



at the issue of defining community and membership and the implications of this in terms of addressing beneficiaries.

Defining community and issues of membership

To gazette a conservancy requires mapping the boundaries and actively involves members of the communities in negotiation with their neighbours. While this requires a good deal of time investment and support by the Government and service providers, defining boundaries is essentially based on what members of a community (particularly their traditional leaders and other key decision makers) regard as customarily under their jurisdiction. In some cases there have been protracted disputes over boundaries and the eventual split of emerging conservancies into more than one unit (as in the case of Sesfontein and Anabeb). This lends support to the fact that the divisions between one conservancy and another are based on locally significant social and geographical boundaries. That these are subject to contestation illustrates that decisions about boundaries have been made in local contexts and on local terms.

While the ultimate intention of policy is for communities to gain the rights to management and benefit, currently the communities within the boundaries of a conservancy have not actually defined themselves in terms of those who should or should not belong to a conservancy, and therefore ultimately be beneficiaries. Rather the regulations that accompany the Nature Conservation Amendment Act suggest a definition of community as *registered members*. The issue is one which has begun to be debated recently and is related to the question of who should benefit from the income raised by conservancies from wildlife and tourism. The following statement from one Government official puts the issue into perspective.

"I am trying to ask myself is benefits only to registered members a real African concept or is it a western concept based in Africa." (Tsukhoe //Garoes, Head, MET CSD – cited in Vaughan et al. 2003)

The legislation places an emphasis on identified conservancy members for a number of practical reasons. One of these is that a list of signed up members demonstrates to MET a desire amongst residents for a conservancy and helps guide the MET decision to register the conservancy. A list of members may also help the conservancy committee in its benefit distribution planning. While this may be so, there are a variety of perspectives now coming from the conservancies themselves (see for example Mosimane 1999; Suich 2003). WILD Project staff in Caprivi recorded a number of challenges in regard to registering members. These include: the logistical task of registering thousands of people as members, no physical proof of membership for the member (for example, a membership card) leading to confusion over whether a person was a member or not, and a lack of knowledge of the membership requirement to sign

a form. The IRDNC project coordinator for Caprivi (Diggle pers. comm.) suggested residents did not perceive themselves to be members through formal registration, but by being members of the communities that fall under the traditional authority (in this case Mayuni).

It is important to recognise that perspectives on this issue will vary from conservancy to conservancy. In some cases (for example conservancies with very high human population density) there may be pragmatic reasons for relying on formal membership as a criteria for distributing cash benefits. The issue of 'who belongs' is subject to a number of different interpretations. At the level of individual households, for example, absent members are not necessarily excluded. In discussions with conservancy committee members at Sorris Sorris and elsewhere, for example, it became clear that the conservancy as a community was defined in terms of the existing social and geographical space and therefore boundaries. These are relatively fluid, and yet with the formalisation of the conservancy, the boundaries (social and geographic) have become hardened. This doesn't necessarily 'fit' with people's own concepts of inclusion and exclusion. There needs to be some criteria for identifying conservancy members, whether in order to determine who should have access to resources and benefits or to assist MET in determining whether a committee is representative. However, the registration of members seems to be problematic.

Defining who should or should not be included as a member of a conservancy does require certain policy guidelines and support, but since there is much variation between conservancies across Namibia, there needs to be enough flexibility for policy to be implemented in ways that communities and conservancies may deem appropriate – in this case defining inclusion and exclusion themselves. According to the planners who developed the approach, a defined membership and defined beneficiaries are crucial in terms of common property resource management. They argue that if there is no definition of who may have access to the resource or who may benefit from its use, then there is no means for establishing a management regime (Jones 2002). If everyone benefits from a conservancy's wildlife income by virtue of being a resident, it means there is no way of excluding anyone from benefit if they do not follow the conservancy rules or if they continue to use wildlife illegally. The variety of perspectives offered above from different conservancies do not refute this, rather the variety of perspectives suggests that the issue is of concern to people in conservancies, and in some cases registering members may be appropriate, in others the community and conservancy may wish to define inclusion differently.

Despite some of the issues identified above and the gaps between policy intent and implementation, the policies and legislation that support CBNRM in Namibia are recognised



within the southern African region and beyond as perhaps the single most important achievement of CBNRM in Namibia. They provide an enabling environment for the implementation of CBNRM and an opportunity that communal area residents would otherwise be unable to capture. The implications for livelihoods of institutional arrangements at conservancy level promoted by policy and legislation are explored in more detail in Chapter 9. The remainder of this chapter aims to locate CBNRM in the broader contexts of national development and the relationship to the international donors.

CBNRM and National Development

Since Independence, the Government of Namibia has developed its own strategies to deal with national development. The National Development Plans, the Poverty Reduction Strategy for Namibia (GRN 2002a), and latterly the Vision 2030 (GRN 2002b), together with other policy documents and statements (see for example, National Drought Policy and Strategy of 1997), all aim to address social, economic and sustainable development and poverty reduction. The national development objectives and priorities in the rural natural resources sector focus on enhancing livelihoods opportunities, building human resources and institutional capacity, and the sustainable utilisation and management of a resources. In fact the issue of sustainability cuts across sectors and is linked to poverty reduction. Other issues central to national development planning (under NDP2, GRN 2001a) include: reducing income inequalities, increasing the protection of vulnerable groups, improving community participation in planning, promoting on and off-farm livelihood opportunities, and wildlife conservation. CBNRM is recognised by several of these policies as a mechanism to support sustainable rural development. The National Drought Policy and Strategy of 1997 recognises wildlife management and tourism as ways of diversifying off-farm income sources. Under the Poverty Reduction Action Programme for Namibia (GRN 2002a), the role of CBNRM, tourism and the conservancies is explicitly recognised as a means to meet its targets and there is also explicit support for the continued registration of conservancies. The Namibian Country Report to the World Food Summit in 2002 (MAWRD 2002b) suggests that CBNRM should be pursued as a means to promote improved food security.

In the wildlife sector, CBNRM is recognised as an explicit strategy to deal with the sustainable utilisation of wildlife, leading to economic development. In other sectors, for example forestry, agriculture, water and tourism, the strategies identified to achieve development objectives echo many of the strategies of the CBNRM programme. These include: community involvement; collaboration between the Government, the private sector, NGOs and resource users;

improving sustainable resource management; and the need to review and implement policy. The national CBNRM programme explicitly shares these objectives (Johnson 2000; NACSO no date; Jones *et al.* 2003). More recently, CBNRM was also highlighted as one of Namibia's key contributions to sustainable development at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. At the recent Regional CBNRM Workshop (NACSO 2003) recognition was given to the need for CBNRM to be more closely aligned with national and, where appropriate, southern African regional initiatives (e.g. NEPAD) to deal with poverty and rural development. In Namibia efforts are currently being made to link the Rural Development Strategy of the National Planning Commission (under the Office of the President, being funded by the EC) to other sectoral initiatives and line ministry programmes, particularly those that address poverty reduction and rural development. Through senior-level staff MET has taken a leading role in addressing the issue of integrating their contribution to other national development initiatives.

Other sectors have also been developing approaches that are based on CBNRM. The DoF and DoT within MET have also been supportive of community-based approaches. Both Directorates have developed policies and practical measures to implement CBNRM. In 2001, for example, Parliament passed the Forestry Act, which makes provision for the establishment of various types of 'classified forest' area including a category of 'community forest'. DoF developed an approach to building community institutions; focusing on capacity building; compiling forest inventories; dealing with controlled extraction; and developing forest management plans. Community Forests are now gazetted by the Government in a similar way to conservancies.

MAWRD, through DRWS, has also taken a community-based approach to managing water points in rural areas. The goal of their programme is community management, with communities and the Government working as partners in the process of planning, construction and/or rehabilitation and management of water points. A draft legislation on rural water supply has been developed by MAWRD in order to implement the government policy of cost recovery for water supply on a national basis (DRWS 2000). The draft bill makes provision for the establishment of a national Rural Water Supply Strategic Plan which will identify Water Management Areas (WMAs). Within each WMA water supply management will be delegated to Rural Water Management Agencies (RWMAs). Below the RWMAs will be Rural Water Use Associations (RWUAs). These will be voluntary associations of individual rural water users who wish to undertake rural water management activities for their mutual benefit. These associations will manage a water point or group of water points and be responsible for their maintenance. The associations will be able to charge water



use fees to cover maintenance and management costs. The association will be represented by an elected Water Point Committee.

The Government has also made a commitment to decentralisation as means to address better its own development targets. The establishment of Regional Development Committees (RDCs) and lower-tier structures like the Constituency and Village-level Development Committees (CDCs and VDCs) are an integral part of the process of decentralisation. The aim of establishing these committees is to provide a coordinated and intersectoral approach to development planning and to devolve the authority for such planning to the regional Government. The Government also emphasises the need for creating an enabling environment and linking the decentralisation of decision-making to civil society institutions. MET is keen to play an active role in these processes and conservancies are seen as an important part of regional-level planning. This is evidenced by the fact that the new Communal Lands Act recognises conservancies as legitimate entities and has included them in the composition of the new lands boards that will operate at regional level. Decentralisation is in its early stages of development, however, and the extent to which the various regional and local lower-tier institutions (CDCs and VDCs) are currently functioning varies considerably. The important issue here, though, is that these processes may offer an opportunity for coordinating development regionally and assist with a more integrated approach to rural development that would be inclusive of the conservancies institutions and wildlife and tourism as components.

Although the above initiatives have been developed nationally, Namibia has also worked alongside donors and other international partners to achieve its objectives. This is particularly so in the case of CBNRM in the wildlife and tourism sectors. Some of the implications of this are briefly discussed below.

International Contexts and Donor Agendas

The evolution of CBNRM in Namibia, from its early days in the 1980s through Independence to its current manifestations, has been accompanied by a shift in the priorities and strategies of the conservation and donor community who have variously funded CBNRM through the last decade and a half. The emergence of new models in

biodiversity conservation at the international level during the late 1980s and early 1990s was allied with shifts in the orientation of the international development community. Perhaps a 'watershed' in this regard was the 1992 conference in Rio on sustainable development. As discussed previously sustainable development became an explicit objective of MET in their efforts to address NRM in communal areas, post Rio. CBNRM in Namibia has been circumscribed by international events and shifting global agendas as much as the programme has been driven from within. Despite the reliance, particularly by the NGO community, on donor funding, considerable efforts have been made to retain an independence from donors and their agendas. For example, the development of Namibia's 12-point plan to implement an integrated and sustainable environmental management approach (Brown 1993) provided a framework for seeking appropriate donor support to CBNRM. The need for such a framework was partly in recognition of the growing collaboration that existed between NGOs and other organisations involved in implementing various aspects of CBNRM. Although a number of NGOs had previously been successful at sourcing their own funds, the Governments of Namibia and the United States negotiated a bilateral agreement to support CBNRM for a period of six years. This led to the implementation of the LIFE programme.

Of all the donor-funded projects that have supported CBNRM in a variety of ways, the LIFE programme which began in 1993 is the most significant. It is a multilaterally funded support programme for CBNRM, with core funding coming from WWF and USAID. It is currently in its second phase (scheduled to run until September 2004, with a budget of US\$1,3 million or N\$13,6 million to be used to cover seed-grants, support to conservancies and institutional grants¹⁴). The programme is managed by WWF, and operates on the basis of supporting existing government, community and NGO initiatives. The allocation of funding grants is a central feature of the LIFE programme's support to national, local and regionally based institutions and organisations.¹⁵ The substantial amount of funding and the coordinated approach that came with the LIFE programme contributed in a variety of ways to the formalisation of CBNRM across a range of stakeholder groups at national level. It was not really until the establishment of the LIFE programme that opportunities for greater collaboration and joint programme development were realised (the current organisational structure of CBNRM support is discussed in Chapter 4).

Integrating the activities of a variety of NGOs and other stakeholders was originally achieved through the LIFE

¹⁴ Minutes of the 11th Members' meeting, NACSO/Rössing Foundation, Okashana 17-19 September 2002: 14.

¹⁵ Although there were a number of individual initiatives prior to LIFE: for example, WWF International and WWF US supported activities in the area formerly known as Bushmanland (later to become Nyae Nyae Conservancy); WWF UK were also keen supporters of the infant CBNRM programme and supported the work of IRDNC in the north-west and north-east.



programme's steering committee. This steering committee consisted of many CBNRM stakeholders, including MET; IRDNC; Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF); Nyae Nyae Development Foundation (NNDf); UNAM; the Namibian Community-based Tourism Association (NACOBTA); and Rössing Foundation (RF). The activities of the LIFE programme aimed to support directly existing approaches and where appropriate implement new initiatives. LIFE has been extremely influential in shaping the current focus of CBNRM in Namibia. It was largely because of the existence and activities of this large and wide-ranging programme that the various individual CBNRM organisations began to realise the need for greater coordination of their activities. The LIFE programme has also provided funds for networking and dialogue, which assisted with the establishment of a national organisation for CBNRM support.

Looking back on the origins of CBNRM in Namibia reveals that the employment of CGGs, working more closely with traditional authorities and community groups, and the implementation of socio-economic surveys marked a move towards a more participatory and 'bottom up' approach within conservation in Namibia.¹⁶ In more recent years greater participation by women in NRM and enterprise development was achieved through the inclusion of female conservancy staff (Community Resource Monitors or community activators) and through the craft programme (Flintan 2001). This, combined with a concern for sustainable development, mirrored the concern to put people and issues of sustainability at 'centre stage', that was becoming the new orthodoxy among donors and practitioners of rural and agrarian development (Chambers 1983, Cernea 1985, Scoones and Thompson 1994). The emergence of national policy documents in Namibia, for example, The National Development Plans, The Namibian Green Plan, and indeed the Constitution (Article 95), are all evidence of the extent to which Namibia and CBNRM have kept pace with global developments, albeit tailored to their own specific needs and contexts.

Conclusions

This chapter reviewed the origins of CBNRM, from the early initiatives and efforts of a few enlightened individuals within rural communities, Government departments and NGOs, during the transition to Independence through to the enactment of globally significant 'rights'-based policy and

legislation. This was followed by a short discussion of the ways in which CBNRM is located in terms of broader national development objectives and strategies and some understanding of the relationship to shifting global conservation and development approaches and agendas.

CBNRM in Namibia has come a long way since its inception. It has been influenced by the global conservation and the development community, and has itself influenced developments in the emergence of new approaches to and models of conservation. "Without a doubt what is happening in Namibia is seen as a good practice and demonstrates what can work" (WWF, cited in Seslar Svendsen *et al.* 2001: 42). It has also been influenced by and had some impact on developments at a national level. CBNRM is now increasingly facing the dual challenge of meeting both donor and community priorities to ensure its own sustainability. On the one hand, the long-standing partnership with key donors (USAID and WWF) is now entering a new phase, following 10 or more years of funding. Donors are raising critical questions about the impacts at household level and for the livelihoods of people in communal areas in terms of a range of issues, particularly those relating to governance and poverty reduction (C. Culler, T. Barrett pers. comm.). Communities and their representatives are also concerned about the extent to which the benefits of CBNRM are being widely distributed among the rural populations and the effectiveness of CBNRM to deal with critical issues like HWC. At this critical juncture the donors are re-evaluating the focus of support to CBNRM in Namibia.

While the programme originated in the context of wildlife conservation, it has evolved into a programme that aims to address rural development and to provide economic benefits to people in communal areas (NACSO no date). To this extent CBNRM in Namibia is at a critical stage in its own evolution, needing to move away from an approach that is closer to community-based *wildlife* management towards broad-based community NRM that encompasses other resources in a more holistic way. Much of the rhetoric of CBNRM has indeed embraced the need to adopt an integrated approach to resource management, encompassing more than merely wildlife: to address rural development; the livelihood needs of community members; and poverty; while continuing to improve opportunities to capture tourism revenues, improve resource management and increase capacity at the conservancy institutional level. Subsequent chapters of this report take up these challenges in more detail.

¹⁶ One of the first PRA (Participating Rural Appraisal) training courses held in Namibia was hosted by the LIFE programme in 1994.