



Chapter 8

Livelihoods and Tourism in Communal Area Conservancies

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Introduction

This chapter focuses on the contribution that tourism is currently making to the livelihoods of people in the conservancies that were the focus of this study. Again the discussion builds on the previous chapters, adding a further layer to our understanding. Promoting tourism as a means to capture revenues that will contribute to the benefits available through improving NRM has been a key component of the CBNRM programme. The rationale for this is that tourism provides a mechanism for local people to benefit directly from wildlife and generates incentives for improved CBNRM. The WILD Project therefore focused research on the implications of integrating tourism as a new land-use strategy and the implications of this for livelihoods. The research materials presented and discussed in this chapter aim to improve the synergy between tourism as a strategy and people's livelihoods.

The organisation of the chapter is as follows. First the discussion focuses on describing the development of tourism as a new land use in communal areas and provides an understanding of the links that tourism has with reducing poverty. Then the discussion turns to explore the main financial and non-financial livelihood benefits of tourism in communal areas that have implications for individuals and the community. The discussion here also examines the amount of income that tourism contributes to communal area communities. Following the discussion of benefits, some of the costs of tourism as a land-use strategy and the ways in which these intersect with existing livelihoods are explored. The discussion then considers a broader range of factors that have led to the successful adoption of community-based tourism (CBT) and discusses a number of institutional issues at regional, national and international levels that have affected CBT. The final part of the chapter provides a number of conclusions and recommendations.

Community Participation in Tourism in Namibia

Development of tourism in communal areas in Namibia¹

As a colony of South Africa during the apartheid period, Namibia experienced the same international isolation as South Africa. As a result, the tourism industry evolved to cater primarily for the domestic and South African markets with an emphasis on low budget facilities – campsites and guesthouses – for independent travellers, and a far smaller high-value market for 'specialist' tourists that emphasised lodges and smart hotels. Prior to Independence in 1990, tourism in Namibia was largely a government-controlled industry, centred on protected areas. The communal areas of the north-west and the north-east of Namibia were mainly off limits to tourists until the late 1980s due to the lack of security during the liberation struggle. Once travel restrictions were lifted these rugged areas with abundant wildlife offered increased opportunities for bush camping and other nature-based recreational activities and became increasingly popular tourist destinations.

Following Independence, Namibia was perceived, on the international tourism market, as a "new" and "unexplored" destination and experienced a boom in long-haul arrivals. This growth in tourist numbers stimulated a diversification of the industry and a proliferation of guest farms and safari companies, as well as increased investment in more upmarket facilities to meet the demands of a new clientele and increasing emphasis on the communal areas as tourist attractions.

The tourism potential of these areas was enhanced by two parallel activities. On the one hand, conservation NGOs, concerned about wildlife poaching – particularly of elephants and black rhinos – encouraged local participation in wildlife

¹ As the WILD Project's focus is on the use of wildlife for tourism in communal areas, its interest is in local livelihoods and locally-based tourism, whether this is community-based or not.



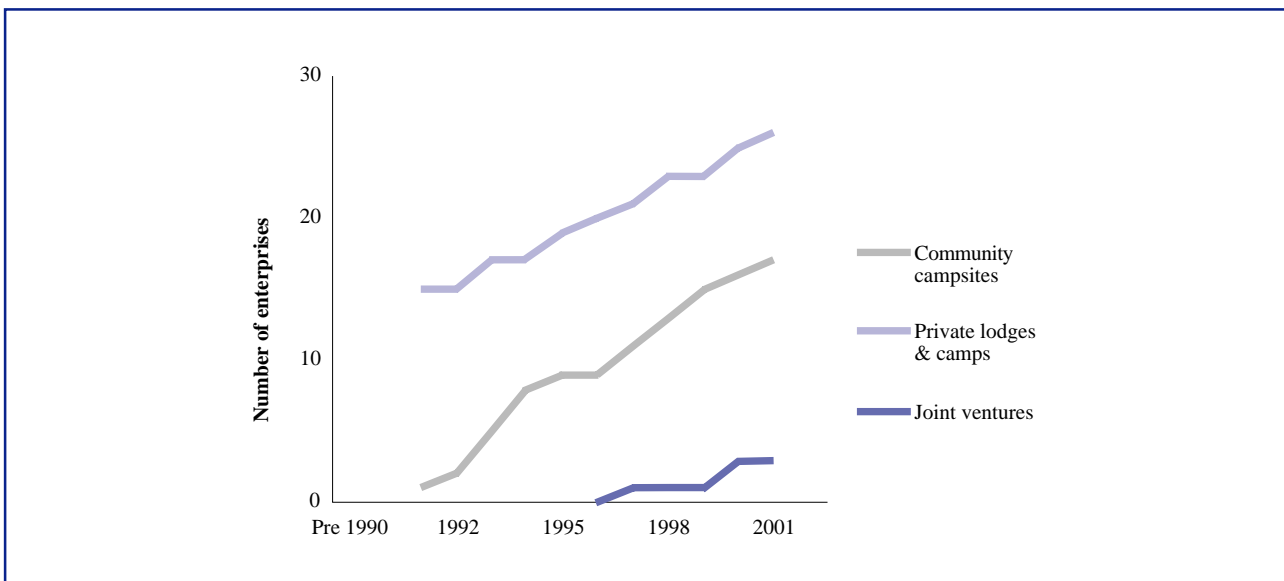
management (see Chapter 3). A system of CGGs was implemented to protect wildlife – thus resulting in an enhanced tourism product – and CBT² was subsequently introduced as a mechanism to bring in some local control over the tourism industry and generate financial benefits from conservation activities.

Policy has been developed to support CBT in Namibia. The 1994 White Paper on Tourism (MET 1994) noted that “tourism must provide direct benefits to local people and aid conservation”; it emphasised the importance of local benefits from tourism and recognised the potential of the communal areas in this regard. One of the objectives of the 1995 Policy on Wildlife, Management, Utilisation and Tourism in Communal Areas (MET 1995a) was “to allow rural communities on state land to undertake tourism ventures, and to enter into cooperative agreements with

commercial tourism organisations to develop tourism activities on state land”. The Policy on Community-based Tourism of the same year (MET, 1995b) states that MET will give recognised communal area conservancies the concessionary rights to lodge development within the conservancy boundaries. However, in most regions in Namibia, the Government has had little capacity to operationalise support to carry out the implementation of policy.³ In addition, enabling legislation has been slow in coming (see Chapter 3 for further details on the policy and institutional frameworks supporting CBNRM – including CBT).

Despite the gradual progress in establishing legislation and implementing policy in the last 10 years, the number of enterprises – both community-based and privately-owned⁴ – in communal areas has increased dramatically (Figure 34).

Figure 34: Enterprise expansion in the communal areas



Source: Roe *et al.* 2003: 37

A variety of support organisations have emerged in response to the demands created by this growth. These organisations build local capacity to manage tourism and identify further opportunities for growth. They include a tourism development programme within the DoT, MET (funded by the European Union), and a range of NGOs – under the umbrella of the NACSO. These NGOs include: RISE; NDT; NNDF; LAC; IRDNC; WWF (through the LIFE programme); NNF; and NACOBTA⁵. Challenges faced by these support organisations include isolated tourist locations

with varying quality of products, limited marketing and business capacity, only partial government support, dependency on donor funding and the private sector accruing the vast majority of the value of tourism in communal areas.

The communal areas of the north-west and north-east now play a significant role in Namibia’s national tourism industry, attracting around 25% of all visitors and accounting for up to 8% of the economic value (contribution to national GDP) of the national tourist industry⁶ (Roe *et al.* 2003). Tourism

² Garth Owen-Smith and Margaret Jacobsohn pioneered a CBT approach in Purros in the mid-1980s by working with the local community.

³ Most implementation has been carried out by NGOs.

⁴ In this chapter, ‘privately-owned’ refers to either white, expatriate, national commercially run enterprises, or to those run by local individual entrepreneurs.

⁵ Nicanor (2001) provides a detailed case study of NACOBTA and an account of their pro-poor tourism strategies.

⁶ This amounts to the total contribution of communal area tourism to GDP being 0.16% (Roe *et al.* 2003: 47).



in Kunene is based on Namibia's comparative advantage in terms of its dramatic and unique scenery and rich cultural heritage, as well as wildlife attractions in the form of rare species such as free-roaming black rhino and desert-dwelling elephants. The tourism potential of the north-east of the country is based on a more typical African product – seasonally abundant wildlife – enhanced by the three rivers that border or bisect the region and provide habitat for a diverse range of birds as well as opportunities for sport fishing.

Regional tourism planning is currently being addressed in the north-west, north-east and the south through the initiation of integrated, regional tourism development plans. There is some coordination of this planning through the CBNRM programme. Although different approaches have been adopted and some are more participatory than others, these plans aim to optimise active community participation and benefit generation. Good examples of these plans have been developed in Caprivi, where the Integrated Tourism Plan for the Eastern Chobe Floodplain, initiated by IRDNC and commissioned through NACOBTA and MET has been completed (Ecosurv 2002). Another example from Caprivi is the Kwando-Linyanti Tourism Plan, which is currently being developed. These plans identify locations of existing and future tourism developments taking into consideration the environment, marketability, activities, existing and potential institutional structures, socio-economic factors, cross-border relations and other opportunities and constraints. Ownership by all affected parties, including communities, traditional authorities, government bodies and the private sector, is needed for these plans to be successfully implemented. In addition strategies to ensure implementation need to be developed. One such initiative has been the establishment of the Caprivi Tourism Working Group⁷. This group has been initiated to ensure successful implementation of the Integrated Tourism Plan for the Eastern Chobe Floodplain.

Transboundary conservation initiatives have the potential to provide a framework to support CBT (Hanks 2001). In Caprivi, these included the proposed Upper Zambezi/Okavango Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) and the Okavango/Upper Zambezi International Tourism (OUZIT)⁸ initiative. The Richtersveld/Ai-Ais TFCA has already been launched between Namibia and South Africa, with the Three-Nations Namib Desert TFCA planned for South Africa, Namibia and Angola.

Linkages Between Tourism and Poverty Reduction in Namibia

Since 1980, there have been significant changes in the character of tourism internationally with enterprises diversifying their focus from mass tourism to a range of more specialised types (Halstead 2003). A common theme emerging with recent tourism development has been the importance of active participation and benefit by local people. In this context, the approach of pro-poor tourism (PPT)⁹ targets benefits to poor people through unlocking “opportunities – for economic gain, other livelihood benefits, or engagement in decision-making – for the poor” (Ashley *et al.* 2001: 1). This approach is particularly relevant for rural communal areas in Namibia where 85% of consumption-poor households reside (NEPRU 1999).

As noted earlier, the Namibian Government has long recognised the potential role that tourism can play in contributing to local economic development and poverty reduction in rural areas. However, it is not just in sectoral tourism policy that the importance of local benefits and links with poverty reduction are noted: the Government has also integrated tourism into broader development policy and planning. Diggle (2003) notes that tourism is valued by the Namibian Government in the National Development Plan (NDP 2) and the National Poverty Reduction Action Programme (2001-2005). Action 26 of the latter calls for MET to assist rural and disadvantaged communities to set up CBT projects, such as businesses and joint ventures.

The nature of community participation in tourism

Local people's participation in the tourism industry in Namibia's communal areas can take a number of different forms – both in terms of the type of enterprise (accommodation, hunting, craft or guiding) and in their level of participation. There is also a distinction between individual participation by local people and collective participation.

At one end of the spectrum, individuals can be involved through direct employment in tourism enterprises or through local private ownership of an enterprise. A tourism study conducted for the WILD Project (Roe *et al.* 2003) estimated that tourism enterprises in the communal areas in Caprivi, Erongo and Kunene Regions generated over 800 local jobs in 2001 – the majority of which were full-time and based in

⁷ The affected communities, the traditional authority, MET, MLRR, MAWRD, IRDNC and Ministry of Fisheries represent the Caprivi Tourism Working Group.

⁸ The aim of OUZIT is “to establish a world-class transfrontier conservation area and tourism destination in the Okavango and Zambezi River basin regions of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe within the context of sustainable development” and includes an objective to create “a framework for public and private sector investment and community participation in tourism and other economic activities based on natural resources of the area” (Annotated agenda from the meeting of Ministers responsible for tourism in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe on OUZIT, 24 July 2003, Zambezi Lodge, Katima Mulilo, Namibia).

⁹ PPT is a poverty alleviation initiative supported by DFID. It is not a specific product or sector of tourism, but an overall approach. Rather than aiming to expand the size of the tourism sector, PPT strategies focus on opportunities to shift benefits to poor people e.g. providing secure tenure for the poor over tourism land or strengthening community organisations in transparent management of collective benefits (Ashley *et al.* 2001: 1). Some of the goals and strategies of PPT therefore overlap with and are compatible with CBNRM approaches.



private lodges and camps. In addition, the study noted that many more informal jobs were likely to be associated with tourism enterprises – particularly during their construction phases.

At the other end of the spectrum, a number of communities own and manage their own tourism enterprises. These include campsites, craft businesses, paying attractions – particularly traditional villages – and guided tours around prime tourist attractions, examples of which include, the ‘bushman’ rock engravings at Twyfelfontein and the famous ‘White Lady’ rock painting at Brandberg Mountain. Some enterprises are communally-owned and managed, that is by conservancies (e.g. Okarohombe Campsite in the Marienfluss Conservancy and Salambala Campsite by the Salambala Conservancy); by villages (e.g. Khowarib Campsite and Lizauli Traditional Village); or through cooperatives (e.g. Mashi Craft Market); while others are owned by individual entrepreneurs from within local communities (e.g. Aba Huab Campsite and the Anmire Traditional Village).

In the middle of the participation spectrum, a number of enterprises have been established as partnerships¹⁰ between private businesses and local communities. In some cases these take the form of long-term ‘joint ventures’ (for example, Damaraland Camp, in Torra Conservancy), while in other cases the private business (for example a hunting company) leases a concession from the local community on a short-term basis, or periodically pays a bed-night levy as a goodwill gesture. These enterprises generate jobs and training opportunities for local individuals, but in addition also provide communal benefits in the form of concession fees or bed-night levies, a stake in the ownership of the enterprise (in the case of joint ventures), and game meat (in the case of hunting concessions). In addition to these there is currently a proposal from the DoT for the European Union to fund “mid-market lodges” in communal areas that would be owned by community structures, but with management support coming from a Section 21 company (non-profit) funded by the Government (Ward, 2002).

The communal management of tourism enterprises (both the actual management and the support to management) has been identified as a complex and time-consuming option (Ashley 1995 and Halstead 2003). Sound management structures and processes for transparency need to be in place. Due to the large number of people in communities and the demanding nature of the tourism industry, successful communal management is almost always difficult to achieve¹¹ (as evidenced by the number of initiatives that have met with failure – or only limited success). However, in the context of CBNRM, proponents claim that a comparative advantage of CBT over jobs for local individuals in private lodges is that it enhances the link between conservation and development opportunities and in so doing (hopefully) improves NRM¹².

Local Livelihoods and Community Participation in Tourism in Communal Areas

Livelihoods and tourism linkages in communal areas

Documentation of the potential and actual contributions of communal area tourism to rural livelihoods and to the financial viability of conservancies in Namibia has a long history – Ashley and Garland (1994); Ashley (1995); Ashley and Barnes (1996); Barnes *et al.* (2001); and Diggle (2003). The early work documents the need to promote CBT development and the potential for wildlife to contribute to development. The most recent documentation shows less reliance on modelled data as actual financial data from the conservancies has become available. The non-financial contribution of communal area tourism to rural livelihoods in Namibia has also been well documented – Ashley (1998) and Ashley (2000).

WILD Project research reveals that community participation in tourism in Namibia generates both benefits and costs that are financial and non-financial and are experienced at a collective or individual level (as summarised in Table 31).

¹⁰ Partnerships are defined broadly here, ranging from a legal contract to a verbal agreement. Refer to Roe *et al.* 2001 for details of types of private sector-community partnerships in Namibia.

¹¹ As a result, NACOBTA is currently supporting the idea of a management change for poorly run community-owned and managed campsites, that has the potential to improve the quality of these enterprises.

¹² Other arguments in favour of CBT are that the land and resources are communally owned as common property resources and CBT enhances empowerment by giving back some measure of control over resources to local people.