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United States Agency for International Development



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Overview

The Oryx, or Gemsbok, is one of the world's largest and most graceful antelope. Though swift and agile, it will sometimes face down large predators and has been known to impale lions. The Oryx is a preferred table game meat and so is potentially exposed to poaching and over utilization. The communally owned lands of Northwest Namibia are ideal habitats for Oryx and its people have taken it upon themselves to help protect this important animal. These indigenous peoples have turned much of their lands into nature conservancies, managing their wildlife both to preserve their heritage and for economic gain. Reflecting these efforts, since 1990 Oryx numbers in Northwest Namibia have increased almost eightfold and now approach 15,000. Through tourism and related activities, across northern Namibia, hundreds of new jobs have been created. Nearly 30,000 Namibians benefit from new sources of income, and an area larger than New Jersey and Connecticut combined has been set aside for conservation. This is the story of the establishment and development of communal conservancies in Namibia and USAID's role in that process.



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USAID's CBNRM Program In Namibia

Large areas in Namibia, primarily in the north, are communally owned by indigenous peoples. By the late 1980's, realization was increasing among these peoples that: 1) the ecosystems were deteriorating, 2) maintaining these ecosystems was vital because of their importance to the peoples' cultures and self-identities and because they were economic assets, and 3) to preserve the ecosystems and promote their use for the benefit of local people, community-wide efforts were required. To develop economically viable, environmentally friendly systems, in the early 1990's, a partnership began to coalesce among community members, domestic and international NGO's, and the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN). The movement became known as Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). In 1992, USAID joined this partnership, working primarily with and through the World Wildlife Fund. The governments of Sweden and the United Kingdom also became strong partners. Along with GRN support, Namibian NGOs have played a vital role in the development of conservancies. They provide interested communities with current information on forming conservancies and then provide training and technical assistance to help community members learn new skills. The NGOs also raise funds for developing new conservancies and assisting conservancies interested in joint ventures with marketing functions. They have a critical role in coordinating discussions around issues of common interest across conservancies and in helping the conservancies bring issues to the attention of the Government. To ensure program coordination and to facilitate sustainability of the CBNRM program after the end of donor funding, the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations (NACSO) was established. NACSO has become a collaborative and extremely productive partnership of 11 NGOs organizations moving the program forward.



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Results to Date

As of September 2001, fourteen conservancies have been registered with the GRN, protecting nearly 10 million acres of communal areas. Another 20 or so communities are in various stages of forming a conservancy with the help of the MET and local NGOs. As can be seen from the map, most of the conservancies are located in the northern part of the country. This is due to the fact that most of the wildlife and the potential for increases in wildlife populations reside in these areas. More communities, especially those in the central and southern parts of Namibia, are also interested in forming conservancies. Interest will grow once other natural resources (grazing lands, freshwater fish, etc.) are formally incorporated into the CBNRM program.

In just six years, the conservancies have gone from no income to nearly US \$600,000 in revenues. This is particularly impressive as tourism has been greatly constrained by insurgency problems in the Northeast (primarily due to spillovers from the war in Angola). Torra Conservancy, the first to become totally self-sufficient, is plowing its profits back into the community. It recently donated over U.S. \$2,000 to a local school, with the Chairperson of the Conservancy stating that, "we wanted to give a little bit to our beloved school so we can look after the new generation."

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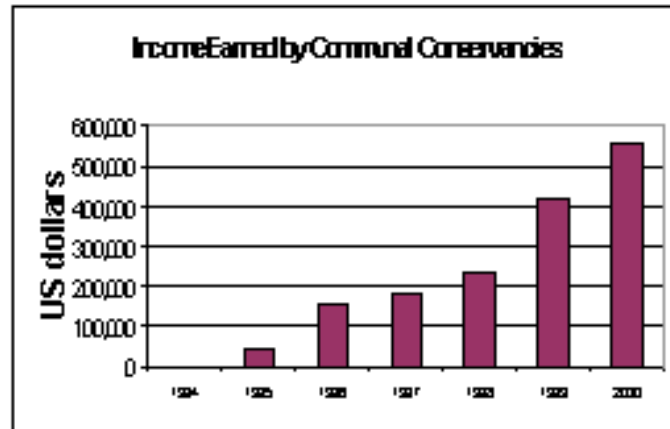
Income Earning Activities

- Communally operated campsites and other tourism enterprises (46%)
- Joint ventures with private tourism enterprises (11%)
- Trophy hunting (12%)
- Cultural tourism and crafts (5%)
- Game donations (23%)

While communally operated campsites have been the biggest earners to date, profits from joint ventures are expected to take over the lead in the next five years. Currently only three conservancies hold joint venture agreements with the private sector, but there is considerable potential for other joint ventures to come on-stream soon, with several conservancies in on-going discussions with potential private sector investors. The joint ventures, along with trophy hunting concessions, and the privately owned enterprises that will benefit from increased tourism, will have a significant impact on the broader Namibian economy if current trends continue.

Another benefit to communities is realized from an increase in the numbers of wildlife. With proper management, it is anticipated that game numbers will grow by 15-to-20 percent per year. This will increase the value of conservancies for tourism, enable increased protein consumption and provide opportunities for additional trophy hunting.

As can be seen from the chart below, the numbers and value of wildlife in Northwest Namibia have grown steadily since the beginning of USAID/WWF's intervention in 1992, and the trends are expected to continue at the same rate. Specific gains have been seen in populations of elephant, giraffe, zebra, kudu and lion. Black rhino numbers have doubled in the Kunene region in eight years. Game donations have helped conservancies increase their wildlife populations. These donations, primarily from private farms and government, reflect a growing belief in the will and ability of the conservancies to be good shepherds of the environment.



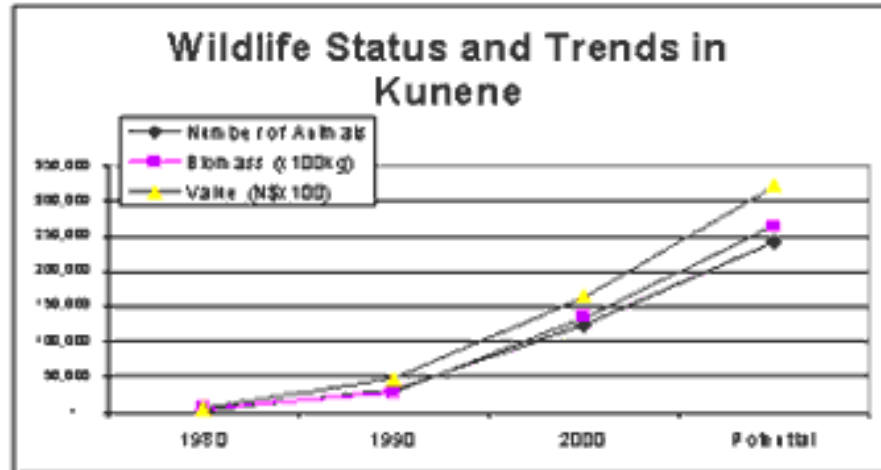
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Benefits Beyond Dollars

As impressive and important as are the improvements in wildlife numbers, biomass and the direct earnings from tourist-related activities, members of the conservancies are realizing additional, non-financial benefits. These include:

- Deepened sense of community: Each community must reach consensus on how to use communal resources for CBNRM. Following this, a committee is elected to oversee related activities. That committee is responsible to the people, usually by interaction with its traditional leaders. Through this process, the benefits of civic actions are demonstrated, organizational skills are enhanced, and more individuals become directly involved in local governance.
- Economic and political empowerment: Previously marginalized, isolated peoples now have increasing control over their futures. They are able to impact on public policy at regional and even national levels and negotiate favorable business arrangements with outside parties. They have improved managerial and business skills which are transferable to other endeavors.
- Elevated status and opportunity for women: Women are taking advantage of many employment opportunities resulting from the conservancies. These include services related to the lodging and feeding of tourists and craft manufacturing and sales. Moreover, 25 percent of the members of conservancy management committees are women who help make decisions for the community.

The increasing numbers and value of wildlife in North Western Namibia



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Ensuring Sustainability – USAID’s Strategy

USAID’s assistance to CBNRM in Namibia will end in 2004. Until then, USAID and its partners will endeavor to ensure the sustainability and growth of conservancies through:

- Continuing work with the GRN to enhance its ability to develop and implement policies related to CBNRM.
- Assistance to NGOs that support CBNRM, with particular emphasis on advocacy and grant management.
- Assistance in engaging conservancies in joint ventures with the private sector that will establish a business foundation for the respective conservancies.
- An intensification of business skills training of conservancy members to promote good management of conservancies and their self-sufficiency and to encourage the development of small and medium-sized tourism related enterprises.
- HIV/AIDS prevention and behavioral change activities.

Through these efforts, conservancy members will develop new skills to manage both their natural resources and their business ventures which, over the long-run, will secure their economic success.

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