



NAMIBIA'S COMMUNAL CONSERVANCIES TOURISM SECTOR (NACSO) COMMUNITY BENEFIT AWARD FINALIST 2010

CASE STUDY

Namibia was among the first African countries to incorporate protection of the environment into its constitution and, in 1998, the Government of Namibia instituted the Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) Programme, giving local communities the opportunity and rights under national legislation to manage their wildlife through the establishment of communal conservancies.

Over the past 20 years, the CBNRM programme has grown dramatically and has successfully achieved both rural development and wildlife conservation.

Conservancies now cover over 16% of Namibia's territory, involve 59 communities (with an additional 30 communities in the process of establishing conservancies), and generate over US\$5 million (2008 – US\$5.7 million) annually.



Most of this growth has come from tourism. Many of these conservancies contain spectacular natural scenery, are home to rare and endangered wildlife, and are also home to rich cultural traditions. As tourism to Namibia has grown, the development of joint-venture projects involving the private sector, the government and the conservancies, for the creation of lodges, tour operations and other related support services, has led to increased economic opportunities for the local communities where the conservancies operate

Job creation, staff training, and the payment of lease and traversing fees to the communities have all led directly and indirectly to economic growth in conservancy communities. Direct benefits include employment, training and economic opportunities to create local businesses that support tourism enterprises. Indirect benefits include community infrastructure developments, such as schools, wells, health clinics, etc, which are decided on by village development committees to make the best use of concession and other tourism related fees.

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In addition to the community benefits, the creation of the CBNRM Programme has led to significant restoration of wildlife populations in many of the conservancy areas, with community conservancies applying large-scale landscape conservation and species monitoring and protection.

In particular, by preserving large areas of land without fencing, natural wildlife corridors have been restored, and the Government of Namibia has embarked on projects to translocate rare and endangered species from national parks to communal conservancies to expand the range and population of species.



These measures signify solid government trust in the demonstrated natural resource management capacities of local communities, underlining the success of Namibian communal conservation efforts.

Their efforts, in turn, support and encourage the development of the tourism sector, which is strongly based on wildlife and geographic diversity of natural habitats.

Communal conservancies are now found in almost all regions of Namibia and more than 230,000 rural Namibians are involved in community-based conservation programmes.

In addition to resulting in increases in wildlife populations in areas where wildlife had previously disappeared due to hunting, poaching and loss of habitat, incomes from joint-venture tourism in communal conservancies have also increased dramatically.

Through its strong commitment to involving local people in managing its land and wildlife resources, and through its support for the development of sustainable tourism models that benefit local communities, the Government of Namibia has created a model for partnering successfully with local people to conserve their abundant natural resources while realising substantive economic benefits – a model that other developing countries can look to for best-practice ideas and implementation.

