States and all Asian elephants (Appendix I).’”<sup>141</sup> Namibia, therefore, was able to export the elephants under an Appendix I interpretation, which has no such restriction (albeit any export must be conducted for primarily non-commercial purposes and a Scientific Authority of the State of import must issue a finding that it is satisfied that the proposed recipient of a living specimen is ‘suitably equipped to house and care for it’<sup>142</sup>). Namibia’s use of an Appendix I listing rather than the stipulated Appendix II listing as per CITES regulations highlights the problematic interpretation and implementation of the CITES Appendices for African elephants. It is this interpretation that continues to allow for the potential export of elephants beyond their natural range. The potential export of the elephants currently under tender to *ex situ* States must therefore be treated as within the bounds of

probability. This is made more so by rumours that 35 elephant will be exported to the UAE and USA.

## B. The four commercial farming areas

### a. Kamanjab commercial farming area

There appears to be few elephants in this area.

There were no visual sightings of elephants in the two weeks of surveying the area in May 2021, although there is evidence of their presence (in terms of dung, spoor and broken branches) of a small family herd moving from the commercial farming area to the conservancy along the D2667 gravel road close to the Khaodi //Hôas Conservancy entrance. There was also dung/spoor evidence of a small herd moving from the commercial farming area to the conservancy on the C40 road.

Ground observations of low numbers of elephants in the area were corroborated by in-person interviews with conservancy pastoralists and villagers in May 2021, as well as several different commercial farmers in the area surrounding Kamanjab. All stated they do not often see elephants and have not had any significant conflict incidents. As the area does not support crop growing (cattle and other livestock are the main agricultural activities), most incidents are water-installation destruction related (such as pumps, pipes and tanks), especially during the dry season when there is a lack of surface water. One farmer informed the investigator that government does not compensate for the breakage of water pumps, pipes and tanks. He resorts, instead, to elephant mitigation techniques in the form of providing an extra water source just for the elephants so as to keep them away from the installations.

139 <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/31/sum/E-AC31-ExSum-03.pdf> par 18.2 c) i)

140 Ibid.

141 [https://cites.org/eng/news/statement/international\\_trade\\_in\\_live\\_elephants#1](https://cites.org/eng/news/statement/international_trade_in_live_elephants#1)

142 Ibid.

There are other elephant-mitigation techniques commonly used in the area and throughout Namibia. One is surrounding water tanks with sharp rocks that effectively prevent the elephants from reaching the tanks. Another is to encase pumps in steel cages.

A fixed-wing survey undertaken by Craig, G.C. and D. St. C. Gibson on behalf of the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism in 2016 revealed only 18 elephants were counted in the Kamanjab area (block FH3).<sup>143</sup> In the Kamanjab block, only 2 of the 18 elephants sighted were bulls.<sup>144</sup> These extremely low numbers of bull elephants could be because they are either more difficult to spot from the air due their solitary nature; and/or that only bulls are targeted for trophy hunting; and/or that bulls tend to be the damage-causing animals and are more frequently killed as ‘problem elephants.’

According to the ǀKhaodi //Hôas annual report for 2019, sightings in this neighbouring CBNRM conservancy totalled just 14 elephants. However, the official annual game count only listed three elephants. The population status is listed as ‘uncommon’.<sup>145</sup>

### ***b. Omatjete area***

Ground observations of the commercial farms and areas along the Ugab River in May 2021 revealed little elephant presence (just some old dung). Interviews with farmers, the manager of a private lodge (Vingerklip Lodge), and other stakeholders in the area all said elephant sightings were rare. The lodge manager said elephants had not been sighted for two years.

The Craig/Gibson fixed-wing aerial elephant population survey of the entire Kunene Region in 2016, counted 277 elephants but extrapolated the figure to 1,716 individuals for the entire region.<sup>146</sup> However, the survey showed a zero count of elephants in this current area of survey (block HL3 – Ugab River/Omatjete area). The survey revealed that there were very few bull elephants in the entire Kunene Region – just 22 of the 277 counted (extrapolated to 59 of 1,716).<sup>147</sup>

Elephant-Human Relations Aid (EHRA) currently conducts foot patrols every other day of the week in the Ugab River/Omatjete area. Information is obtained from direct sightings of elephants. The EHRA annual report for 2020 shows low numbers of adult

cows and adult bulls. Here are their findings:<sup>148</sup>

- Herds are small (6-12 individuals).
- Numbers of bulls are very low, while the western sector of the Ugab River showed a drastic decline of female elephants.
- Since 2003, sixteen female elephants have died. Only five remain.
- Since 2017, three adult bulls over the age of 25 years were shot, two of which were destroyed as ‘problem animals’ and one as a trophy. Another young male of 19 years was shot as a problem-causing animal. One male over 30 years of age remains in the Ugab River West area. The lack of breeding bulls is of major concern.
- Since 2014, calf mortality in the Ugab West population stands at 100%. The last surviving calf was born in June 2014. Since then, 9 new-born calves died at or shortly after birth. The last new-born death in the Ugab River West population occurred in January 2020. The last new-born death in the Huab /Aba Huab resident population occurred in October 2020.
- Severe droughts have been prevalent in this area for the past five years.
- Jointly with the MEFT and local conservancies, EHRA have managed to direct the Ugab West elephants away from the commercial farms, and west down the Ugab River “back into a safer area.”
- EHRA also assist in various mitigation techniques to reduce human-elephant conflict such as elephant proof walls around water tanks.

Neighbouring Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) conservancies show a similar trend in low elephant counts. This is evidenced in their respective annual game counts. The latest figures are found in the annual reports on the NACSO website from the past decade.<sup>149</sup> They are as follows:

- The annual report for the !Khoru !Goreb Conservancy in 2019 listed elephants as ‘very rare’ with no recorded sightings since 2014.<sup>150</sup>
- The annual report for the Ohungu Conservancy in 2019 listed elephants as ‘very rare’ with no recorded sightings in the last ten years. However, one elephant was ‘removed’ as a ‘problem animal’.<sup>151</sup>
- The annual report for the Otjimboyo Conservancy in 2019

143 Craig, G.C. and D. St. C. Gibson (2016)

144 Ibid.

145 [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi\\_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoadi_hoas%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf)

146 Craig, G.C. and D. St. C. Gibson (2016)

147 Ibid.

148 EHRA Annual Conservation Report (2020)

149 <http://www.nacso.org.na/conservancies>

150 [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoru\\_goreb%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Khoru_goreb%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf)

151 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Ohungu%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf>



listed elephants as ‘very rare’ with no recorded sightings since 2011.<sup>152</sup>

- The annual report for the Sorris Sorris Conservancy in 2019 listed elephants as ‘very rare’ with no recorded sightings since 2014, although elephants do feature relatively prominently in the Human-Wildlife Conflict section since 2016.<sup>153</sup>
- The annual report for the Tiseb Conservancy in 2019 listed elephants as ‘very rare’ with no recorded sightings in the last ten years.<sup>154</sup>

The fact that all four conservancies reported ‘no recorded sightings’ does not mean there were literally no elephants. Instead, zero elephants were sighted during the two day annual game counts usually conducted in June/July each year. However, these reports are indicative that elephants are so few in number that it is difficult to count them from the road in a vast landscape unless a comprehensive aerial survey is conducted or that elephants are fitted with radio collars to track their whereabouts.

### *c. Grootfontein-Kavango Cattle Ranch area*

The Kavango Cattle Ranch (KCR) is a government parastatal farm conglomerate administered by the Namibia Industrial Development Agency (NIDA). The ranch area is approximately 168,900 hectares in size, and is comprised of over 40 individual farms, primarily used for livestock production.

Unlike the two previous areas surveyed in the Kunene Region, on the KCR there are a lot more elephants. Various estimates from local farmers and KCR management indicate there may be between 130 and 200 ‘resident’ elephants that move in and out of the area.

Two female elephants were fitted with radio collars in 2014 by the Na’ankuse Elephant and Wild Dog Project to monitor long term movements but, despite this, there does not appear to be any solid data on their movements or any other assessments of these elephants.<sup>155</sup>

It is claimed by the MEFT that the elephants in this area cause damage to fences, water dams, water pipes and, occasionally, to crops grown by the local people. This damage is costly in terms of repairs, maintenance and labour. The claim of widespread human-elephant conflict was confirmed in June 2021 by resident livestock farmers and by the NIDA manager, who was interviewed in his office in person. The manager stated that the damage from elephants is widespread and continuous. He says the cattle farmers are in a state of desperation and believes that if the current state of affairs continues for another six months the conglomerate would have to file for bankruptcy. The manager also maintained that a person was killed 2020 by an elephant. Cattle have also been killed by elephants. The manager said that apart from reading the advertisement about the auction of elephants in the New Era newspaper, he has yet to be contacted by government on the subject.

The north of the KCR is bordered by 120kms of veterinary cordon fence. The full length of the fence was surveyed in June 2021. Dozens of fence breaches caused by elephants were evident. Teams of labourers working for the Namibian veterinary authority were observed repairing the fences. When asked about the frequency of breaches, all replied that fence repairs were conducted on a daily basis. “It’s a full-time job,” said one. Apart from fence destruction, other elephant evidence in the form of spoor, dung and broken water installations was observed.



152 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Otjimboyo%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf>

153 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Sorris%20Sorris%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf>

154 <http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Tiseb%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf>

155 <https://naankuse.com/conservation-research/mangetti/>

There was a rumour circulating among farmers in the area that due to the continued and abundant presence of elephants and other wildlife, government has mooted that the KCR could be converted into a game reserve.

#### ***d. Grootfontein-Tsumkwe area***

The elephants here form part of the commercial farmlands and game/hunting ranches to the east of the town of Grootfontein to the west of the Nǀa Jaqna conservancy.

The area was surveyed by vehicle and farmers interviewed in June 2021. Human-elephant conflict is generally regarded as ‘occasional’ and primarily concerns water installation destruction. There is very little sign of elephants both in terms of sightings as well as dung and spoor and fence destruction.

One farmer and wildlife rancher mentioned that there had only ever been one elephant – a lone bull – that had roamed into the area. It was apparently ‘destroyed’ by the MEFT.

There is very little information on these elephants in terms of official aerial surveys (unlike in the Kunene Region). No official aerial survey has been conducted in this area, possibly because there are not enough elephants to warrant a survey in the first place.

The neighbouring Nǀa Jaqna conservancy annual audit for 2019 (road counts) lists elephants as ‘uncommon’, although there is a hunting quota of four elephants, which most likely take place to the far east of the conservancy, about 100 kilometres from the commercial farming areas. The last recorded human-elephant conflict incident in Nǀa Jaqna was in 2014.<sup>156</sup>

#### ***e. Conclusion***

As mentioned earlier in this document, the elephant population in the north-western Kunene Region could be on the verge of collapse. Of major concern are the extremely low numbers of breeding bulls and high infant mortality rate (100% since 2014). The concern is whether the MEFT’s plan to remove any live elephants from the Omatjete/Kamanjab commercial farming areas is viable. The removal of that number could have severe implications on an already fragile and isolated desert elephant population. It also seems that the ability to capture highly mobile elephants in such a large area could be problematic, with the risk of injury and/or mortality.

In the north-eastern area, in the Grootfontein-Kavango Cattle Ranch area, there appears to be a significant elephant population with widespread human-elephant conflict incidents.

The Grootfontein-Tsumkwe area, on the other hand, does not seem to share the same issues in that there are not too many elephants nor high conflict incidents. Elephant sightings and conflict incidents are deemed to be minimal, and do not substantiate the claim made in the MEFT advertisement that elephant numbers need to be reduced. Drought, cited by the MEFT advertisement as a factor requiring a reduction in numbers, is not evident here either. The wet season for 2021 in this region was one of the better ones on record, according to local farmers.

If these elephants are exported to locations outside of Namibia (*ex situ*) the process will most likely use controversial interpretations. Again, the legal validity of which remains in question and the concern is consequently being referred to the next CITES Standing Committee.<sup>157</sup>

If these elephants are captured in the Omatjete/Kamanjab area, it could have detrimental effects on the future survival of Namibia’s isolated desert elephants.

<sup>156</sup> [http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Na\\_jaqna%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf](http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Na_jaqna%20Audit%20Report%202019.pdf)

<sup>157</sup> CITES Thirty-first meeting of the Animals Committee Online, 31 May, 1, 4, 21 and 22 June 202

# 8 / Ekipa (Ivory Jewellery) Trade

## A. Background

*Ekipas* are traditional Namibian intricately carved ‘buttons’, customarily made from elephant ivory. They are typically mounted in precious metals such as copper, silver and gold and are either worn as buttons, belts or as jewellery pendants, the latter usually mounted in conjunction with gemstones and strung with animal leather or elephant hair. The manufacture and trade in *ekipas* have come to represent Namibia’s national heritage as traditional attire for the Ovambo and Himba. These days, *ekipas* are mostly found in upmarket jewellery stores and street-side markets in Namibia’s main urban centres, as well as in upmarket lodges and hotels throughout Namibia. The jewellery has evolved from being a traditional Ovambo or Himba ornament to a mainstream jewellery item and, in recent years, has been traded on the international tourist market.

In October 2004, at the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP13), Namibia sought to obtain approval from Convention on International Trade in Endangered Wild Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) to trade internationally in ‘individually marked and certified [ivory] *ekipas* incorporated in finished jewellery for non-commercial purposes.’<sup>158</sup>

The information document submitted by the Namibian authorities at CoP13 described in detail the regulations that it proposed to implement to control the *ekipa* trade.<sup>159</sup> In that document, Namibia promised a ‘highly controlled ivory carving industry under the Ministry of Environment and Tourism supervision’. The relevant provisions of the proposed controls were summarised as:

- Only ivory from the national stockpile may be used to make *ekipa*;
- Only registered carvers may work with the ivory;
- Only registered jewellers may work with the *ekipa* to make finished jewellery;
- Each finished item of jewellery, incorporating *ekipa*, must be marked with a unique number engraved on the reverse side of the item in such a way that it is fully visible in the final product.
- A minimum size will be prescribed for all items to be exported to facilitate a permanent marking system that will consist of a unique code and number engraved on the reverse side of all items.
- Only registered jewellers may offer *ekipa* jewellery for sale. Their registration must be prominently displayed in the sale area.



158 CITES CoP13 Prop. 7.

159 CITES CoP13 Inf.doc 33 (October 2004)

- On sale of the item, a certificate, which includes a photograph of the finished piece of jewellery, must be supplied to the purchaser as proof of legal origin.
- An export permit must be obtained before taking the item overseas. A permit will only be issued upon presentation of the *ekipa* jewellery and its certificate.<sup>160</sup>

In its proposal to CoP13, Namibia stated that it had ‘complied with every requirement of CITES concerning the conservation of the African elephant’.<sup>161</sup> This would include Res. Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP12). This Resolution provides that there should be a proper registration system for all importers, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers dealing in ivory. There should also be effective reporting and enforcement systems for worked ivory. In addition to these controls, Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP12) recommends that each country establish a nationwide procedure, particularly in retail outlets, informing tourists and other non-nationals that they should not purchase ivory in cases where it is illegal for them to import it into their own home countries.<sup>162</sup>

On the basis of the information Namibia provided in the information document, and its promise of strict controls, Parties at CoP13 gave Namibia approval to ‘trade in individually marked and certified *ekipas* incorporated in finished jewellery for non-commercial purposes’. Approval was not given to trade in ‘unmounted’ *ekipa* (that is, *ekipa* buttons that are not incorporated in finished jewellery), or in other items of worked ivory.<sup>163</sup>

## B. July/August 2006 Investigation

In July and August 2006, Dr Rosalind Reeve and Simon Pope, as part of an investigation into the *ekipa* trade for David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF), visited 21 jewellery shops as well as street markets in Namibia’s capital, Windhoek, the tourist resort of Swakopmund, and the large souvenir market in Okahandja, north of Windhoek.<sup>164</sup>

They found that the strict registration and certification system promised by Namibia at CoP13 to control trade limited to ‘individually marked and certified *ekipas* incorporated in finished jewellery’ had not been implemented. ‘There was no evidence of any controls over ivory trade at all.’<sup>165</sup> An uncontrolled trade in all types of *ekipa* from unknown and possibly illegal sources had arisen. In the shops and market stalls surveyed they saw a total of at least 750 *ekipa* on sale of all shapes and sizes, 86% of which were not mounted in finished jewellery (as per law) and none of which had identifying marks. Claims were made that many were antique, but only about 19% may possibly have been ‘old’; carvers have apparently become adept at making new *ekipa* look antique. *Ekipa* sold openly in street markets were almost exclusively new. Many jewellery items made of elephant hair, mostly necklaces and bracelets, were on sale. The hair is a byproduct of the trophy hunting industry and can be bought from taxidermists.<sup>166</sup>

## C. March/April 2007 Investigation

In May 2007, Davyth Stewart submitted findings of a follow up investigation on behalf of DSWF.<sup>167</sup> This came after Kenya and Mali submitted a proposal to the 14<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP14) in January 2007, which sought to remove the annotation that allows Namibia to export *ekipa*.<sup>168</sup> That proposal cited the report of Reeve and Pope (November 2006), and included details of their findings identifying the problems within Namibia’s domestic ivory market, and the lack of regulations and controls over that market. Despite Namibia being given the opportunity to review the information contained in the Kenya/Mali Proposal, Stewart’s research conducted in March and April 2007 found that nothing had been done to improve the situation. In particular, the domestic ivory market in Namibia remained unregulated and uncontrolled, and ivory continued to be sold in breach of CITES which, in turn, was thought to be stimulating illegal importation of ivory from neighbouring countries.<sup>169</sup>

160 CITES CoP13 Inf.doc 33 (October 2004)

161 CITES CoP13 Prop. 7.

162 CITES Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP12)

163 Ibid.

164 Reeve, R. & Pope, S. (November 2006).

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid.

167 Stewart, D. (May 2007)

168 CoP14 Prop. 6

169 Stewart, D. (May 2007)

Evidence was also gathered by Stewart to suggest that the ivory market in Namibia was growing. Stewart found ‘a greater number of new *ekipa* on sale, a greater percentage of which were unmounted.’<sup>170</sup>

Subsequent updates to Res. Conf. 10.10, that have been made since CoP12, include advising that Parties in which there is a legal domestic market for ivory that is contributing to poaching or illegal trade, take all necessary legislative, regulatory and enforcement measures to close their domestic markets for commercial trade in raw and worked ivory as a matter of urgency, and that any exemptions should not contribute to poaching or illegal trade. It also urges Parties with a legal domestic trade to register or license all importers, exporters, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers dealing in raw or worked ivory, and to introduce recording and inspection procedures to enable the Management Authority and other appropriate government agencies to monitor the movement of ivory within the State, particularly by means of compulsory trade controls over raw ivory, and comprehensive and demonstrably effective stock inventory, reporting, and enforcement systems for worked ivory.<sup>171</sup>

With this last point in mind, this investigation assessed the current status of the *ekipa* trade in Namibia and whether

there were any significant changes from the previous two investigations over a decade ago.

## D. May/June 2021 Investigation

Over a dozen major registered jewellery and curio retailers as well as large street markets in central Windhoek that were covered in the 2006 and 2007 investigations were investigated.

The number of *ekipas* for sale were found to be lower than previous investigations with only a couple of items per retailer on display. In the retail stores, all pieces viewed were jewellery-mounted (in copper, silver or gold, and some with precious stones). Prices ranged from NAD 750 (USD 50) – NAD 6,000 (USD 403) depending on size, material, and design. Most items on display did not appear to be made of elephant ivory due to the lack of Schreger lines. Schreger lines are commonly referred to as ‘cross-hatchings, engine turnings, or stacked chevrons’ particular to elephant or mammoth ivory only.<sup>172</sup> Schreger lines do not appear in cross-sections of animal horn or bone.



170 Ibid.

171 <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/document/E-Res-10-10-R18.pdf>

172 [https://www.fws.gov/lab/ivory\\_natural.php](https://www.fws.gov/lab/ivory_natural.php)

Only one open market stall in Windhoek displayed *ekipas*. There were about 100 *ekipa* pieces ranging from NAD 150 (USD 10) – NAD 450 (USD 30). The inexpensive price in the open market suggested that many of the items were not made of elephant ivory which is reported to fetch up to NAD 15,000 (USD 1,000).<sup>173</sup> The stall displayed a few dozen unmounted *ekipas*.

There were no certificates for any of the items observed, nor did any have an engraved unique number on the reverse side. However, as mentioned, very few items observed were made of elephant ivory. Apart from one or two display examples, almost all *ekipas* were made of warthog tusk or animal bone, which explains the lack of certificates, lack of unique registration numbers on the reverse side, lack of Schreger lines or, as with the case of the street-market items, were available as unmounted items in contravention with the CITES requirements listed above.

Retailers interviewed explained that selling and manufacturing *ekipas* from elephant ivory is regarded (by them) as illegal in Namibia. Possession of ivory *ekipas* (they believe) is allowed, but no commercial trade is permitted. Some pieces on display in the jewellers were made of elephant ivory but shop-owners insisted these were for display purposes only and were strictly not for sale. One of the displayed items was strung with elephant hair. None of the retailers were prepared to sell any of their elephant ivory *ekipa* displays.

A vendor of a stall in the street market in central Windhoek maintained that her *ekipas* were made of ivory. Most, however, appeared to be made of bone or horn. The low price and lack of Schreger lines were evidence that they were not elephant ivory. However, one unmounted piece priced at NAD 450 (USD 30) had Schreger lines. It was purchased for further analysis (see image above). Many of the items seen looked ‘antique’, or at least well-used. One item still displayed the ochre tone of its original Himba wearer.



173 Nakala, A. (27th August 2019)

The investigation also concentrated on the Woodcarvers Craft Market in Okahandja (another town investigated as part of the 2006 and 2007 investigations). Only one stall out of approximately fifty in the market sold *ekipas*. The eight pieces available for sale were unmounted without certificates and without registration numbers on the reverse side. They were priced at NAD 950 (USD 64), but it was obvious this was an opening price for bargaining. The vendor claimed the pieces were of ivory. However, all eight pieces were either of bone or horn as evident by the lack of Schreger lines and inexpensive price.

## E. Conclusion

This investigation shows that the elephant ivory *ekipa* trade is currently minimal. Compared to the 2006 and 2007 investigations, few pieces were on display for sale and almost all were not made of elephant ivory but of warthog tusk or the bones of other animals (giraffe was cited as one example). There does not seem to be a large enough trade to make a case for a major laundering of illegal elephant ivory through this trade, as suggested by the 2006 and 2007 investigations.

It is apparent that registered jewellers and curio shops will not sell or manufacture elephant ivory *ekipas* for commercial purposes as it is deemed by the sellers to be illegal. The street vendors, however, claim their pieces are ivory, but all pieces analysed (except perhaps one) are of horn or animal bone. The use of the word 'ivory' in these instances may be used as a generic term for animal bone or horn and not necessarily that of an elephant tusk as evident by the lack of Schreger lines and low price per item.

The consumer demand for elephant ivory *ekipas* appears to be low, perhaps as a result of the product being perceived as illegal, the global reduction in overall demand for ivory, the growing stigma of owning ivory, and the perceived difficulty of exporting the product internationally without permits.

# 9/ Recon Africa Test Oil Drilling Sites

## A. Background

Recon Africa is a Canadian-based oil and gas company working collaboratively with national governments to explore oil and gas potential in north-east Namibia and north-west Botswana in what is known as the Kavango Basin. The company has been selected to work with the Namibian government and local officials to plan and drill three conventional exploratory stratigraphic wells in Namibia. Results from the first well have now confirmed there is an active petroleum system in the basin.

According to their website, Recon Africa's 'project aims to prove a potential reserve that could lead to economic stimulus, funding local and regional jobs and other socio-economic benefits such as increased infrastructure, potable water access and investments in environmental and wildlife conservation. Should oil and gas be discovered, Namibia's traditional authorities and its elected governments will determine how it will manage those resources.'<sup>174</sup>

Media reports, however, reported that the company had sailed through the EIA process for the drilling of exploratory boreholes on communal and conservation lands with little or no community engagement and also no critical list of Interested and Affected Parties, in contravention of Namibia's Environmental Management Act 7 of 2007.<sup>175</sup> Normally in Namibia, a high-impact industrial development that would affect a rural area would include in its EIA the voices of local and indigenous communities, experts, scientists as well as local, regional and international organisations who are working in the region. There was so little engagement that no objections or concerns were raised or published in the final EIA that led to the Environmental Clearance Certificate for drilling being issued.

According to media reports, this region is home to a diversity of endemic and endangered plant and animal species. This includes the 'last free-ranging cross-border elephant herd of about 130,000 pachyderms.'<sup>176</sup> The environmental impact assessment reports for Recon Africa's planned 2D seismic surveying failed to consider the impact of seismic surveys on savanna elephants. One article stated: 'At the very least, a comprehensive and independent monitoring programme should be established whereby potential changes in behaviour and movements of a representative fraction of the elephant populations in Khaudum National Park and Nyae-Nyae Conservancy can be recorded in response to seismic exploration.'<sup>177</sup>

174 Recon Africa (website)

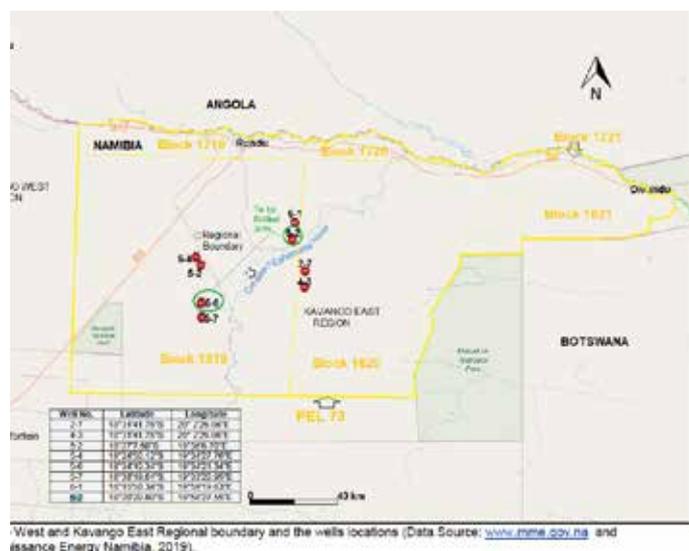
175 Reconnaissance Energy (Pty) Ltd. (March 2021)

176 Hübschle, A. & Ratmell, S. (3rd June 2021)

177 Ibid.

## B. June 2021 Investigation

During this investigation, two test drill sites were located in the Kavango-East Region of Namibia. The drill site named 6-1 in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report is 30 kilometres south-west of the town of Rundu on the Kavango River. This drill site is not yet listed as being operational. It was supposed to be in an area named 5-6 as per the EIA Report (see image below). The second operational test drill site (listed as 6-2) is fifteen kilometres further south and is fully operational.



Both sites (6-1 and 6-2) are just off the main gravel roads and very conspicuous with the Canadian flag flying and big signs advertising 'Recon Namibia'.



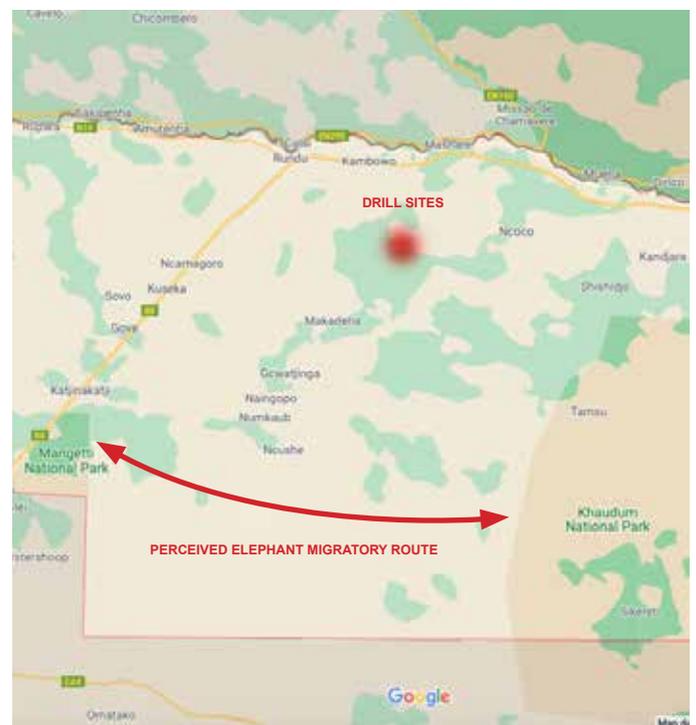


Drill site 6-1 on the D3468 road is about 45kms south of Rundu; 6-2 is about 20kms further south on the D3447 road. The area around 6-1 and 6-2 is densely populated with humans and cattle. There is little sign of elephants. Nearby villagers and cattle herders were interviewed about elephant presence. Most confirmed few, if any, sightings of elephants although some acknowledged the odd presence of the occasional individual (possibly a bull) passing through.

Some villagers mentioned that there was occasional human-elephant conflict, with some crops being destroyed. As seems usual, they had not received any financial compensation from government.

The 2016 IUCN African Elephant Specialist Group census confirmed that the main resident elephant populations are some distance from this area. The nearest resident elephant populations occur in Khaudum/Nyae-Nyae area of the Kavango-East Region about 100-200kms to the south-east of the test drill sites. There is also a group in the Kavango Cattle Ranch (KCR) area to the west of Mangetti National Park in the south-west (also about 100-200kms). The assumption is that any evidence of elephants in the test drilling area would most likely be those few passing through and are not 'resident'.

Media reports suggest the drill sites are in the middle of an elephant migratory route between the Khaudum and Mangetti National Parks. However, little hard evidence of this has been produced. The most obvious route between the two parks appears to be to the south (100kms) of the two test drill sites but, even then, this is a migratory route that is seldom used by large herds as they would have to negotiate 200kms of cattle ranches and their fences.



As for human communities affected by the test drilling, there appears to be a number of concerns among local villagers. There are three villages near the Recon test drill sites: Likwaterera, Mbambi and Shakambu. In all three, villagers interviewed in-person expressed concern about the drilling sites and that they had not been informed in advance that the drilling would happen.

In Likwaterera, residents said no one had visited them at all, while at Shakambu there had been a meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> May with officials who assured them there would be no disruption to daily lives. On the other hand, in Mbambi (close to the 6-1 drilling site) the traditional leader said that there had been a recent meeting where ‘off the record’ Recon representatives had hinted at the possibility of (paid) eviction if they did find oil. Those attending the interview were distressed at the thought of being evicted from their ancestral land. They believed that the eviction would not be a matter of choice.

Two families have had their land trespassed upon by the two Recon test drill sites – one on Kawe farm (6-2) and one near Mbambi (6-1). The Kawe farmer (Andreas) came back from Rundu to find the oil sites already set up on his property (about 150m from his house). They told him they had permits to do so. For the family in Mbambi, their pumpkin/watermelon fields were cleared without permission. Recon Africa officials purportedly claimed they had permission from authorities.

There was general uncertainty among interviewees as to whether Recon Africa had obtained permission to drill. According to local activist ‘Max’, they only applied for a leasehold on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021, which apparently was never issued due to an objection letter submitted by the communities, farmers and other affected parties, but the clearing of the land started December 2020 and drilling started 11<sup>th</sup> January. According to the Traditional Authority in Mbambi (6-2), Recon Africa ought to have spoken to the local authorities before going ahead with any drilling. It seems apparent that Recon Africa never took the public notice to the affected communities either, but only circulated it via media and emails. This made registering objections to the drilling impossible for residents who do not have access to the internet. According to the Village Development Committee

chairperson, Recon are claiming they have a leasehold, whilst Kapinga kaMwalye Conservancy is claiming they don’t. Many residents in the area don’t know what to believe.

The residents of Shakambu had been experiencing water which tasted bad. They were unsure as to whether this was related to the drilling or another factor (they also suggested it could be rust from the pipes, as they had been drinking rainwater for several months prior). The Village Development Committee chairperson in Shakambu expressed concerns that the noise of the drilling would scare off wildlife. Those in Shakambu also resented that they were living in poverty and would unlikely receive any financial compensation for the oil drilling.

## C. Conclusion

In terms of elephants, the Recon test drill sites don’t seem to be posing much of a problem *at this stage*. Population numbers in this region are small and any elephants in the area seem to be only passing through. Research from seismic tests on elephants reveal that an affected area is a few kilometres in radius, so it’s unlikely these current drill sites will result in any significant effects. This, of course, could change if the area of test drilling is expanded, or if oil is found and the entire area is transformed.

The presence of the test drill sites appears to have far greater consequences on the human inhabitants of the region, with locals facing eviction and/or other forms of exploitation/depravation. This is a factor that plays out time and again in Namibia. Throughout our investigation, minority ethnic groups (Kavango, San, Himba, Damara, Nama) maintain they have been exploited, and the resources (wildlife, timber, minerals, etc..) within their traditional lands extracted by the ruling ethnic group, the Ovambo.

One outstanding question is the effect of the test drilling on the water-table and water sources that feed the Kavango River, like the Omatako ephemeral river (alongside the two drill sites). The Kavango is the main river source for the Okavango Delta in Botswana.

# 10/ Overall Conclusion

As detailed, Namibia's CBNRM model has often been presented as the exemplification of elephant and wildlife conservation while at the same time providing meaningful economic benefits to rural communities living among and alongside Namibia's elephants and other wildlife.

Yet, as this field investigation and analysis concludes, the perceived success of wildlife conservation and concomitant economic benefits for previously disadvantaged rural communities in Namibia is found to be grossly misrepresented.

In many areas, particularly in the dry CBNRM-dominated Kunene Region of the country, wildlife populations of many species are declining. Elephant, oryx, Hartmann's mountain zebra and lion numbers are the large mammals most negatively affected, largely as a result of drought, trophy hunting, own-use hunting, conservation mismanagement and human-wildlife conflict incidents. This region also faces the spectre of the capture, auction and possible export of live elephants which, when the auction goes ahead, will likely threaten the entire existence of this isolated and uniquely desert-adapted elephant population that is already in sharp decline.

In other areas across the northern region, elephant populations and movements have likewise been adversely affected due to trophy hunting, own-use hunting, poaching and trade. In two additional commercial cattle farming areas, elephants have been earmarked for live captures, auction and possible export.

Throughout the entire northern region, and especially within the twenty-nine CBNRM conservancies visited during this investigation, human communities remain impoverished to the same extent, and in some cases more so, than during South African apartheid rule prior to independence. Many communities, most of whom are minority ethnic groups in the Namibian demographic landscape, are oppressed and exploited by central government. Central government is dominated by the largest ethnic group – the Ovambo. The Ovambo and other larger ethnic groups, such as the Herero, have in recent years moved into communal spaces of minority groups (San, Himba, Kavango, Caprivian, Damara) in pursuit of commercial capitalisation of the natural resources. This investigation has revealed that the exploitation of rural communities and indigenous peoples, and the removal of natural resources is taking place in the form of land invasion and expropriation, wildlife over-utilisation, mining, oil drilling, logging and other natural resource appropriation.

Thus, far from being a success-story, Namibia's much-touted wildlife conservation model, and its adherence to sustainable utilisation of wildlife through community-based management has, in fact, achieved the opposite of what is commonly presented. Overall wildlife numbers are declining, and elephant populations in the Kunene Region are collapsing, while rural communities within the CBNRMs are as impoverished as ever, in many cases, more so.

Disclaimer: This is an independent report, whose production was funded by a number of organisations, including Animal Survival International, Animal Welfare Institute, Born Free Foundation, Fondation Franz Weber, Future for Elephants, Humane Society International and Pro Wildlife. The authors of the report confirm that the findings and views are their own and were in no way influenced by these organisations.

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