



Chapter 4

The Implementation of CBNRM

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Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the various ways in which CBNRM is currently being implemented. The discussion essentially takes a programme-level perspective and describes the current organisational structure of NACSO and its functions. This is followed by a brief discussion of the process and requirements to register a communal area conservancy and discusses the current focal activities of the CBNRM support organisations in relation to the three 'pillars' of CBNRM: namely, NRM, institutional development, and enterprise development. The discussion provides an overview of the achievements that have been made in respect to these themes.

Organisation and Coordination: NACSO

The momentum that CBNRM and the conservancy initiative has gained in Namibia in recent years is, in no small measure, enhanced by the existence of a coordinated group of CBNRM stakeholders. With the introduction of the LIFE programme in the early 1990s and the growth of community and other stakeholder interest in CBNRM, it was becoming increasingly important to provide a means to coordinate the activities of various organisations.¹ This led to the development of a 'collaborative group' in 1994. This group consisted of stakeholders who shared the common vision of linking conservation and rural development through sustainable NRM (Jones *et al.* 2001). At this time the LIFE programme, through its own activities and support to others, was actually supporting the implementation of the bulk of CBNRM activities in the country, and therefore the 'collaborative group' never became fully functional and was to a large extent superseded by the LIFE steering committee. This steering committee provided a coordinating mechanism for stakeholders' activities and for agreeing decisions

regarding the distribution of funds to support various conservancies' activities and institutional development among the CBNRM support organisations.

Recognising the need for a coordinating body that would take CBNRM beyond the LIFE project (with its limited life span²) led to much discussion among the various stakeholders as to what form a coordinating body should take. It was broadly agreed that to create a new organisation would be problematic, particularly in defining the relationship between the various levels within the structure (i.e. the board, the institutions involved and the management functions). The need for a coordinating body was still such that by 1998 at a meeting at Midgard Lodge, it was agreed that the national programme should be implemented through the various stakeholder organisations, and that there should be a clear strategy of Namibianisation, so that activities carried out at the time by LIFE would gradually be taken over by Namibian organisations (Jones *et al.* 2001). Considerable debate between organisations and particularly the differences in the capacities, organisational structures, perspectives, and strengths between various NGOs and MET was at the forefront of struggles over control for power and resources within such an organisation. The principles that underpinned the CBNRM approach were, however, not in question and eventually there was agreement about the form that a coordinating body should take. Essentially this would mean an independent secretariat to coordinate and oversee the functioning of the association.

The association that was eventually formed is now formally known as the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO). It consists of 13 member organisations and three individual associate members. In 2001 a constitution and structure was agreed for NACSO. The association's key roles are to coordinate and support the work of the conservancies and implementing agencies; to advocate for policy and legislative change; and to monitor the effectiveness and impacts of conservancy development

¹ The LIFE programme expanded CBNRM enormously.

² USAID have agreed to fund a third phase for the LIFE project, which will take the programme through to 2010.



(Johnson 2000). The association is a functional body and meets on a regular (quarterly) basis to review the progress of various working groups, and to assess and approve grant applications from conservancies and support organisations. It hosts national-level workshops and conferences, debates strategy and lobbies donors.

The organisations who are founder members of NACSO include: IRDNC; Legal Assistance Centre (LAC); NACOBTA; Namibia Development Trust (NDT); NNF; NNDF; RF; Rural Institute for Social Empowerment (RISE); MRCC/UNAM; and the DEA, DoT, DoF and DPWM within MET³.

Like all collaborative efforts, however, the Namibian association is not without its own internal rivalries. These have been characterised by NACSO stakeholders themselves as the 'white-led' versus the 'black-led' NGOs; however, the internal dynamics of the organisation are more complex than such a characterisation. The dynamics relate to a variety of factors; these include historical and political factors, interpersonal rivalries, competition between various organisations for the control and distribution of funds between the members organisations⁴, and the extent to which some organisations perceive there to be a degree of favouritism in respect to supporting some conservancies over others. Another important factor relates to the ideological differences between those whose primary concern is conservation and those who are more concerned with development and livelihood objectives. The organisations with most capacity (material and human) and resources (financial) all share a primary concern for conservation as part of a sustainable development strategy. While these issues are familiar to NACSO members, and have been the subject of many internal discussions (as reflected in the minutes of various NACSO meetings, Child *et al.* 2001 and Jones *et al.* 2001 for example), they are important considerations in the context of understanding the dynamic institutional processes that circumscribe the implementation of CBNRM. The dynamic referred to here relates to the distribution of power and influence within NACSO. This has an effect on the distribution of resources and on the focus of implementation outcomes. A key element of this relates to the distribution of grant monies to conservancies and member organisations.

Due to the exponential growth in the number of registered and emerging conservancies, NACSO members have agreed a process for assessing the appropriateness of providing financial support to them. This is based on their viability in

terms of their income-earning potential and biodiversity value. They are divided according to the following structure:

- Fast-track conservancies: Those estimated to be self-sustaining in less than five years' time.
- Medium-track conservancies: Those estimated to take about five years or more to become self-sustaining.
- Slow-track conservancies: Those that may never become self-sustaining, but are worth supporting because of high biodiversity value.

In addition, the revision of the NACSO grant-making strategy to conservancies aims to link performance criteria to participation, accountability and devolved rights. Essentially this requires that proposals to NACSO must demonstrate that there is adequate provision made for sharing information within the conservancies and that there is accountability to the conservancy membership and to NACSO. The procedures that circumscribe the grant approval process for conservancies through NACSO remain unclear. There is a lack of clarity surrounding the allocation of grants, because there is no formal and agreed policy regarding grant allocation within NACSO. Despite this, some principles have guided grant-giving decisions. An early draft of various policies surrounding the allocation of grants prescribe that core costs are meant to pay salaries of CCGs and other conservancy staff (up to 70% of the grants).⁵ At the time of this research little attention was paid to guiding conservancies to use grant monies specifically to address the issue of accountability of the conservancy committees to their membership, yet the allocation of grants to conservancies was in part based on demonstrating the committee's financial accountability and ability to share information with members.

The relationship between the Government, represented by MET, and the various NGOs and UNAM is an important part of understanding the internal dynamics of how NACSO functions. All the various member organisations have voting rights, and when MET was a member, it had four votes, one each for the participating directorates⁶. MET withdrew from NACSO because of political and bureaucratic issues relating to the extent to which the Government can legitimately be subsumed as a part of an independent organisation that spearheads a national programme to support CBNRM. Despite this, at a national level MET takes an active role in coordinating with NACSO and works with partners at a variety of levels to support CBNRM. For those who regularly participate it remains a strong and dynamic collaboration,

³ MET has subsequently withdrawn as a member as the Minister expressed reservations about the appropriateness of the Government being linked to NGOs in this way. MET now attends NACSO meetings as an observer, but cooperation on implementing CBNRM between MET and NGOs continues.

⁴ See Jones *et al.* (2001: 43,44) for a discussion of some of these issues and recommendations that have been made to address them.

⁵ Various internal NACSO documents and statements including 'Definitions and Policies', circulated by the CBNRM unit, NNF, at NACSO meetings, provide support for this statement. In the latter case the policy draft covered core costs, transport and staff policy and not allocations for improving accountability.

⁶ The Directorates of Environmental Affairs, Parks and Wildlife Management, Forestry, and Tourism.



despite practical difficulties in linking and coordinating field- and Windhoek-based planning.

The structure of NACSO reflects the core functions of the group. The series of working groups that have been established take on a variety of different aspects of the core focus of CBNRM support. These essentially coalesce around the three 'pillars' of CBNRM support, which are discussed in more detail below.

Implementing CBNRM

Communal area conservancies

The first conservancies were formally registered in 1998, with the highest level support. His Excellency President Dr. Sam Nujoma launched the communal area conservancy programme and presented the first certificates of registration. The first conservancies to be registered were Torra, Nyae Nyae, ≠Khoadi //Hôas, and Salambala.

As outlined in the previous chapter establishing, registering and continuing to provide strategic support to conservancies is the primary focus of CBNRM implementation.⁷ Conservancies are geographically and socially demarcated areas of land. They have defined boundaries and membership, an elected committee and a constitution. The committees that run the conservancies aim to be multifunctional, serving as management structures for natural resource utilisation and benefit distribution.

Establishing a conservancy is not an easy process and normally requires considerable support and assistance. A huge amount of support has been provided for the conservancies through NGOs (with donor funding) and MET, with the result that there are currently 31 registered communal area conservancies in Namibia and more than 50 involved in the process of registration (known as 'emerging'). These 31 conservancies cover over 9% of the land mass of Namibia and involve approximately 38,000 registered members (MET/CSD 2003). The first conservancies to be registered were in areas with relatively rich wildlife populations, and where tourism had the potential to generate revenues for the local population.

Establishing a conservancy involves a number of steps to meet certain legal requirements aimed at supporting democratic processes (Jacobsohn 2000: 123). The Minister of Environment and Tourism will declare a conservancy in the Government Gazette if:

- the community applying has elected a representative committee and supplied the names of the committee members;
- the community agrees upon a legal constitution, which provides for the sustainable management and utilisation of game in the conservancy;
- the conservancy committee has the ability to manage funds;
- the conservancy committee has an approved method for the equitable distribution to members of the community of benefits derived from the consumptive and non-consumptive utilisation of game;
- the community has defined the boundaries of the geographic area of the conservancy; and
- the area concerned is not subject to any lease or is not a proclaimed game reserve or nature reserve. (Jones 1999: 30).

Meeting these requirements actively involves community participants in a process of dialogue and negotiation with their own communities, with other communities and with external agents. The registration of conservancies is simply the first step in a long and dynamic process, however, which ultimately aims to provide the foundation upon which communities can negotiate contracts with tour operators, lodge owners and safari hunters; take an active role in land-use planning and NRM within their conservancies; and develop their own community or individually-run enterprises. Much of the focus of the CBNRM programme to date has concentrated on the registration of conservancies, the development of conservancy institutional capacity and support for NRM (particularly wildlife), although this varies between regions and conservancies.

Meeting the requirements of the conservancy legislation entails a large amount of time and effort from those interested in forming a conservancy (both community stakeholders and service providers). It is necessary to visit each village and homestead to explain the purpose of the conservancy, canvass people to become members and then arrange and hold elections to the committee. A constitution needs to be developed and agreed by the community, the committee needs to demonstrate that it has an appropriate method for equitable benefit distribution, and conservancy boundaries must be negotiated and agreed with neighbouring communities. If conservancies are to have any meaningful say in the management of wildlife, they need to carry out their own monitoring so that they are aware of trends in wildlife numbers and trophy-size animals. They are also expected by MET to develop a wildlife management plan.

⁷ Although conservancies are almost synonymous with CBNRM in Namibia, this is not exclusively the case and recently efforts have been made to work with communities in areas without attractive wildlife or opportunities for tourism. In these contexts (Eastern Otjozondjupa for example), it is widely recognised that a conservancy may not be the most effective institutional structure at the local level (R. Dempers pers. comm.)



Much of the support at the beginning is for the establishment of an accountable and representative institution that meets the conditions set by legislation. NGOs assist newly formed committees to develop the skills necessary for running the conservancy as an organisation that needs to manage funds and employ staff. They also provide advice and support for conservancies in their negotiations with the private sector professional hunters and tourism companies. NGOs and MET staff assist conservancies in developing their wildlife monitoring systems, land-use plans and tourism development plans. There is a heavy emphasis on conservancies developing bureaucratic management and planning procedures and developing representative committees, that will operate according to a formal constitution and take decisions based on scientifically acceptable information.

The level of investment and external support to some conservancies is high compared to some other sectors and cannot be replicated for every community wishing to form a conservancy. Generally the approach being followed to support conservancies is what has been called consistent and persistent 'light touch' community empowerment and facilitation (Hitchcock and Murphree 1995; Jones and Mosimane 2000). In Namibia this approach can be interpreted as engaging directly with community representatives working for or under the supervision of the conservancy institutions and not only through local government institutions or traditional leaders. The approach includes visits to the representatives concerned; assisting them to identify key NRM, institutional and enterprise issues and potential problems; and helping them to work through these issues and then to develop appropriate decisions, solutions and actions. NGOs are trying to avoid creating a dependency on external support and funding by conservancies by strategically withdrawing financial and other support as conservancies begin to operate and earn their own income (Jones *et al.* 2003). Of the 31 registered conservancies four are paying their own management costs, but they still receive a considerable amount of support and advice from NGOs and MET.

Current Activities and Focus of the CBNRM Programme

Figure 7 illustrates which organisations are predominantly involved in which areas of support for CBNRM, and the various ways that CBNRM is coordinated according to key themes. The organisational structure of NACSO mirrors the structure of the programme of practical support to conservancies. NACSO has developed a series of thematic working groups (represented as 1-9 in the figure). These consist of a chairperson and a group of individuals representing the various support organisations who work in pursuit of particular aspects of implementation. The working groups include a strategic group; an institutional development group; an enterprise development group; a NRM group; a research working group; a training group; a legal working group; and a group that deals with grants management and the establishment of monitoring and evaluation systems. The groups are composed of the organisations who are especially oriented towards meeting specific objectives, but they are also represented by others who share an interest. For example, the legal working group is chaired by the LAC, but members of MET will attend meetings since ultimately they will take responsibility for the development of new bills and acts. The legal working group addresses, among other things, issues relating to supporting the development of constitutions and disputes arising over Permission to Occupy (PTOs).

Often there is overlap between the groups and some group members are also involved in other groups. There are also a number of groups that address cross-cutting themes. The institutional development group is one such. This group tends to be one of the lead groups as they currently address programme activities that relate to a number of other group's objectives: for example, M and E, NRM and business and enterprise development (BED). All the groups contribute in various ways to the three core CBNRM 'pillars'. Each of these is discussed at more length below.