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Namibia's Communal Conservancy Tourism Sector

Dr. Joram Ndlovu, *University of KwaZulu-Natal*

Synopsis and Learning Outcomes

The purpose of this case study is to provide insights into the strategies undertaken by the Namibian Government to use tourism as an incentive for local communities to coexist with wildlife, including predators. Its relevance is based on the types of incentives used and the level of stakeholders' participation. The case study highlights the constitutive role of policy and policy alignment in community-based tourism programmes. Three core issues are discussed, namely: devolution of rights over wildlife and tourism to communities; establishment of tourism joint ventures; and the impacts of tourism at local, national, regional and international levels. To understand the context of sustainable tourism development, the case study examines theories relevant to the support and sustenance of tourism within local community contexts. Such theories include common property resource theory and practice, social exchange theory, social representations theory and community participation theory. Muller's (1994, cited in Sharpley & Telfer, 2002) 'Magic Pentagon of Sustainable Tourism Development and Equity' theory are also used to put the case into perspective (see Giaoutzi & Nijkamp, 2006). The case highlights the achievements of communal conservancies, which include:

- Empowering communities to make their own decisions regarding sustainable utilisation of their natural and cultural assets.
- Providing rights and tenure over natural resources through the promulgation of a tourism policy to enable communities to earn an income and other related direct or indirect benefits.
- The accruing benefits from the allocation of hunting quotas to local communities and other commercial products derived from community forests.

- The exponential growth of conservancies which has increased opportunities for employment, training, capacity building and other economic prospects for the locals.
- Helping in tackling HIV issues during community gatherings by educating communities about the AIDS pandemic.

After studying the case study, learners should be able to:

- 1 Evaluate the role of tourism as both a conservation and development tool in Namibia, particularly in relation to wildlife conservation and employment creation in communities where few alternative job opportunities exist.
- 2 Assess the extent to which strong incentives can redirect community efforts to manage their natural resources in a sustainable manner to enhance their livelihoods.
- 3 Discuss ways in which communities can capitalise on rapidly growing global tourism demands to boost tourism revenues and diversify their rural livelihoods away from primary traditional subsistence farming.
- 4 Provide insights with regard to benefit sharing and make feasible recommendations on tourism governance in the conservancy tourism sector.

■ Background

The Republic of Namibia's constitution stipulates in article 95 (1) on the environment and policies (*see* <http://www.environment-namibia.net/constitution.html>), the importance of promotion and maintenance of the welfare of the people of Namibia through sustainable utilisation of natural resources for the benefits of all Namibians (Government of Namibia, 1990:36). As a result, tourism has been used such that sustainable utilisation of natural resources can benefit the local community in Namibia. Namibia has managed to enhance its tourism offering through a mix of natural resources conservation and development. With its diverse landscapes, the 'big-five', and rich cultures, the country has managed to support a mix of land conservation models, including communal conservancies. In order to achieve this, the Government has incorporated the concept of environmental protection into its constitution to facilitate the implementation of Human Wild Life Conflict (HWLC) (*see* Appendix 1) and Community Based Natural Resources Management programme (CBNRM) (*see* Appendix 2) policies.

In 1995 the Government developed and approved a policy for the creation of community-level conservancies. The following year in 1996, the Nature Conservation Amendment Act Number 5 amended the Nature conservation Ordinance of 1975 so that residents of communal areas could gain the same rights over wildlife and tourism as commercial farmers. The Act makes the formation of a conservancy a condition for giving rights over game and tourism to communal

area residents of a certain territory. A conservancy on communal land can be defined as “a community or group of communities within a defined geographical area who jointly manage, conserve and utilise the wildlife and other natural resources within the defined area” (Jones, 1995). The map in Figure 11.1 shows the landscape and the area of conservancies in Namibia.

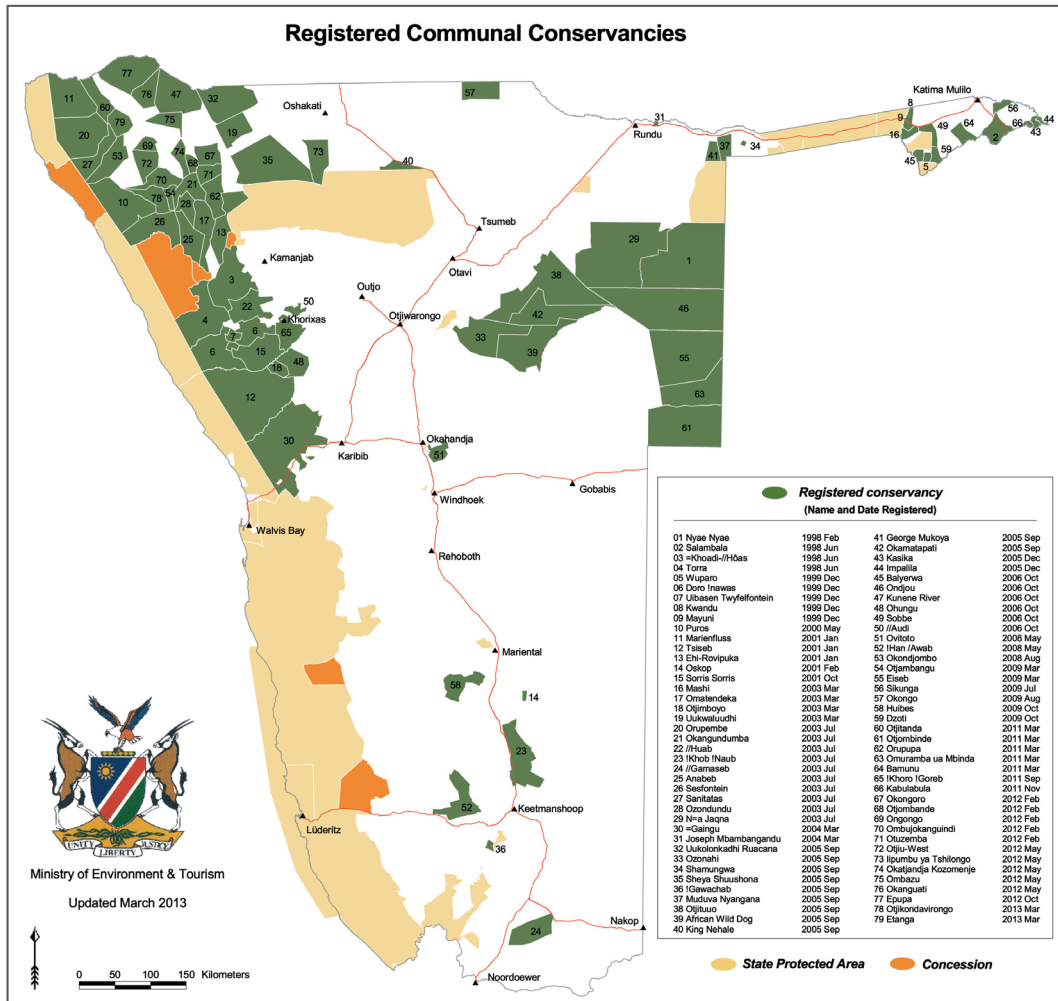


Figure 11.1: Namibia-Area of conservation. Source: NACSO, 2010

In the past, local communities were not involved in the planning and development of tourism on their communal lands (Ashley, 1999), which tended to shift tourism benefits to investors. Over the past 20 years, the CRNRM programme has grown dramatically and achieved its wildlife conservation and rural development objectives. The preservation of large, unfenced areas of land has managed to restore natural wildlife corridors. In order to restore and expand the range of wildlife populations, the Government of Namibia embarked on a deliberate