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# COMMUNITY CONSERVATION IN AFRICA. SUCSESSES AND FAILURES – LESSONS FOR THE CURRENT POACHING CRISIS

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## **Abstract**

For more than three decades in Africa community involvement in conservation has been promoted as an alternative to ‘fortress conservation’ – defending protected areas (PAs) and wildlife from the deprivations of people. Across Africa community involvement takes many forms. In some cases it means trying to build community support for a state-run PA. In others it means a vision of conserving wildlife, forests and other renewable natural resources on community land outside state-run PAs. More recently recognition has been given to the concept of an Indigenous Peoples or Community Conserved Area (ICCA) – community land where local people’s actions have conserved natural resources. A particular form of community involvement is known as Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), in which there is a strong emphasis on community ownership of land and resources and communities having authority to take management decisions. This form of community involvement has been particularly prevalent in southern Africa. This paper focuses on the reasons for both successes and failures of CBNRM in southern Africa, arguing that it can work given the right conditions. In order to create those conditions, more attention needs to be given to community capacity building, particularly the capacity of communities to demand rights from governments. Current high levels of rhino and elephant poaching across Africa have led to calls for more boots and guns on the ground, but boots and guns still need a solid foundation of community support to be effective and this should not be ignored in the rush to find military solutions to complex conservation problems.

## **1. Community Conservation in Africa**

### **1.1 Fortress conservation and Community Conservation**

For more than three decades in Africa community involvement in conservation has been promoted as an alternative to ‘fortress conservation’ – the defence of protected areas (PAs) and wildlife from the deprivations of people. As part of fortress conservation protected areas were created and often fenced off from surrounding areas, people were excluded from the protected areas, consumptive use of wildlife was prevented and other forms of human impact minimised (Adams and Hulme 2001). Para-military game rangers were employed to prevent local people from using resources in national parks and from killing wildlife for trade or for the pot. Fortress conservation was established under colonial rule in Africa but was often perpetuated by post independence governments.

The involvement of local communities in conservation, known generally as ‘community conservation’, emerged as an alternative approach based on experiences in East and Southern Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. Adams and Hulme (2001) suggest that Community Conservation has two main elements: First that people in and around protected areas should participate in the management of natural resources and second, that conservation objectives should be linked to local development needs. Community conservation gained in popularity for a number of reasons: It could be linked to the concept of sustainable development; it fitted the growing recognition in the development world that communities should be involved in designing and implementing projects they were to benefit from; it resonated with a renewed emphasis on placing economic value on natural

resources; it fitted new agendas for foreign aid based on economic incentives, a reduced role for the state and the focus on communities, and it provided a means of addressing the growing recognition that protected areas were not sufficient in themselves to conserve Africa's wildlife (Adams and Hulme 2001).

## 1.2 Diversity in community approaches

Community involvement in natural resource management takes many different forms in different locations and in different socio-political and bio-physical contexts and is also interpreted in different ways in different parts of Africa (Binot *et al* 2009b). However three main forms of community involvement can be identified (Barrow and Murphree 2001): Protected area Outreach; Collaborative Management, and Community-based Conservation.

Protected area outreach tends to focus on developing community support for protected areas (PAs). It recognises that communities neighbouring PAs suffer costs that can include a loss of access to land and resources, and damage to crops, loss of livestock and loss of human life due to human-wildlife conflict. It therefore aims to provide some benefit from the PA to offset these costs and ensure local people do not undermine the integrity of the PA.

Collaborative Management aims to involve local stakeholders in management of a particular resource or conservation area through some form of negotiated agreement. Often such arrangements are between governments responsible for state-owned PAs and communities resident in or neighbouring the PA.

Community-based conservation (sometimes called Community-based Natural Resources Management or CBNRM) is where local communities have land and/or resource user rights and take their own decisions about using the land and resources. These may be *de facto* rights or rights devolved by government and recognised in legislation. In Africa in different countries there are community-based approaches to wildlife management, rangeland management, water management, and the management of forests, inland fisheries and coastal and marine resources.

More recently recognition has been given to the concept of an Indigenous Peoples or Community Conserved Area (ICCA) – community land where local people's actions have conserved natural resources. The IUCN defines ICCAs as natural and/or modified ecosystems containing significant biodiversity values, ecological functions and benefits and cultural values voluntarily conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities – both sedentary and mobile – through customary laws or other effective means (Borrini-Feyerabend 2010).

Community conservation approaches have been shaped by different factors in different regions of Africa. The following provides a brief summary of regional approaches<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Drawn from unpublished background research for the USAID Publication: Nature Wealth and Power 2.0 Leveraging Natural and Social Capital for Resilient Development

### 1.2.1 West Africa

In West Africa there is a focus on community involvement in forest management. In Gambia, 139 community forests had been gazetted by 2008 under national legislation covering an area of just more than 12 600ha Jammeh (2008). An assessment by Thoma and Camara (2005) concluded that, in general, the trends of a number of indicator species were more positive in the community forests than in the state forest areas where, on average, the trends for most species were still negative. Villagers stated positive trends for various wildlife species such as in warthog, baboon and grass cutter populations. They attributed this trend to improved forest cover, coupled with further enforcement of hunting regulations in recent times. Bushfires were declining. Jammeh (2008) reported a decline in illegal forest utilisation.

In Ghana Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) have been established under the Collaborative Community-based Wildlife Policy of 2000. Binot *et al* (2009b) reported that by 2009 in Ghana the CREMAs had delivered some success for conservation of natural resources through a reduction in illegal activities, believed to be based on the expectation of future returns.

Binot *et al* (2009a) reported that it was too early to judge impacts of CREMAs in Ghana on livelihoods, although early experiences suggested negative sentiments as CREMA regulations restricted certain activities. They said that social capital indicators, in contrast, were very positive, as CREMA members perceived the institutions to be working for the common good. It was also considered too early to evaluate issues such as the governance performance of CREMAs. However, more recently Ashley (2012) reported that CREMAs were demanded and driven by local people, based on traditional values and systems, had legal backing to enable management, enforcement, and generation of revenue, and were economically self-sufficient with benefit sharing defined by communities.

Both Thoma and Camara (2005) and Jammeh (2008) reported increased incomes to community members from community forestry in Gambia. Income was being derived from a number of enterprises such as selling fuelwood, timber, poles, furniture, honey and from ecotourism.

### 1.2.2 East Africa

In East Africa, Binot *et al* (2009a) found that in some cases, community owned or managed land appears to be performing better than state land in maintaining wildlife populations. This was particularly the case in Kenya and Tanzania where landholders were generating significant economic returns from wildlife. Game counts in community conservancies between 1990 and 2005 showed stable or increasing wildlife populations. Studies also indicated that a number of community forest areas were conserving forest vegetation more effectively than state forests. According to Binot *et al* (2009a) in Tanzania, impacts of participatory forestry management include:

- improvements in water discharge and quality from PFM areas
- increasing signs of natural regeneration in degraded areas

- reduction in unregulated and unsustainable levels of harvesting (such as logging, charcoal production and hunting of game)
- reduced incidences of fire
- reduced village revenue from fines, due to reduction in illegal activities
- reduction in encroachment of agricultural land into forest areas
- increases in game and wildlife numbers/diversity.

However, attempts to introduce community conservation through establish community Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in Tanzania have been less successful because the procedures need to go through to obtain WMA status are particularly onerous, the government regulations do not devolve secure and long-term wildlife user rights to communities and creates additional institutions above village level, which remove management authority from the existing village institutions (Nelson and Blomley 2010). According to Nelson (2012) community conservancies in northern Kenya are critical to the survival of endangered species such as the Grevy's zebra, which numbers less than 3,000 animals, the vast majority of which live in central and northern Kenya, as well as species such as wild dog and elephant.

In conservancies supported by the Northern Rangeland Trust there is a core conservation area in which grazing by domestic livestock is prohibited, surrounded by a larger buffer zone which acts as a dry season grazing reserve for livestock. Glew *et al* (2010) analysed the condition of vegetation in these conservancy land use zones and found significant improvements in green vegetation in conservancies in comparison to control areas indicating improved habitat condition in community conserved areas. Grazing was an important determinant of vegetation change within the management zones of conservancies. Seasonally grazed buffer zones experienced significantly higher increases in green vegetation during the dry season than the exclusionary core zones due to stimulatory effects of grazing and livestock presence on photosynthetic activity (Glew *et al* 2010).

Glew *et al* (2010) assessed the impact on livelihoods of three community conservancies supported by the Northern Rangelands Trust in northern Kenya: Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust; Sera Wildlife Conservancy; and West Gate Community Conservancy. Conservancies were compared to matched non-conserved sites with similar socioeconomic and environmental conditions, identified using maximum entropy modelling. In a sample of more than 600 households, NRT and its constituent conservancies were found to enhance livelihoods in participating communities, compared to what would have been the case without the conservation initiative. The assessment found that in Namunyak and West Gate, community conservation has led to significant positive change in livelihoods for communities engaged in the initiative. This is perhaps mainly because they are successful livestock projects with some additional wildlife benefits.

Benefits occurred at both the household and community level. Increasing physical security and access to affordable transport were the most important impacts reported by households. Some direct financial impacts occurred through the provision of educational and medical scholarships and to a lesser extent through paid employment especially in tourism. Incomes in conservancy

communities were significantly more likely to be described as 'stable or increasing' than in non-conservancy areas.

Glew et al (2010) found that the community institutions were taking over the role of development NGOs or local government. For example, West Gate Community Conservancy provided water to the community at Ngutuk Ongiron. In addition conservancies acted to stabilise certain livelihoods components, such as access to firewood, buffering participating communities from resource shocks seen in other communities in the region.

Examples of income generated through CBNRM in eastern Africa include:

- Ethiopia: Community based tourism at Meket – more than US\$15 000 from 2005-2007 (Binot *et al* 2009a)
- Kenya: Community-based tourism in Laikipia – US\$16 053 shared by 100 sampled households (Binot et al 2009a);
- Tanzania: 7 villages in Loliondo Division adjacent to Srengeti National Park earned more than US\$300 000 in total in 2007 (Nelson and Blomley 2010).
- Tanzania: In Iringa District, annual village incomes from participatory forest management increased from around US\$540 in 2002 to around US\$720 by 2005.

### **1.2.3 Southern Africa**

In southern Africa several countries have implemented a particular form of community conservation known as Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), in which there is a strong emphasis on community ownership of land and resources and communities having authority to take management decisions (Jones and Murphree 2004). The main focus has been on wildlife management with income earned from photographic tourism and trophy hunting providing the main economic incentive for communities to invest in wildlife as a land use (Binot *et al* 2009b).

CBNRM in southern Africa has been strongly influenced by the theory and practice of common property resource management that suggested that groups of people could successfully cooperate to develop rules and practices for sustainably managing natural resources (e.g. Berkes 1989, Ostrom 1990, Murphree 1993). For this cooperation to take place there need to be defined boundaries of the area being managed, a defined community, rules which can be changed or adapted locally, clearly recognised rights to use and benefits from resources, the authority to make management decisions and enforce rules governing use, and the right to exclude outsiders.

CBNRM in southern Africa to different degrees in different countries has tried to create these conditions with mixed results. In some countries declines in wildlife numbers have been reported in areas where CBNRM is taking place. In Zambia wildlife-based CBNRM takes place through Community Resource Boards (CRBs) in Game Management Areas (GMAs) adjacent to protected areas. However quantitative evidence collated by Simasiku *et al* (2008:vi) led them to conclude "that in more than half of Zambia's GMAs animal populations have declined, mainly due to poaching, and in some GMAs the animal status is unknown". Twelve GMAs were found to be in a critical state of

depletion. A snap survey also indicated that the natural habitats available to support wildlife in GMAs was shrinking throughout Zambia due to increased settlements, cultivation, traditional land claims and uncoordinated planning by government departments. Very little of the income in GMAs was being reinvested in resource protection. Only 29 out of 68 CRBs had sufficient revenues to employ village scouts.

Simasiku *et al* (2008) found GMA communities are characterized by high poverty levels. When compared to other rural communities, the welfare of communities in GMAs is 30% lower than national rural average. On average, households in GMAs gain from living in GMAs, but benefits are captured by the elite and relatively non-poor stratum of the community. The elite capture is supported by audit reports of Community Resource Boards in the Kafue National Park system, which pointed to large proportions of funds being spent on travel allowances, accommodation and meeting costs. In many GMAs, recruitment of qualified staff for CRB secretariats had not been possible because revenues were considered too low to accommodate wages.

In Botswana results of aerial surveys carried out by Michael Chase and Kelly Landen of Elephants Without Borders, found that 11 out of 14 species counted in the Ngamiland District including wildebeest, giraffe, tsessebe, lechwe and zebra, declined by an average of 61 per cent between 1996 and 2010, averaging a drop of 10 per cent each year (Chase 2011). Ngamiland has been the focus of much of the CBNRM effort in Botswana. Chase suggests the declines have been caused by a number of factors including longer term effects of past drought, human encroachment, game fences, poaching and possibly fire. The survey found that elephant numbers in northern Botswana had stabilised at around 130 000. The survey also found that while springbok numbers had declined in the Makgadikgadi Pans area other species such as oryx and ostrich were increasing, and most species counted were either stable or increasing in the Chobe National Park area, with roan and ostrich having declined slightly.

Income to community natural resource management trusts in Botswana has declined due to the ban on trophy hunting introduced last year. The Sankuyo Management Trust, which was one of the most successful CBNRM organisations in Botswana is now reported to be in financial difficulties because it no longer receives income from trophy hunting. According to the Botswana Gazette newspaper (Wednesday 25-31 March 2015, p7) the trust has had to retrench 62 employees and halt various community projects including improved sanitation for each household, scholarships and funeral assistance.

In Zimbabwe Mazambani and Dembetembe (2010) found that the CAMPFIRE program helped to develop strong and effective institutions in the wildlife producer wards below the level of Rural District Councils. The ward CAMPFIRE committees were empowered to enforce wildlife management laws through resource monitors and game guards, count wildlife and monitor hunting activities, undertake problem animal mitigation measures, and ensure reduction of wild fires. According to Mazambani and Dembetembe the empowerment of producer communities and the benefits communities were receiving from wildlife led to a considerable reduction in poaching. Elephant numbers increased between 1988 and 2000, although buffalo numbers declined due to loss of habitat, poaching and climate variability. From 1989 to 1997, wild habitat in most wildlife districts under CAMPFIRE was being maintained or declining only slightly. Since 2000, wildlife numbers across Zimbabwe have declined as a result of severe economic problems and political upheaval.

Mapedza (2007) found that wildlife habitat and populations were declining in both quality and extent, largely due to a breakdown in the policing power and incentive structure of local institutions. Poaching for commercial rather than subsistence needs had increased, as had encroachment on protected areas by farmers and livestock herders.

According to the CAMPFIRE Guidelines natural resource producer communities must receive not less than 55% of gross revenue; Rural District Councils receive a maximum of 26% of gross revenue for management activities and a maximum of 15% of gross revenue as a levy. The CAMPFIRE Association (which represents all CAMPFIRE RDCs) receives 4% of gross revenue as a levy (Mazambani and Dembetembe 2010). The total revenue realized from wildlife hunting under the CAMPFIRE program for the period 1989 – 2006 was USD \$41.4 million of which USD \$20.8 million (50.2%) was allocated to communities as dividends. Mazambani and Dembetembe (2010) found that the revenue disbursed to the wards was often used to invest in agricultural processing, other agricultural investments or to provide social infrastructure normally provided by government. In Masoka the community used their dividends from CAMPFIRE to provide: funding for construction of a health clinic; a primary and a secondary school; a grinding mill, co-funding for sinking a borehole; 30 km of seasonal road; co-funding for 20 km of electric fence; two tractors; and drought relief food in times of famine. The community also benefited from employment and meat from problem animal control. Interestingly the community used its wildlife income strategically providing cash benefits or “drought relief” during drought when crops failed and cash was most needed and providing social projects at times when cash was less needed (Taylor and Murphree, 2007). However, more generally Mapedza (2007) found that the funds received by local communities from resource management and harvesting were declining, further decreasing incentives for local protection of wildlife.

## **2. CBNRM in Namibia**

Namibia has gone the furthest in terms of government devolving clearly delineated legal rights over wildlife to rural communities (Nelson 2012) and is one of the best known African examples of community-based wildlife management (Binot *et al* 2009b).

Under national legislation rural communities are able to apply to be registered as a conservancy if they meet certain conditions, which include being legally constituted, having clearly defined boundaries accepted by neighbouring communities, having a defined membership, a representative decision-making body and a plan for the equitable distribution of benefits to members. On registration by government a conservancy automatically acquires use rights over wildlife and tourism which include the following:

- ✓ The conservancy becomes the owner of huntable game that is within the conservancy (springbok, oryx, kudu, warthog, buffalo, bushpig) and can use these species as it wishes for ‘own use’ without a quota or permit although the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) prefers to issue quotas so it can monitor the use of game animals.
- ✓ The conservancy can request a trophy hunting quota from MET.
- ✓ The conservancy can then enter into a contract with a trophy hunting company to sell the conservancy’s trophy hunting quota.

- ✓ The conservancy can enter into a contract for a tourism company to develop a lodge or lodges and other tourism facilities.
- ✓ The conservancy can retain all the income from these contracts and can decide how to use that income.
- ✓ The conservancy can apply to MET for a permit to carry out other forms of game utilisation, such as live capture and sale of wildlife or the hunting of protected and specially protected species.

In addition, conservancies are able to apply for tourism concessions in state-run protected areas, providing additional means of generating income and providing communities with links to land and resources they were alienated from when the protected areas were established.

At the end of 2013 there were 79 registered communal conservancies in Namibia and one community conservation association in a national park, the Kyaramacan Association (KA), which is managed like a conservancy. Conservancies in 2013 managed 160,244 km<sup>2</sup> of land, which is about 19.4% of Namibia (NACSO 2014). There are now 82 registered conservancies in Namibia.

Increases in wildlife numbers in Namibia have been well documented (NACSO 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014). Aerial surveys indicate that springbok, gemsbok and mountain zebra populations increased more than ten times in north western Namibia between 1982 and 2000, although this figure may be influenced to some extent by variations in methodology. This period coincides with the establishment of community game guards and small-scale community-based tourism enterprises in mid-1980s and the establishment of conservancies after 1996. Since 2000 extensive fixed route vehicle surveys, carried out during the annual North-West Game Count, show overall positive trends being maintained, although there has been a sharp downward trend in sightings of springbok. According to NACSO (2014) this is likely to be due to a combination of factors including low rainfall during the last two rainy seasons, which resulted in a significant increase in recorded mortalities during 2013, increased harvest quotas over the last decade (but within sustainable levels) and movement in and out of the count area.

Numbers of black rhino in Namibia have more than doubled since the mid-1980s<sup>3</sup> and Namibia's overall elephant population grew from around 7,500 to around 20,000 between 1995 and 2013. Lion numbers in the north western conservancies have increased from a low of around 25 in 1995 to around 150 in 2013 (NACSO 2014). Poaching in the north-west conservancies has been at a very low level although in the past two years there has been a sharp rise in black rhino poaching from no poaching at all to the loss of at least 24 animals.

Wildlife numbers are also increasing or stable in the north east of the country largely due to breeding, a reduction in poaching and immigration from Botswana of elephants. Although poaching had declined substantially over the last 15 years, there has been a recent sharp increase in ivory poaching (NACSO 2014).

Between 1999 and 2013, a total of 10 568 animals consisting of 15 different species were translocated to 31 registered conservancies and three conservancy complexes (NACSO 2014).

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<sup>3</sup> The Namibian government does not release precise numbers for security reasons.

Namibia is the only country in Africa where the government has re-introduced black rhino to communal land conservancies, a measure of level of government confidence in community-based conservation in conservancies.

Several conservancies border State-run protected areas and contribute to creating larger landscape conservation areas. For example the Mudumu North Complex in north eastern Namibia is made up of four conservancies, three community forests, two National parks and a State Forest. These different land units collaborate on wildlife monitoring and game counts, anti-poaching activities, fire and fire management. Wildlife moves freely between the land units which are also maintaining important wildlife movement corridors between Botswana and Namibia, between Botswana, Namibia and Angola, and Botswana, Namibia and Zambia.

According to NACSO (2014), the total cash income and in-kind benefits generated in conservancies grew from less than N\$ 1 million in 1998 to more than N\$68 million in 2013. This includes all directly measurable income and in-kind benefits being generated, and can be divided into cash income to conservancies (mostly through partnerships with private sector operators), cash income to residents (mostly through employment and the sale of products), as well as in-kind benefits to residents (mostly the distribution of harvested game meat).

By the end of 2013 in Namibia's CBNRM sector there 39 joint-venture tourism enterprises in with 640 full time and 46 part time employees, 44 trophy hunting concessions with 134 full time, and 129 part time employees, 29 small/medium enterprises (mostly tourism/crafts) with 142 full time and 40 part time employees, 647 full time and 88 part time conservancy employees (NACSO 2014).

Recent analysis (Jones *et al* 2013) suggests that CBNRM in Namibia does not make a major contribution to poverty reduction in rural areas except for those people who gain permanent employment. It does, however, contribute to poverty alleviation and diversified livelihoods and provides a range of intangible benefits for many more people.

In addition to the communal wildlife conservancies in 2013 in Namibia there were 32 registered community forests, 66 community rangeland management areas, and three community fish reserves.

Although CBNRM in Namibia places a large degree of emphasis on financial incentives for people to accept wildlife on their land, intrinsic values also play a role. Recent research on conservancies and community well-being in north-west Namibia demonstrated the extent to which communities also value wildlife for cultural and aesthetic reasons (Jones 2014). Community participants in four conservancies noted the following:

- There is a link between wildlife and culture through patrilineal and matrilineal names
- Wildlife is important for purification at holy fire
- Wildlife is important for medicine and healing
- It is important for our children and their children to see and know wildlife – “Wildlife helps nature to become beautiful”

The participants valued the conservancies because they were helping them to maintain these cultural and aesthetic links to wildlife.

Binot *et al* (2009b) suggest there are a number of aspects of the Namibian CBNRM approach that are relevant for the design of CBNRM initiatives. First, the rights granted to communities over wildlife are secure over time; these rights are conditional and can be revoked but they are not term-limited. Second, there is no “middle-man” between communities and the private sector; third 100% of the income from wildlife is retained locally; and fourth, the programme had a long history of internal development prior to the involvement of external actors and donors. In addition, the rights given to conservancies over wildlife are clearly defined and are contained in national legislation, which means that they cannot be removed or diminished through policy changes or at the whim of bureaucrats. Further, communities in the Namibian CBNRM approach are self-defining so conservancies are established by people who have chosen to cooperate for natural resource management rather than being forced to cooperate because they fall within a government determined administrative unit.

### **3. Conclusions**

As a result of the diversity in approaches, types of resources and terminology, it is difficult to draw conclusions about community conservation in Africa that would be consistent or relevant across the continent. Another constraint to the provision of a general assessment of impacts is the lack of good data for many CBNRM activities. Impacts are often reported in a generalised way without quantification, particularly at household level, or data are available for one or two sites that have been well researched but not across community conservation activities in the whole country. Generally, however, there are some patterns that emerge which enable analysis to be carried out across broad regions. Community conservation reviews such as Roe *et al* (2009) suggest that while some community conservation initiatives demonstrate clear success and others demonstrate clear failure, most fall somewhere in between.

#### **3.1 Conservation Impacts**

Binot *et al* (2009a) show how large areas of land are under some form of community management across Africa. However, what is more important is the nature and quality of management taking place. Where proprietorship over land and or resources is strong and benefits are perceived to be significant (Kenyan and Namibian conservancies, Tanzanian village forests) generally positive conservation impacts have been recorded. Where land and resource rights have been weak or insecure and benefits low (Tanzanian WMAs, Zambian GMAs, and some community areas in Botswana), wildlife has been decreasing.

There are few recent data regarding the impact of CBNRM on the maintenance of wild habitat or broad biodiversity rather than simply large game species. The impact of CBNRM on biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems remains an area that is still not adequately monitored. As a result it is difficult to come to clear conclusions about such impacts at scale. Research often tends to be site specific.

While noting that perceptions of land degradation are highly debated in the literature, Binot *et al* (2009a) suggest that theoretically multispecies production systems under CBNRM should reduce pressure on rangelands compared to single species systems such as cattle ranching or agro-pastoral

systems. Where communities set land aside specifically for wildlife and tourism use it is assumed that land degradation due to overgrazing or over cultivation, particularly in drier areas, will be reduced.

### **3.2 Economic impacts**

Communities are using their wildlife and tourism incomes for different purposes – sometimes cash payments to members or households, sometimes for social projects. Some commentators argue that government should provide social infrastructure and communities shouldn't be relieving government of its responsibilities. However, many areas where communities receive wildlife and tourism income are remote and governments have weak capacity to provide services. In addition, it is often argued that incomes are small, particularly if divided amongst households. Two aspects are important here. First, the US\$ amounts look low to outsiders but the equivalent in local currency can be more significant according to local living standards and can have an impact where poverty is rife. Second, little research is carried out to show how this impact can be made. It is important for example to assess how much maize meal (or other staple food in poor areas) household income from wildlife can purchase, or to consider the timing of cash payments. For example Torra Conservancy in Namibia in 2003 paid N\$630 (around US\$63 at the time) to each member. Long (2004) found that this amount could cover basic grocery costs for a local household for three months, was almost equivalent to the average amount raised annually from the sale of live goats and is equivalent to 14% of the average annual income (N\$4 500 or US\$450 at the time) for individuals in the region and 8% of the average annual income of households (N\$8 000 or US\$ 800 at the time). The most common use of the cash was actually for school fees as the payment took place in January prior to the start of the new school year. This type of analysis is rare when considering household payments from CBNRM.

Further, what appear to be low household benefits could be interpreted to result in a weak incentive for community members to conserve wildlife particularly where the costs from human wildlife conflict are high. However, Jones (2012) reports how residents of the Sobbe Conservancy in eastern Caprivi Region are maintaining their portion of an elephant "corridor" which links the Mudumu National Park in the south, the conservancy, a state forest and the Sioma-Ngwezi National Park in Zambia to the north. A local *induna* (headman), local residents and a staff member of a local NGO explained that community members were not allowed to settle or grow crops in the corridor because the community was benefitting from the trophy hunting of elephants in the conservancy. This benefit was an annual payment of N\$100 (US\$12.5) per adult - it is important to understand benefits from the perspective of the beneficiaries rather than that of outsiders.

### **3.3 Lessons learned**

A number of lessons emerge from recent reviews of community conservation in Africa. In terms of success factors the following can be identified:

- Provision of strong and secure rights over land and or resources
- Benefits are perceived by local people (rather than outsiders) as significant

- Capacity building of community management skills
- Support for good governance and participatory decision-making

A number of other key points can be identified:

- 1) Legal rights over resources and secure land tenure remain necessary, if not sufficient, foundations for successful CBNRM. Often there is insufficient political will to implement policy reforms that devolve use rights to communities or bureaucrats try to hold on to power. Sometimes there is a failure to build community management capacity or to help create the conditions in which good governance can emerge. Democratic, accountable and transparent systems of governance at the local level need time to evolve. They cannot be imposed by projects and external agencies, but outsiders can assist communities in developing systems and tools for promoting the emergence of good governance.
- 2) More recognition is required of the political nature of community conservation. It concerns access to rights revenues and resources for which there is often competition. Community conservation is therefore rooted in national and global political economies. Community conservation therefore needs to give more attention to building the political capital of communities so that they can demand accountability of government and international institutions that also affect their lives. This requires shifting external support from central to local actors (Nelson 2010) and privileging the local (Murphree and Taylor 2009) instead of the centre, i.e. recognising CBNRM as *restoring*, land, resources and rights of governance over commonages to communities instead of a bureaucratic transfer of authority from the central state. Those supporting CBNRM need to align themselves with the aspirations of communal people for a restoration of their rights and the authority to manage their common resources (Murphree and Taylor 2009). In addition, external actors should focus more on building local capacity through training, knowledge, organisational support and networking in ways that enable communities to demand accountability of the centre (Nelson 2010). Pani (2014) suggests that this approach should also be extended to the international arena. He argues that there should be a greater presence of local communities at International Conferences, and in particular to CITES Conferences of the Parties which make decisions on the use of wildlife. Decision-making mechanisms at the international level need to take into account the needs of people sharing the land with wildlife, and communities should be able to articulate their own needs (Pani 2014).
- 3) More attention needs to be given to ICCAs as community run protected areas requiring appropriate forms of legal recognition, protection from inappropriate externally imposed rules and institutions, and protection from inappropriate development that promotes extractive industries and agricultural monocultures (Borrini-Feyerabend 2010).

### **3.4 Community conservation and the poaching crisis**

The recent increase in elephant and rhino poaching across Africa has drawn international responses which re-emphasise some of the main features of “fortress conservation” i.e. boots and guns on the ground backed up by modern surveillance techniques such as the use of helicopters and drones. High level international conferences have paid lip service to the role of local communities but the

resources are being put into the boots and guns on the ground. For example out of 14 urgent measures identified by the IUCN African Elephant Summit held in Gaborone, Botswana from 2-4 December 2013 only one highlighted the need to work with local communities:

“In African elephant range States, **engage communities living with elephants as active partners in their conservation** by supporting community efforts to advance their rights and capacity to manage and benefit from wildlife and wilderness” (IUCN 2013).

The current poaching crisis does provide a challenge to proponents of community-based approaches to conservation, particularly as the drivers of demand for rhino horn and ivory are complex. However, some conservationists believe that community involvement is crucial for addressing the current crisis. Participants at another IUCN conference in South Africa in March 2015 noted the following (Coonie, R. email correspondence 09.03.2015):

- Governments and international agencies are now more open to recognizing the role of indigenous peoples and local communities in the governance of natural resources, but in the context of Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) this linkage has been largely overlooked in the face of the urgent nature of the threat. Even when this linkage has been recognized, there is still a major gap in implementation.
- The rights and responsibilities of communities in efforts to reduce IWT need to be recognized and strengthened. If local communities have a collective sense of ownership over their wildlife and view poaching as stealing from them, they are highly motivated to help combat IWT.
- Effective enforcement will require and be enhanced by active engagement of local communities. Communities are in the best place to know what is happening on the ground, including the movements and activities of poachers. They can be the "eyes and ears" of state-led enforcement efforts. Community engagement needs to be based on listening, building trust, respecting traditional authority, and developing shared, co-created solutions.

The conference recommendations included the following:

- ✓ Support community rights and responsibilities through:
  - recognising that IWT is a development as well as a conservation issue;
  - recognising the central role of the communities that live close to wildlife in addressing and combating IWT;
  - seeking to understand, respect and respond to community rights, needs and priorities in designing initiatives to combat IWT;
  - ensuring enforcement efforts are sensitive to potential negative impacts on local communities and are accompanied by appropriate accountability mechanisms;
  - recognising, supporting and providing an enabling environment for communities to be involved in wildlife governance and derive benefits from its conservation and sustainable use.
- ✓ Strengthen community voices through:
  - supporting a mechanism for communities affected by IWT to learn from each other and to have their voices heard in national and international policy fora; and

- strengthening the ability of communities to be involved in decision-making surrounding action to combat IWT, including use and management of wildlife, and to derive benefits from conserving wildlife.

These recommendations provide a strong agenda for action regarding the involvement of communities in combatting poaching. There is sufficient evidence from community conservation across Africa that if the right conditions are created, communities can indeed be a strong force for conservation. These conditions include secure land and resource rights, the right to take management decisions and the right to benefit. They also include appropriate capacity building and support for the development of local institutions for natural resource governance.

At the same time as we focus on the immediacy of the poaching crisis we should not lose sight of the underlying reason for the loss of most wildlife in Africa, the species other than elephant and rhino. According to the Southern African Sustainable Use Specialist Group (SASUSG 1996) the biggest threat to wildlife is the loss of natural habitat due to conversion to other forms of land use. This is why as Pani (2014) argues: “devolution of ownership of wildlife to communities to allow direct receipt of benefits from consumptive and non-consumptive use ... can provide crucial incentives for sustainable wildlife management. The fact that many countries have not fully devolved authority or ownership rights to communities but have maintained State ownership over wildlife is a major obstacle to achieve effective wildlife conservation over huge wild areas”.

This why we need to focus on far more than boots on the ground and guns and helicopters. We need to work to make wildlife an attractive form of land use for people using the land and its resources across Africa so that wildlife can still be found outside protected areas.

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